

In Job chapter 29, Job waxes nostalgic over his former life when he was blessed with status and respect. Job remembers his former blessed condition in order to contrast it with his present wretched situation described in chapter 30. He remembers the days when God blessed him (29: 2-7). Life was good. The opening words of Job 29 is similar to what we read in Job 27:1. Job remembers those days described in Job 1:1-5, when he was wealthy, healthy, and blessed in family life. Those past days appear to him as times when God took care of him. Now in his present condition, he believes that God is attacking him and is purposefully making his life a living hell. When people suffer, it is natural for them to long for the days when life was better.

Job chapter 29:3-7 further describes Job’s past. Those were the days when his way was illuminated before him (v. 2; cf. Eccl. 2:12-13). Job continues his painful reminiscence of the good old days by cataloging how people used to react to him. In the past, both young and old as well as nobles paid him respect (29:8-10). Job recounts his behavior that led to such a high regard for his character. He cared for the vulnerable (29:11-17). When people heard and saw what he did, they were ready to affirm and enhance his reputation (v. 11).

In Job 29:18-25, Job concludes his reminiscence of the happier days of the past, a remembrance that only increases his depression about the present. In Job 29:18a, he makes use of a bird analogy to describe how he expected to live out his latter days. He desired to die in his “nest” and not away from his home. He thought his life would end well. In those good old times, he thought he would die of old age, and be happy until the end. It is true that it is best for a person to die in familiar surroundings, supported by family and friends. And it is best to die at an extremely advanced age.

To sum up, Job believed that a wonderful life ought to be the portion of those who are faithful to God. That was the popular belief in Job’s day; to be in a good relationship with God should lead to a happy, painless, and successful life. Today, those who espouse a prosperity gospel would agree. If we feel that we deserve God’s blessing because of our faith and obedience, then when that blessing is disturbed by hardship, we are left confused and angry. The word of God, however, never guarantees a life free of troubles (See Prov. 16:8, 19; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; Rev. 7:17). James urges us to “Count it all joy when you encounter various trials.” Moreover, we are mistaken if we consider God’s blessings to be only earthly, material possessions. God’s blessings, however, are not necessarily physical in nature, but spiritual (See Eph. 1:3) The truth is, the so-called good old days were never exempt from troubles. But for God’s people, the good old days are not behind us. Rather, we anticipate the Great Day when Jesus returns to usher in a New Day of eternal bliss in the presence of God.