Job's 6th Response—the Converse View of the “Wicked”
The “Wicked” Do Prosper, They Are Satisfied &
Go to the Grave with Minimal Suffering

Introduction:
This is Job’s third speech in the “second round” of discourse with his friends and his second response to Zophar; it represents his sixth speech overall. In this chapter Job challenges Zophar’s [as well as his other two “friends”] assessment that the wicked always suffer and are destroyed [in this life]. This belief is epitomized by Eliphaz when he says,

“Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed? According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it. By the breath of God they perish and by the blast of His anger they come to an end.”—Job 4:7-9

Job gives the converse example by showing that the wicked most often appear to be quite content and happy with their lives. They prosper, seem satisfied, their children are well off and they go to the grave with minimal or no suffering at all. The implication, then, being their arguments prove nothing about Job’s calamity.

The point is, that to say a person is suffering and destroyed in dramatic fashion does not automatically prove they are “wicked” [even though that can happen]. Many times a righteous person suffers because they have made a bad decision or they are victims of circumstances and events which are out of their control. Their suffering does not consequentially make them a wicked person.

So for Zophar to imply that Job is suffering in such a horrific way because he is wicked means nothing at all because the converse can also be shown. The wicked don’t always suffer, but sometimes they do. The wicked don’t always prosper, but sometimes they do. It proves nothing in relation to Job’s situation!

Thus, the arguments of Job’s friends really do not prove anything about the reason for his suffering and Job proceeds to show this is just the case.

You may have been thinking, “But wait, I know of cases where the wicked don’t suffer but prosper instead and they live to “a ripe old age”. The position of Job’s friends is not always the case. Well in this chapter Job persuasively shows that his friends have only gotten the story half-right—the other half is that other times the wicked indeed do prosper, grow powerful and live a long time.

vv. 1-3➤ Job’s Plea to Be Listened to Carefully
[1 Then Job answered and said: 2 “Listen carefully to my speech and let this be your consolation [to me]. 3 Bear with me that I may speak, and after I have spoken, keep mocking.”]

Job answers Zophar by saying if only you would “listen carefully” [lit. “shema shama”]; that is, attentively listen to, take it to heart.

It should be noted that the Hebrew word Job uses here for “listen” is ‘famous’ as it contains the essence of Jewish faith in Jehovah, the one True God. It is used in the passage known as “the Shema” and is translated simply by the word “hear”:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Yehovah] our God [Elohiym], the LORD is alone! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”
—Deut. 6:4-5

The same Hebrew word is used when King Solomon personifies “wisdom” and the importance of listening to “her”:
“Now therefore, listen to me [wisdom], my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me [i.e., wisdom] love death.”—**Prov. 8:32-36**

It is the same sentiment used by John in introducing the **REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST**:

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”—**Rev. 1:3**

And to each of the seven churches in Asia Minor [modern Turkey]:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches……”
—**Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22**

The importance of communication and understanding cannot be overstated!

**Application:** The important thing we learn here is that a person who is suffering doesn’t necessarily want things “fixed”. They desire most of all a listening ear and an understanding heart; not a condemning, patronizing, or mocking mouth. A person who is going through a tragic trial wants someone who will commiserates with their grief and suffering.

Thus, by using this word twice, Job is emphasizing that he yearns to be listened to—not just “heard”. He wants to be understood. He’s already referred to his friends as “worthless physicians” {**Job 13:4**} and “miserable comforters” {**Job 16:2**}.

Job is appealing to Zophar’s sense of reason and challenging him [and his other friends] to “bear with” [lit. “be lifted up”] him and really listen and understand. He wants his friends to really commiserate with his grief and suffering. As we are told by the apostle Paul:

“Brothers, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”—**Gal. 6:1-3**

Jobs says that if his friends really listened diligently and attentively to what he had to say, it would truly be a consolation to him¹! If his friends actually did this Job’s expectation was that they would **quit their mocking**²; probably because they would be convinced of his innocence.

So what is Job going to do? He is basically going to argue the converse of his friends understanding of things. Job wants his friends to be open to the possibility that there may be another reason for his grief and calamity; since their reasoning is not universal to all situations.

Job is going to remind them that oftentimes the wicked do prosper; they are quite content, satisfied and go to the grave happy with their lives. Their children are well off and lack nothing. All this in contradiction to his friends’ arguments.

Therefore, what does their [misplaced] logic really prove in Job’s case?

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¹ Other commentators believe that Job is being sarcastic here by saying that will be **their** consolation.

² The Hebrew word translated ‘mocking’ literally means “to stammer, to speak unintelligibly” and can also mean “to speak in a barbarous or foreign language”. In this context it means “to deride or mock, to ridicule or insult”.

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vv. 4-6 ➤ **Job Challenges His Friends to Really Consider His Plight**

[4 “As for me, is my complaint against man? And if it were, why should I not be impatient? 5 Look at me and be astonished; put your hand over your mouth. 6 Even when I remember I am terrified and trembling takes hold of my flesh.”]

Job rhetorically asks his friends if his great complaint is against man; i.e., against his friends. It was with God, not them.

But then he adds that if his complaint was against man then he has a right to be impatient [lit. “shortened spirit/breath”], i.e., to have a troubled spirit because man is fallible and powerless. A more literal translation might be, “And if so, why should not my spirit be distressed?”

In other words, Job is saying that since (a) my cause is with God, (b) my problem is understanding why God has allowed me to go through so much suffering and grief, (c) I have cried to Him and am utterly dependent on Him and (d) God apparently is not listening or helping me—why shouldn’t I be allowed to be distressed.

“Look at me [lit. “to turn”; i.e., turn and face] and be astonished”. If his friends were to really turn from their prejudiced ideas and ‘look’ at his condition [in concert with attentively listening] they would be astonished and amazed!

Note that the Hebrew word used here strongly suggests a state of devastation and is most often translated that way as in Dan. 9:27; “abomination of desolation”; when referring to what the anti-Christ will commit [in the rebuilt Temple in the Last Days; refer to 2 Thess. 2:3-4].

Job’s condition is certainly one of utter devastation and therefore cause for astonishment!

Job says his friends should be putting their hands over their mouths [see Job 29:9; 40:4; Mic. 7:16], i.e., be stunned into silence, as they ponder the full extent of his calamity.

And why aren’t they since Job himself felt dismayed and trembled over his situation. Fear and horror took control over his whole body and it shuddered. Job’s body is literally trembling at the shear enormity of his sufferings and he’s wondering why Zophar and his friends don’t have the same reaction! Why is there no compassion and sympathy?

Job’s friends were simply giving him instinctive and mechanical explanations without even considering his heartache; without caring about his physical, mental and spiritual suffering! In effect, Job is saying until we’re “on the same page”, your speeches will have no capacity to help me understand or alleviate my suffering!

**Application:** Mankind’s main problem, his primary complaint, is really against God not man. The problem is that most people do not want to accept and admit the fact that they are created in God’s image, and that they are accountable to Him. But God has also provided a Savior, Jesus Christ, a way to be redeemed from the bondage of sin and destruction. God has provided the means and a person needs to respond by agreeing with, and accepting, God’s authority, repent of their sins and receive the gift of salvation {Eph. 2:4-10; :Ti. 3:4-7} by confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior and believing that He was raised from the dead {Rom. 10:9-13}.

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3 Of the 86 times this word occurs in the Old Testament, it is translated “astonished/amazed/appalled” 22 times and “desolate/desolations/destroy/waste” 64 times.
To initiate his argument, Job asks two questions regarding the fundamental issue at hand:

- “Why do the wicked continue to live long lives?”
- “Why do the wicked continue to become strong and powerful?”

The gist of Job’s questions to his friends is this: “If you so sure that the wicked are treated according to their character in this life—that committing great sin is of necessity followed by great judgments, how is it that the wicked continue to live in prosperity, grow old and mighty in power?”

It is somewhat surprising that Job has not brought up this reality sooner, earlier in the debate, since it might have averted much needless chatter.

The friends of Job had maintained that the wicked would be cut-off in the “prime of life”. Job, on the other hand, affirms that oftentimes they live on to old age.

There are of course cases in the “general” course of events where the wicked do experience calamity in this life and are cut-off early, but some live on to a very old age; by the same token, the righteous do experience prosperity in this life, but some suffer terribly and their lives are cut short {e.g., refer to vv.23-26}.

Without directly answering those questions, which perhaps Job never intended to answer, Job instead explains the reasons behind those questions.

Nevertheless, these questions are meant to fly-in-the-face of his friends’ arguments that it is only the wicked that are judged and destroyed in a manner commensurate with their iniquity.

Although Job does not answer the questions he posed, he does offer 6 examples [circumstantial evidence] regarding the lives of the “wicked”, which contradict Zophar’s argument, and thus Eliphaz’s and Bildad’s, as well.

Also, as Job indicates in his examples, there enough exceptions to his friends’ arguments to show the necessity of a future state of rewards and punishments—after this life. And Job actually alludes to this in v.30.

Job is now going expose the fallacy in their argument and also provide some “closure” to the entire issue. His argument is founded on the fact that if “any” wicked person should live and prosper to old age, it would destroy the basis of his friends’ argument: that “all” are treated by God in this life according to their character.

Note that most of these examples would be considered “blessings” in a pastoral society and they are sufficient to seriously call into question Zophar’s [as well as the others] rationale that Job must be wicked. Let’s hope that Zophar and the others listen attentively!

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4 Includes the aspect of the exercise of power through great wealth.
Their descendants [lit. "seed"] are established [lit. “erected”] with them in their sight; their offspring before their eyes.

Job’s friends had maintained, with great confidence and conviction, that the children of the wicked would be “cut-off” {e.g., Job 18:19; 20:28}. This belief Job now directly contradicts and says that it is a fact, that so far from being cut-off, the ungodly [parents] are often established and prosper in the very presence of their children. All around in society the ungodly can be seen enjoying themselves with their families!

The point Job is making is, ‘How is this consistent with the viewpoint that God always deals with people in this life according to their character?’, which is what Job’s friends were dogmatically promoting.

Job is reminding them that it is a fact that the wicked do not always suffer in this life; in fact, they may prosper. They are not always “cut short” and destroyed; sometimes they live to become very old, their assets remain intact and are inherited by their children; perhaps empowering another ungodly generation.

We can look around in our own society today. There are certain family names that stand for wealth and power, and they have no reputation for being godly. We find them in politics, finance and in high society. They don’t seem to suffer as other people suffer and it may have caused you to wonder.

Job’s words ring true, the wicked do prosper and their offspring are established. At the same time, he is demolishing his adversary’s viewpoint, especially Zophar’s, who has been insisting that that the ungodly person’s enjoyment of life is brief {Job 15:29, 32-34; 18:5; 20:5, 8 22}.

Their houses are safe from fear and neither is the rod of God upon them.

This echoes what King David said, “I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree” {Ps. 37:35}. However, David found, too, that God finally moves in judgment against the wicked.

The houses [or homes] of the wicked enjoy peace [lit. “shalom”] from alarming news. Job’s friends had maintained just the opposite {e.g., Job 5:4-7; 15:21-24; 20:27-28}. In other words, the wicked lived in security and peace; without fear of outside intrusion.

Seemingly neither does the Lord chastise or punish them [“rod of God” is an emblem of punishment]. Job is saying that there are enough examples to show that the wicked are free from the punishment their sins deserve. So what’s up with that?!

Their bull breeds without failure and their cow calves without miscarriage.

In the Middle East livestock represent great sources of wealth and Job says look around and observe: the livestock of the wicked is fruitful; just as it does for the righteous.

Their bulls breed without fail and their cows give birth to calves without any miscarriages. God doesn’t always intervene and cut off their cattle to prevent them from prospering.

In his notes on this verse, J. Vernon McGee recalls the time he was a boy in West Texas and that some of the biggest drunkards in the neighborhood were also the biggest ranchers in the area. He mentions that their sons apparently are following right in their footsteps. So they do prosper and Job calls attention to that.
They send forth their little ones like a flock and their children dance

Not only their livestock, but their families are fruitful. Note the beautiful imagery of fruitfulness: their little ones, their children, are referred to as a large flock [lit. “migration”] of sheep; numerous and content. They are sent forth to engage in outdoor activities and pastimes seemingly without a care in the world.

The children of the ungodly “live it up”, and have time to dance [lit. “to stamp”; i.e., “to spring about (wildly or for joy) or to leap or skip”] and enjoy life. The idea here is not proper dancing, but the sportiveness and recreation of children playing in the fields, woods and, today, on the lawn.

Continuing the pastoral imagery Job says the children of the ungodly have a spring in their step and they go about like playful, leaping lambs in a large flock.

What can be more satisfying for a parent [godly or ungodly] to see their children happy and frolicking in and around their home?

They sing to the tambourine and harp and rejoice to the sound of the flute

Lit. they “lift up or elevate” the tambourine and harp. The ungodly and their children participate in musical activities and become joyful and energized at the sound of music in their homes—seemingly without a care in the world.

The children of the ungodly not only play and frolic like playful lambs, but the elements of music add to their overall enjoyment of life. They seem to have everything to make them happy.

The word Job uses for “flute” means “to breathe or blow” and evidently refers to some type of wind instrument; such as a crude reed or pipe. Various forms of wind instruments existed during Job’s day and here is reference to one.

Job mentions this as a musical instrument which arouses joy and laughter, which contributed to entertainment in the home.

Instead of lamentations and woe, as his friends said there would be in such dwellings {e.g., Job 8:22; 18:15, 19-21}, Job says that the ungodly have the sound of music which produced joy and gladness.

They spend their days in wealth and in a moment they go down to Sheol

[Lit. they “wear out their days in good things”] The wicked sometimes enjoy the good things of life—the things that others would like to have but don’t. The ungodly are not oppressed with the rigors of poverty and hunger, but their days are spent in abundance of “the good things” of life. They live the “high life” and while-away the hours in ease.

Albert Barnes [American Theologian, 12/01/1798—12/24/1870] comments: “The object of Job was not to say that all this was in itself wrong, but that it was a plain matter of fact that God did not take away the comforts of all the wicked and overwhelm them with calamity. It refers to the playfulness and the cheerful sports of children, and God has made them so that they “will” find pleasure in such sports, and so that they are benefited by them. There is not a more lovely picture of happiness and of the benevolence of God any where on earth than in such groups of children, and in their sportiveness and playfulness there is no more that is wrong than there is in the gambols of the lambs of the flock”.

5
[Lit. "in a wink of the eyes" they go down to Sheol] That is the place of the dead [refer to v.9 notes and Appendix in Job 7]. The point Job is making is that the wicked live long lives of ease and then don’t even suffer in death—they die quickly, in the “wink of an eye”. The go to the grave without a catastrophe or calamity of any kind—they oftentimes have an “easy” death.

Asaph, the author of Psalms 73 had this view of the death of the wicked, which is remarkably similar to this, when he said,

“Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; hey have more than heart could wish.”—Ps 73:1-7

Of course the Psalmist goes on to say;

If I had said, “I will speak thus”, behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.....Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”—Ps 73:15-19, 25-26

Job reminds his friends that the days of the ungodly are spent enjoying good things to the very last, quite in opposition to the gloomy pictures which the friends have drawn of their fearful and violent ends {Job 11:20; 18:14; 20:11}.

Yes, the wicked disappear suddenly into the unseen world, but oftentimes they do so painlessly. Such a life may be lived and such a death may be consummated without a spark of faith to justify or explain it {see vv.14-15}.

The point that Job is making is this: when the ungodly die they are not afflicted with lingering disease, or great bodily pain; but having lived to an old age in the midst of comforts, they drop off peacefully and quietly, perhaps even in their sleep. This again is in complete contradiction to the argument Zophar gives in Job 20:4-11.

God has allowed the wicked prosperity while they were alive, and when they come to die He does not, necessarily, come forth with the severe expressions of his wrath, nor oppress them with long and lingering illness.

However, Jesus explains that there will be a price to pay in the afterlife {refer to Luke 16:19-31} and it’s important to make the right choice about God now and not later!

The ultimate equalizer, as far as God’s justice is concerned, will be at the GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT {refer to Rev. 20:4-6 and Rev. 20:11-15}.

All the examples that Job gives here, which are in contradiction to Zophar’s argument, are based on real facts. The conclusion should be that God does not always deal with people according to their character, i.e., whether or not they have put their trust in the Lord or have committed some grave, immoral sin or iniquity.

Therefore it would be a big mistake to draw an inference respecting a person’s moral character from God’s dealings with them in this world.
Jeremiah would write some 1400 years after Job:

Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. “The Lord is my portion”, says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!”—Lam. 3:22-24

Jesus Christ came about 2000 years after Job lived and today we know that it is by God’s grace we are saved from our sins.

“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”—Titus 3:4-7

Through these examples, Job has painted a picture of prosperity, abundance, health/long life, leisure, exuberance and happiness for the wicked. They should suffice to demonstrate that there are instances enough occurring in every age like those given here by Job, to justify the conclusion which he draws.

In summary, the wicked appear to prosper: (a) they seem to be blessed and enjoy long life, (b) their homes were free from sudden, unexpected bad news; (c) the judgment of God didn’t seem to be upon them, (d) their fields were fruitful with herds of cattle and (e) their families enjoyed the sound of happy and playful children all around them.

As for Job’s two questions, “Why do the wicked live and become old?” and “yes, become mighty in power?” are two of the most nagging questions of all time, and ones which are natural to ask, but which it are not easy to answer.

However, there are some principles found in scripture that can help us understand some things related to difficulties with these questions. The following are reasons and provide possible answers to the questions that Job asks:

The wicked live and are preserved……..

(1) to demonstrate the grace, mercy and patience of God {Rom. 2:4-11; 15:4-6}.
(2) to furnish dramatic illustrations [and warnings] of the depraved character of the human heart {Jer. 17:9-10}.
(3) to afford them ample space for repentance, so that they have no legitimate cause to complain when they are judged before God and are condemned {2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:3-4}.
(4) because God intends to make some of them the testimonies of his mercy, and more powerfully display the extent of his grace in their conversion, as he did in the case of such individuals as the apostle Paul, John Bunyan, and John Newton {Acts 9:15-16; Rom. 9:22-24}.
(5) because God uses them as tools and vessels in accomplishing some important purpose through them in which He is inevitably glorified. Examples include God’s dealings with Pharaoh during the time of the Exodus {Ex. 14:10-18 26-31}, the Assyrian king Sennacherib {2 Ki. 19:5-37; 2 Chron. 32:9-23; Isa. 36:1-10; 37:5-7, 21-38}, and the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar {Jer. 25:8-11; 27:6-11; 29:21-23; Dan. 4:13-17, 25, 34-37}. 

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so that the general welfare and security of society may be carried on; that the affairs of the commercial and the political world may be advanced by their skill and talent to the benefit of all {Dan. 4:19-22; Rom. 13:1-7}.

(7) to provide an opportunity to demonstrate God’s great love in not wanting any to perish and show that the “rain” [a sign of blessing and promise of fruitfulness] does indeed “fall on the just and unjust” {Matt. 5:44-48; 2 Pet. 3:1-9}.

It may be that for some, or all of these reasons, the wicked remain alive and are blessed with great prosperity.

Of the "fact" that the wicked live long and prosper there can be no doubt; as for the "reasons" for that fact, there will be perhaps further explanation and understanding in the Age to come [New Heavens and New Earth] than there can be now [of course then it may not matter of be necessary].

vv. 14-16 ➤ **ALTHOUGH THE WICKED ENJOY LIFE THEY REJECT GOD’S AUTHORITY**

14 “Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. 15 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?’ 16 Indeed their prosperity is not in their hand; the counsel of the wicked is far from me.”

Job now superbly summarizes the key characteristics of a wicked person. The wicked proclaim their disdain for God Almighty ["El Shaddai"] by proudly announcing to God that (a) they want God to leave them alone, (b) they have no desire to know God, (c) they have no intention to serve Him and (d) they find no profit [lit. “ascent”, i.e., “high advantage”] in praying to God.

[Depart from us…..] The Hebrew word translated “depart” here literally means “to turn off”. The wicked person wants to “turn off” God in their life!

The wicked are godless, that is, they are without God, they have no awe, fear or respect for the Holy God, the One who created them. They want no part of him and reject all knowledge of His ways, that is, His standards of morality. The thought of worshiping the LORD is the farthest thing from their minds, it is not even the slightest consideration!

[Who is the Almighty?……] The Hebrew word used here for God is “Shaddai” and it means powerful; and describes someone who is extremely “buff”. It is the name used for God when His all sufficient and limitless power is being emphasized. This name is first used in Genesis 17:1 when God says to Abraham, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”

But here, Job reminds us that this is the smug question that an immoral person has the audacity to ask. This is similar to the conceited question Pharaoh asks Moses and Aaron:

Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness’. And Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go.”—Ex. 5:1-2

The wicked deny the both the authority and power of the LORD God Almighty!

The irony is that God is Almighty in that He created everything—including the life that the wicked enjoy! Their attitude is an insult the very character of God.
The wicked also mockingly ask, “What profit do we get out of praying to Him?” In other words their attitude is, “If there’s no profit in it, and I haven’t seen any, why pray to God?”; there is no elevated advantage in it for us; i.e., there is no monetary or social gain in praying to God.

Thus, the wicked person cynically ignores God’s mercy and grace! There is not a hint of gratitude or thankfulness for anything in their lives. What a miserable and hopeless state to be in.

Such an attitude comes from the selfish pride of a hardened heart which has the nerve to ask, “What has God ever done for us?” That is the height of arrogance, but also ignorance, because it ignores the fact that their very prosperity is dependent on the patience, mercy, grace and sustaining power of the Almighty God! The One with Whom they want nothing to do!

This is the same ungrateful and prideful attitude that the Israelites had in the wilderness that Moses had to contend with and also those Jews who complained to Jeremiah about God:

Then all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods, with all the women who stood by, a great multitude, and all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying: “As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you! But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble. But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.”—Jer. 44:15-18

There are two groups of people that should immediately come to mind here: (1) the fanatical Evolutionist and (2) the Satanist; both of whom worship and serve the creation rather than the Creator! {see Rom. 1:18-25}. The following are examples of things Evolutionists have said:

Dr. George Wald (1906-1997) was professor Emeritus of Physiology at Harvard University and shared the Nobel prize in that field in 1967 wrote:

“There are only two possibilities as to how life arose. One is spontaneous generation arising to evolution, the other is a supernatural creative act of God. There is no third possibility. Spontaneous generation, that life arose from non-living matter was scientifically disproven 120 years ago by Louis Pasteur and others. That leaves us with only one possible conclusion: that life arose as a supernatural creative act of God. I will not accept that philosophically because I do not want to believe in God. Therefore, I choose to believe in that which I know is scientifically impossible—spontaneous generation arising to evolution.”

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6 Of course God had an answer for this and it was to destroy those Jews who rejected His ways; refer to Jer. 44:20-30: “Behold, I will watch over them for adversity and not for good. And all the remnant of Judah, who have gone to the land of Egypt to dwell there, shall know whose words will stand, Mine or theirs. And this shall be a sign to you”, says the Lord, “that I will punish you in this place, that you may know that My words will surely stand against you for adversity.

7 Scientific American, August 1954, p.46.
Dr. Richard Lewontin (1929-present), was professor of zoology and biology at Harvard University, specializing in genetics and academic/social commentary wrote as part of his review of Carl Sagan’s book, The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark:

“Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door…..”

These are words of men who fit the description that Job gives in vv.14-15. Please refer to the APPENDIX: THE ARROGANCE OF THE “WICKED” for additional examples of this.

These kinds of people are described by God as having their eternal dwelling in a place outside of Heaven; in the LAKE OF FIRE:

“But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”—Rev. 22:14-15

However, the wicked are forewarned by God to change:

“For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord and He ponders all his paths. His own iniquities entrap the wicked man and he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.”—Prov. 5:21-23

“For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.”—Prov. 8:35-36

“Say to them: ‘As I live’, says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’”—Ezek. 33:11

“The fool [lit. “stupidly vile”] has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’. They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; there is none [of them] who does good”.—Psalms 14:1; 53:1

“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.”—Prov. 16:18-19

“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.”—Jer. 17:9-10

“He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray.”—Prov. 10:17

“The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from Sheol below.”—Prov. 15:24

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.”—Deut. 30:15-16

“Now you shall say to this people, ‘Thus says the Lord: Behold, I set before you the way of life\(^9\) and the way of death’.”—Jer. 21:8

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God.....”—Deut 30:19-20

And Jesus has said it is better to be \textit{voluntarily broken} rather than \textit{involuntarily crushed}:

Then He looked at them and said, “What then is this that is written\(^{10}\): ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”—Luke 20:17-18

There are indeed only two ways to go in this life—the way that leads to [eternal] life and liberty, which is God’s way; and the way that leads to [eternal] death and destruction, which is man’s way. The latter way is chosen by those whom God classifies as “wicked”.

The point that Job is making to his friends is that he knows that the wicked have no desire for God, telling Him to “depart from us”, literally, they want to “turn off” God from their lives. Job is saying that if you were to “listen carefully to my speech” \{v.2\} and “look closely at me” \{v.5\}, that is definitely NOT my attitude! You are wrong in your belief that a person will, without exception, always suffer the \textit{immediate consequences commensurate} with their actions. This is not always true, as I have shown. Besides, even if it were always true, it still doesn’t apply to me because I have not guilty of having committed a grievous sin.

[\textit{Indeed their prosperity is not in their hand.....}] Job sums this all up by bringing the wicked back to reality: although they don’t admit it, their prosperity is really not within themselves. Although they deny God, He is still in charge and just as God has allowed the wicked to enjoy prosperity, He can also remove it—the wicked are not really in control after all!

Jonah 2:8 says it the best:

“They who regard empty vanities [i.e., idols] forfeit their own mercy [i.e., kindness]”.

[...the counsel of the wicked is far from me.] Job summarizes by stating that he \textit{rejects} the \textit{counsel} [i.e., the \textit{attitude}] of the wicked. That is, Job has no use nor respect for the way a wicked person thinks. Job testifies that he does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

Although this Psalm was written by King David over 800 years later, I’m sure Job would have completely identified with it:

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”—Psalms 1:1-6

\(^9\) A very practical illustration of this is found in Jer. 38:2.

\(^{10}\) Psalms 118:22-23.
v. 17-21  

JOB ASKS: “HOW OFTEN DO THE WICKED ACTUALLY SUFFER?”

[17 “How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? How often does their destruction come upon them, the sorrows [God] distributes in [His] anger? 18 Are they like straw before the wind and like chaff that a storm carries away? 19 They say, ‘God lays up one's iniquity for his children'; let Him recompense him, that he may know it. 20 Let his eyes see his destruction, and let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty. 21 For what does he care about his household after him, when the number of his months is cut in half?”]

Earlier Bildad had stated,

“The light of the wicked indeed goes out and the flame of his fire does not shine. The light is dark in his tent and his lamp beside him is put out…..He has neither son nor posterity among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings.”—Job 18:5-6, 19

And concerning the wicked, in the last chapter Zophar said, 

“He will fly away like a dream, and not be found; Yes, he will be chased away like a vision of the night. The eye that saw him will see him no more, nor will his place behold him anymore’…….”When he is about to fill his stomach God will cast on him the fury of His wrath and will rain it on him while he is eating”…….”The increase of his house will depart and his goods will flow away in the day of His wrath. This is the portion from God for a wicked man, the heritage appointed to him by God.”—Job 20:8-9, 23, 28-29

So Job asks three more rhetorical questions, all relating to the duration and permanence of a wicked person’s life. The way these questions are worded implies that they should all be answered in the negative and contradict what his friends have been saying.

The word rendered “sorrows” in v.17 literally refers to a tightly wound “rope or cord”. That is, how often does God give the wicked person enough “rope” to hang himself with!

That is, the “lamp”, i.e., the life and prosperity, of the wicked seldom seems to be put out. Destruction and the sorrows that should be distributed to them do not often come upon them.

And rarely does it seem like they are like straw [broken pieces of dried grain] blown by the wind or chaff [the leftovers from threshing wheat or some other grain] that a storm carries away.

Job is asking just how often have you seen the “lamp”, i.e., the prosperity, of the wicked snuffed out? Although you seem so certain, just how often have you seen destruction come upon the wicked and God’s righteous anger has caused them grief and sorrow?

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11 Yet at other times, it is as Zophar has said, the lamp of the wicked is put out. See for example: “The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out” [Prov. 13:9]; “For there will be no prospect for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out” [Prov. 24:20]. Therefore, it is good to keep in mind that sometimes one does not know which case it is for either can be true.

12 For other allusions to this see for example Psalms 1:4; 35:5; 83:13; Isa. 17:13; Hos. 13:3.

13 For example; “The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart” [Prov. 20:27]. “No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light” [Luke 11:33-36]. It is important to note that the “lamp of the body” is the eye and that the greedy person has an “evil eye”, i.e., an “evil lamp” illuminating their path [see Prov. 28:22].
Job basically saying that experience and observation teach us that the influence and power of the ungodly never seems to end. The wicked seem to have no more and no less tragedy in their lives than the average person has. And more often than not, as Job has said previously, the wicked seem to live a long, prosperous, healthy and happy life.

Job goes on to describe the callus attitude of the wicked towards their children, their *posterity*. It is one of utter disregard for the future of their children’s well-being.

Their attitude is *selfish*, “My children will inherit the consequences of my iniquity!”; so why should I care? Furthermore, the wicked think that if there is going to be any judgment let my children experience it. If there is going to be any suffering let it fall on my descendants after I’m dead and gone.

Their attitude is *heartless*, in desiring to let them be subject to God’s destruction and metaphorically, drink down the wrath of the Almighty [God].

Why? Because the wicked person doesn’t really care about the family that comes after him, even when their lives are cut short since he/she is not around to see it.

The irony of all this is that they themselves may be the offspring upon whom this was wished by their own parents!

The conclusion one should draw from this, and the one that Job is promoting, is that in God’s ordering of things the outward show of prosperity is often unrelated to inward moral worth.

The *material* things of this world cannot, ever, satisfy the *spiritual* needs of man. One cannot be truly ready to live until one is first ready to die. One cannot truly enjoy the good things of this world without first enjoying the good things of Heaven—without first worshipping God.

The Bible puts this all into proper perspective:

“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”—*1 Tim 6:6-10*

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into this or that town and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” You do not know about tomorrow. What is your life like? For you are a puff of smoke that appears for a short time and then vanishes. You ought to say instead, “If the Lord is willing, then we will live and do this or that.” But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows what is good to do and does not do it is guilty of sin.”—*James 4:13-17*
A Thought Provoking Question

[22 “Can anyone teach God knowledge since He judges those on high?”]

In a sense, this question has already been answered up by Job’s oldest friend, Eliphaz:

“Can a mortal be more righteous than God? an a man be more pure than his Maker? If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth?”—Job 4:17-19

“If God puts no trust in His saints and the heavens are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!”—Job 15:15-16

But standing back and looking at the “big picture” Job now asks this pivotal question meant to remind everyone of their place in the overall scheme of things. Namely, that God’s wisdom and knowledge is higher than mankind’s, which of course includes Job and his three friends.

God will even judge those on high, which can be a reference to both angelic beings and people who rule in powerful places. Job is implying that despite their protests, his friends’ wisdom and counsel are not supreme nor necessarily consistent with God’s wisdom counsel.

But here we all are, arguing over my guilt and innocence and the reasons for my calamity and trying to explain what God should and shouldn’t be doing. We’re trying to figure out God and acting like we know all about Him and pretending that we can teach Him something new that He doesn’t already know.

Note the wisdom of God in the insight He gives to Isaiah:

Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord and He will have mercy on him; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways”, says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”—Isa. 55:6-9

The answer to Job’s question is of course no one can teach God anything since He is the LORD of the Universe. God designed and made everything. He is Creator of things that never existed before. God is the Owner of all things and therefore He has the right to judge all things. No one can legitimately dispute God’s decisions and actions or presume they know what God is thinking or going to do unless He’s revealed it to them!

Although Job shows his friends that their proverbs and clichés are not always true, nevertheless that doesn’t imply that God is not going to judge the wicked someday.

Job is admitting his confidence that God will judge the wicked, either in this life or the one to come—there is no question about that and Job is certain in that conclusion!

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” —Luke 12:16-21
vv. 23-26 ➢  “DEATH” IS THE GREAT “EQUALIZER”

[23 “One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and secure; 24 his pails are full of milk and the marrow of his bones is moist. 25 Another man dies in the bitterness of his soul, never having eaten with pleasure. 26 They lie down alike in the dust and worms cover them.”]

Here Job makes the keen observation that a person may die old and “full of strength” [lit. “full bones”; same word is rendered “bones” in v.24]; with no worries [lit. “tranquil” and “peaceful or quiet”].

Job then uses poetic [and somewhat grammatically difficult] language in v.24 to elaborate on the degree of vitality of those living a long and peaceful life. The following translations testify to

[NASB]  His sides are filled out with fat and the marrow of his bones is moist…..
[ASV]  His pails are full of milk and the marrow of his bones is moistened…..
[NIV]  His body well nourished, his bones rich with marrow…..
[KJV]  His breasts are full of milk and his bones are moistened with marrow…..
[YLT]  His breasts have been full of milk and marrow his bones doth moisten…..

The Hebrew word rendered “pails” [NKJV] is used only here in v.24 and Strong’s Concordance defines it as coming from an unused root apparently meaning “to contain”, a receptacle [for milk; i.e., a pail, figuratively, breasts]. Some have believed that it refers to the skin or bladder of an animal used to contain liquids such as wine or milk.

Note also that the word rendered “marrow” is only used here and can refer to grease found in fat and describes a person growing to old age with his bones remaining moist, that is, strong and full of energy [ref. Prov. 3:8; Isa. 58:11; 66:14].

Since the Hebrew word for “milk” is clearly used in this verse, many Bible commentators have concluded this is then referring to the containers used to carry the milk; i.e., pails or buckets. In that case, Job could be referring to fact that a person’s cows [or goats] never cease to give him milk.  

However, in Hebrew poetry parallelisms [couplets] typically retain the same line of thought, whether that is a comparison or contrast, which is often seen in the Proverbs. Thus, a reference to pails of milk, in the sense of prosperity, would weaken the parallelism.

Therefore, it seems somewhat strange, and inconsistent, that in the context of vv.23-24 [strength, health and vigor] Job would be referring to something external, i.e., “milk pails”, representing prosperity, in the first half of the couplet and something internal i.e., “marrow of his bones is moist”, representing physical health, in the second half of the couplet. It would seem to make more sense that both halves of the couplet refer to similar ideas.

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14 In his extensive notes on this Hebrew word the American theologian, Albert Barnes, concludes, “The leading idea in all the forms of the word, and its common use in Arabic, is ‘that of a place where cattle kneel down for the purpose of drinking’, and then a place well watered, where a man might lead his camels and flocks to water. The noun would then come to mean a watering place—a place that would be of great value, and which a man who had large flocks and herds would greatly prize. The thought here is, therefore, that the places of this kind [wells and oasis], in the possession of the man referred to, would abound with milk [from the cattle, camels and goats thus nourished]—that is, he would have abundance.” [Italics added for clarity].
If this is so, then what could the phrase “containers full of milk” reasonably be referring to? I would suggest that it may refer to male virility. In that case, Job would be using a similar analogy to poetically describe overall physical health, i.e., physical vigor {v.23}; and compliment strong bones {v.24b} with sexual vitality {v.24a}—even in old age!

Thus, Job is pointing out that a person may live to an old age and die in full health, strong and virile; irrespective of whether they were wicked or godly.

But another {v.25} may die young; in “bitterness of his soul”, never having enjoyed life, never having experienced “peace and quiet”, in poor health, weak and impotent; this too irrespective of whether they were wicked or godly.

Over 1000 years after Job uttered his words, this truth would cause Solomon to proclaim

> “There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.”—Eccl. 8:14-15

It has been said that, “For some people this life is the closest they’ll get to experience Paradise while for others it is the closest they’ll get experience to Hell”. But, sadly, for many others it is all too often “hell” on earth and then, afterward, also Hell.

Death is indeed the common thread among all men and is the “great equalizer”. “They lie down alike in the dust and worms cover them”.

The bottom line is that everyone eventually “lies down” for the last time and their body is buried [or cremated]; and all that they were and all that they’ve accomplished are left behind. The great statistic that always holds true is that 10 out of 10 people will die in this life; and “no one gets out of here alive”.

All that being said, and despite the observation that Job makes here, the Bible offers us some valuable insight into the proper way one should live their life while here on earth.

The Psalmist declares:

> “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”—Psalms 1:1-6

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”—Psalms 119:9-11

Solomon gives this sage advice and counsel to those who are in the prime of their life:

> “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’.”—Eccl 11:9-12:1
Furthermore, death is not the end because;

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”—Heb. 9:27-28

And Jesus said [see also Luke 12:16-21]:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live......Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good\textsuperscript{15}, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” —John 5:24-30

As a side note: The wicked might as well enjoy every pleasure available to them, because this life is their only chance. The wicked, whether they die old or young, are eventually going to appear before the RIGHTEOUS JUDGE one day \cite{rev.20.11-15}.

\textit{vv. 27-29} \textbf{JOB IS WISE TO THE SCHEMES & TACTICS OF HIS FRIENDS}

\cite{job.27:27-29} “Look, I know your thoughts and the schemes with which you would wrong me. 28 For you say, ‘Where is the house of the prince? And where is the tent, the dwelling place of the wicked?’ 29 Have you not asked those who travel the road? And do you not know their signs?”

If you were wondering whether or not Job was “wise” to his friend’s innuendos and implications about the wicked, wonder no more. Job clears the air and makes it obvious that he knows “what the score is”.

Job goes on record by declaring that his physical and mental suffering have not dulled his thinking; that his terrible disease and agonizing grief have not confused his understanding.

The words rendered “thoughts” and “schemes/devices” are from Hebrew words meaning “to fabricate” and “to plan”, respectively. Job’s meaning is, that he knows his friends have been concocting stories about him and conspiring against him. They were definitely not acting like “friends”.

The Hebrew word rendered “wrong” or “wrongfully imagine” refers to a “violent action”. Thus, Job is saying that his friends have not only shown themselves to being callous, but also that they had proceeded with extreme prejudice against him!

Job clearly reveals that he is wise to the prejudiced logic and calculating schemes of his friends’ arguments become verbal abuse and are really intended to harm or wrong him—not comfort or help him!

He’s acknowledging that when they were talking about the “wicked” in the second person they were really referring to him. Their statements about the wicked were thinly veiled references to him.

This is not how true friends would act!

\textsuperscript{15} “Done good”: means believing in God and that He sent the Messiah to seek and save that which was lost. \textit{See John 6:28-29.}
And his assessment is correct since his friends had presumed his guilt based on his suffering and were now trying to find ways to show he must therefore be a wicked man.

The legal term that Job could have used here was his friends had “malice aforethought” and he rightly calls them out on it. Can you imagine the frustration this must have caused Job?

[Where is the house of the prince? And where is the tent, the dwelling place of the wicked] Job’s friends had mockingly asked these kinds of questions, with the implication that the wicked person’s dwelling places are destroyed; just as Job’s had been {Job 1:2-3, 13-19}. But immediately Job, by asking two additional questions, reminds them that they have not exhausted their knowledge on this subject.

[Have you not asked those who travel the road? And do you not know their signs?] Have they asked those who travel about what they’re saying? Do you know what their “signs” mean?

People who traveled, either due to business or to move to a new area, usually traveled in caravans with many others, perhaps hundreds of others. In doing they would have visited with different peoples and cultures, which in itself is an educational experience.

People who have been to and studied in places beyond their own region have a broader perspective on things, which is not to say that they are necessarily wiser or more intelligent. But they are usually more understanding and appreciative of differing situations.

The word rendered “signs” comes from a Hebrew word which means “to appear”; thus meaning an indication of something, a signal. The word can be used to describe just about anything that calls people’s attention to something or provides evidence of what is true. This could be a token, a mark, a beacon light, a monument or a stone altar.

Job implies that if you ask these travelers they will tell you the same thing: They will tell you that they have seen the wicked prosper and live long lives; which of course would destroy their carefully crafted and superficial arguments!

Job goes on to say that those who travel the highways and byways of the world could provide you with evidence of this and probably even document this by giving you specific examples [i.e., “signs”] on the subject!

**vv. 30-33**  THE WICKED ARE RETAINED FOR A DAY OF CALAMITY & ESCORTED TO A DAY OF FIERCE WRATH

[30 For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath. 31 Who condemns his way to his face? And who repays him for what he has done? 32 Yet he shall be brought to the grave and a vigil kept over the tomb. 33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him; everyone shall follow him, as countless have gone before him.”]  

Although the wicked do prosper, grow old and remain healthy and vigorous to the end of life, Job clearly acknowledges that they are nevertheless “reserved” [lit. “restrained” or “held back”], they are retained [presumably by divine intervention] for a day of “doom”\(^\text{16}\). This assessment is in actual fact much closer to reality than that of his three friends.

\(^\text{16}\) From an unused root word meaning “rake together”, a “poker” [for turning over burning embers or stoking a fire].
You’ll also note that the word rendered “doom” or “destruction” is related to a word meaning “a turning” accompanied by “bending down”, that is, a time of “reversal”. Thus the wicked will eventually experience an opposite time of calamity, misfortune or ruin.

The wicked will also be brought out in the day of wrath(s), i.e., when God’s fierce wrath is visited upon them. The idea here seems to be that the wicked will be brought forth and escorted to face the judgment of God’s fierce wrath—that is what they were “retained” for.

The point Job is making is that judgment of the wicked may be delayed, but judgment will eventually come, either in this life or the one to come. Because God is Holy and Just, the wicked will eventually receive the “just reward” for their evil actions and stubborn rejection of God. Divine judgment is not always exacted in this life.

**Application:** God will allow the ungodly person, one who could care less about God and His moral standards, to enjoy the “high life” or “good life” here on earth, if that’s their decision. And to such a person it may seem like if there is God He must not care or is powerless to do anything about their sin. This is the example of the person whom the Apostle Paul questions:

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”  

But on the other hand, God does care and He is definitely not powerless to do anything to bring justice to the wicked person for we are also told:

“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.”

The patience of God should not be cause for one to take advantage of or despise God’s grace [His undeserved favor and blessing]. For a Christian this is especially a serious issue:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

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17 A graphic example of this occurs near the end of the GREAT TROUBLES; see Rev. 14:14-20.
18 Although Job probably did not know the details about this, this perhaps may be an inspired allusion to the coming DAY OF [God’s] WRATH; both (a) upon the inhabitants of the earth for their continued, unrepentant sin and iniquity {e.g., see Isa. 13:6-13; Zeph. 1:14-18; 1 Thess. 5:1-3; Rev. 9:13-21; 16:8-11, 17-21} and (b) the GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT of unbelievers {Rev. 19:19-20, 20:11-15}.
19 The ultimate example of this was the attitude of the people and religious leaders who mockingly cried out to Jesus while He was being crucified; “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross” {Matt. 27:40} and “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God’” {Matt. 27:42-43}. 
Job continues to ask questions [a very good strategy when discussing controversial issues]. These are intended to reinforcement what he’s already stated; what actually happens with the wicked.

[Who condemns his way to his face?] The word rendered “condemn” here means “to front” and the word rendered “face” here refers to the physical presence of a person.

Job is asking who is brave enough to confront [lit. “stand in front of”] a politically and/or financially powerful person who is wicked and openly challenge his evil to his face. Who dares to rise up and expose the immoral and unethical deeds of the ungodly and declare his evil face-to-face.

The remarkable, and ironic, aspect about this question is the implied suggestion that, deep down in their hearts, his friends knew Job was innocent because they feel very comfortable in confronting him face-to-face!

**Application:** The question expects an answer of “probably no one or, at least, only a very few would have the courage to do it”. Another answer might be that a person may rationalize the immorality and ungodly actions of the wicked person; “well it’s really not that bad”, or conclude that “it’s none of my business”, or even “I don’t want to be judgmental”.

Edmund Burke, an Irish statesman who lived in the 18th century said, “when bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle”.

And even the secular philosopher Plato wrote, “The price good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men”.

It has also been said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”. And so it is.

This is the serious and practical implication of Job’s question.

[And who repays him for what he has done?] Following up with the previous question, and in support of his overall point, Job basically asks; who punishes the wicked man for the evil he has inflicted. The meaning of the Hebrew here is who will “neutralize” the wicked person.

Job is asking who holds the wicked man accountable and causes him make restitution for what he has stolen or destroyed. It seems like no one is able to bring the ungodly to justice for all the evil they have done.

Consequently, because no one has the courage to directly confront the wicked person face-to-face—they get off “scot free”. Thus, they rarely face justice and seldom get their “just desserts” while their victims continue to suffer. The wicked then continue to enjoy their prosperity and security!

[Yet he shall be brought to the grave and a vigil kept over the tomb] The word rendered “grave” in this verse means “sepulcher”, the word for “vigil” means “to be alert or watchful” and the word for “tomb” literally refers to a “burial mound”.

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20 This quote is oftentimes incorrectly attributed to Edmund Burke.
21 In the sense of someone watching a vineyard, house or some other personal property.
Not only do the wicked most often die in “full strength” and in “peace and quiet”, incredibly there are actually mourners, probably friends and allies, who come to his gravesite and keep watch over it!

Some of the most wicked and vile people also have a popular following who may come to the gravesite out of affection or to keep it in repair. Therefore, their gravesites become great monuments [e.g., mausoleums], to enshrine their names, which are then appropriately honored and guarded.

Those to whom the wicked man was unknown would see the attentiveness shown to the gravesite and the fresh flowers with their fragrant odors and never know this was a man whose wickedness God abhorred.

[The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him…..] That is a valley [lit. “a stream”] which was a low area through which streams or small rivers ran. A popular location for burial.

This was another way of saying that the wicked die a peaceful and quiet death. The ground, i.e., clods, in which he is buried is not unpleasant to him—why should he care, his children may bear the consequences of his evil {vv.19-20}.

He may even relish the rest of the grave and his body is laid to rest as calmly as any other man.

[…..everyone shall follow him, as countless have gone before him] The idea here seems to be that in death, regardless of if one is righteous or wicked prominent people are memorialized and many there are that have come to visit his gravesite and many more will come afterward. It describes an innumerable company of people paying their respects over the years.

vv. 34> **Job’s Friends are Powerless to Help Him**

[34 “How then can you comfort me with empty words since falsehood remains in your answers?”]

Job concludes his discourse the same way he began it, with a question, which has an obvious answer. His friends are incapable of comforting Job because, as Job has already told them that they are “forgers of lies” and “worthless physicians” {Job 13:4} and “miserable comforters” {Job 16:2}.

Job: Seeing that all the things I’ve said are true, because they can be observed by not only me but those who travel, then there is no way you can comfort me because your words do not ring true, they are empty words. Your counsel and arguments cannot help me because they are not based on reality, i.e., they are not grounded in “truth”.

Job: Since I have amply demonstrated that your logic is faulty, then “falsehood”, i.e., “treachery”, remains in all your responses to me.

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22 Just consider all those who desire to see the burial place of one of the Popes, or those who would view King Tutankhamen’s sarcophagus, look on the sarcophagus of Alexander the Great or the tomb of Napoleon Bonaparte; or even the gravesites of famous actors.
Job: You have attacked me with malice, your arguments don’t match reality—I can’t trust what you guys are saying!

This then concludes Job’s response to Zophar [as well as his other two “friends”].

And it is a great reply to Zophar, but we can also see that Job is still trying to justify himself. There is no thought of personal repentance because Job still feels self-justified because he is innocent of his friends charges—but he doesn’t realize [yet!] that he is guilty of spiritual pride!

Table 21-1. The Major Themes Repeated in Job’s Responses

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1st Speech</th>
<th>2nd Speech</th>
<th>3rd Speech</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declaration of God’s greatness</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>9:1-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disillusionment with God’s ways</td>
<td>7:11-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Despair with life (or desire to die)</td>
<td>6:8-13; 7:1-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disillusionment with God’s ways</td>
<td>16:6-17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Despair with life (or desire to die)</td>
<td>17:6-16</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>Desire for vindication with God</td>
<td>16:18-17:2</td>
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<td>26:1-4</td>
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<td>23:8-17</td>
<td>26:5-27; 28:1-28</td>
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<td>Disillusionment with God’s ways</td>
<td>24:1-17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Despair with life (or desire to die)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desire for vindication with God</td>
<td>23:1-7</td>
<td>31:1-40</td>
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Bibliography

(4) Barnes Notes,
APPENDIX: ARROGANCE OF THE “WICKED”

“If all animals and man evolved, then there were no first parents, no paradise, no fall. And if there had been no fall, then the entire historic fabric of Christianity, the story of the first sin, and the reason for the atonement collapses like a house of cards.”—H.G. Wells [1866-1946], The Outlines of History, 2 Volumes (1920).

“I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning. For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality, because it interfered with our sexual freedom. We objected to the political and economic system, because it was unjust. The supporters of these systems claim that in some way they embodied the meaning—a Christian meaning, they insisted of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confusing these people and at the same time justify ourselves in our political and erotic revolt. We could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever.”—Aldous Huxley [1894-1963], Ends and Means (1937).

“The most devastating thing though that biology did to Christianity was the discovery of biological evolution. Now that we know that Adam and Eve never were real people, the central myth of Christianity is destroyed. If there never was an Adam and Eve there never was an original sin. If there never was an original sin, there is no need of salvation......If there is no need of salvation there is no need of a savior. And I submit that puts Jesus, historical or otherwise, into the ranks of the unemployed. I think that evolution is absolutely the death knell of Christianity.”—Frank Zindler; public debate with William Craig, video, Zondervan, 1996.

“The battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in a public school classroom by teachers who correctly see their role as the proselytizers of a new faith. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity and the faith of humanism.”—The Humanist magazine, from the article entitled, “A Religion for a New Age: The Secular Classroom” (1985).

The book Cosmos, written by the “pop” astronomer Carl Sagan, begins with his trademark phrase:

“The Cosmos is all that is or ever was, or ever will be.”

and goes on to say;

“....we are, in the most profound sense, children of the Cosmos.

"Some part of our being knows this (i.e., the cosmos) is from where we came. We long to return......Our ancestors worshiped the sun, and they were far from foolish.....does it not make sense to revere the sun and the stars?"

Carl Sagan has also stated in another one of his books:

“A universe that is infinitely old requires no Creator.”26

Such is the extent of the arrogance and pride of wicked.

In stark contrast, it is noteworthy that John opens his Gospel up with these words;

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”.

Sagan would substitute the word “cosmos” for the Greek word “logos” here; for to him the cosmos was deity!

Even more interesting to note is John 1:10; “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him”. The word used here in the Greek for “world” is “cosmos”! The cosmos was made by Him, Jesus Christ—the living Word, but the cosmos does not know Him!

Carl Sagan considered himself (and all of us) a part of the cosmos, but he did not acknowledge the Author of the cosmos or recognize its Designer! He and others like him have basically said to God, “Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways” just as Job 21:14 declares.

Yet the Word of God stands in absolute contradiction of such blatantly arrogant rhetoric:

The voice said, “Cry out!” And he said, “What shall I cry?” “All flesh is grass and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”—Isa 40:6-8

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”—Isa. 55:11

And Jesus Himself says in context of the end of this age and the consummation of all things:

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”—Matt. 24:35

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27 Quoted by the apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 1:24-25.