



WHEN GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER Studies in the Book of Job Lesson 5

FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

The presenting question in the Book of Job is, "Why do the righteous suffer?" The major part of this book is a description of man's efforts to find an answer to this puzzling question. But the Book of Job does not answer the question because that is not the question in the background of the book! All human characters in the book try to answer the wrong question! The question the Book of Job raises and answers is not, "Why do the righteous *suffer*?", but "Why do the righteous *serve* God?" Satan's challenge to God was "Does Job fear God for nothing?" (Job 1:9)

I. **JOB'S FINAL RESPONSE TO GOD JOB 42:1-3**

The questions that God asks are designed to demonstrate the limits of Job's knowledge. The subject of the questions does not concern the topic of suffering, or even the cause of suffering, but the world in which Job lives. The questions are framework kinds of questions. If they cannot be answered, than one cannot discuss derived questions. The implied logic in these questions is that the limit of Job's understanding limits his right to judge the purposes of life. Job's grade on this exam is not a 90%, or 50% or even a 5%, but a 0!

God never answers Job. Job is expected to have respect for God like a child for his parent even though he, Job, does not understand.

A. **Acknowledgment Job 42:1-2**

In the first part of Job's acknowledgment ("*I know that You can do everything*") he admits that God is omnipotent over nature, as contrasted with his own feebleness. (See also Job 40:15; 41:34).

In the second part of the statement ("*no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You*") Job admits that God is supremely just in all His dealings as contrasted with his own vileness (Job 42:6) and incompetence to deal with the wicked as a just judge. (Job 40:8-14). (See also "Job," Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary)

B. **Admission Job 42:3**

Job admits that he spoke about things "*too wonderful for me*" that he did not know. This is the language of true humility and repentance. It shows that Job had at heart a profound reverence for God in spite of his improper expressions.

...Furthermore, does Job care any longer whether he is right? Since "rightness" and "justice" have been concepts that God has exploded in chapters 38-41, does Job's being right mean anything at all? Or, on the other hand, are these few words ["as my servant Job has"] possibly the most liberating, most affirming thing that God could have said because it confirms for Job what he knew was the case all along? Thus, it tells Job that his sense of life, his grasp of the world, was fundamentally correct all along. Are these five

words, in a strange way, the indication that Job, the one who knows he is utterly lost, is now strangely found?

– Dr. Bill Long, <http://www.drbilllong.com/index.html>

II. JOB'S HUMBLE REPENTANCE JOB 42:4-6

A. Experience

Note the difference - *"I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You."*

Since Jesus said that no one has seen God (John 1:18), it must mean here that the inner eye of the heart sees the nature of God.

Note five things:

1. **Now I know you.**
2. **Now I know myself.**
2. **You can do all things.**
3. **Things too wonderful for me to know.**
4. **It is enough that I have seen your face.**

B. Repentance

The result of Job's experiencing God is that he says, *"I despise myself."* That is repentance. Job is agreeing with what God says about him. He quotes what God says twice. He says, in effect, "Lord, you asked me, 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' You are right, Lord. It is I. That is what I have been doing. I am an ignorant man. I do not know enough to begin to challenge the wisdom of the Almighty. I am an ignorant, limited man who speaks without even knowing what he is talking about. You are quite right, Lord, it is I."

III. JOB'S FRIENDS REPRIMANDED AND RESTORED JOB 42:7-9

A. Reprimanded Job 42:7

God's wrath was aroused against Job's friends for their "folly" (cf. 42:8). They had not spoken what is right about God, unlike Job.

It is clear from the Scripture that God does sometimes bring suffering in a person's or nation's life as a result of some particular sin. However, obviously this does not apply in every situation where a person is suffering. This does not mean that whenever a person is in a difficulty or is suffering, it must be a result of his sin. Whenever there is suffering, the temptation is to apply the faulty logic of Job's friends: God brings suffering as a punishment for sin.

But in what way were the three friends "unlike Job?" Had not Job accused God of injustice?

If ('eelay – "of me") were translated (unto me), there would be a clear reference to Job's confession. But even if it is translated of (me), it seems necessary to think primarily of Job's confession and the friends' lack of such repentance in response to the theophany. For in terms of the theology expressed in their debate, the difference between them was merely one of degree. The words of all of them were in part censurable.

– The Wycliffe Bible Commentary

1. **Perhaps they were "unlike Job" in regards to the debate over the cause of suffering.**
 - a. **They had argued that suffering is always sent by God in response to sin.**

b. Job had denied that; in this he was right and they were wrong.

2. Perhaps in that Job had repented, whereas the three friends had not yet done so.

First, I think, if you look back through this you will see that when Job could see no sin in himself he did indeed charge God with unfairness, but the moment God showed him the sin that was still deeply embedded in his heart he immediately repents. There is no hesitation, there is no argument, there is no self-defense. He admits that the problem was in him and not in God.

3. Perhaps because Job was always true to the facts as he saw them.

True, he did not see them very clearly, and there are things about himself and about God's rule in the universe that he did not understand, but to the point where he did see things, he was always honest.

4. Perhaps because he took his problem to God, even though God was his problem.

All through the account he is breaking into prayer constantly. Unlike his friends, who never pray to God for Job, he prays. Out of the torment and anguish that he feels, he always ends up laying his complaint before God.

Job is forever crying out before God and bringing his problems, his bewilderment and his bafflement unto the Lord himself and asking for wisdom and help. Remember how Jesus said to the people in his day, "*Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*" (Matthew 11:28).

5. Perhaps the difference is in Job's belief in a future state

....But now, take the other life into the account, and the thing will appear in quite a contrary light; and we shall easily see the reason why God approves of the sentiments of Job, and condemns those of his friends....

For supposing the friends of Job to argue that the righteous are never afflicted without remedy here, nor the wicked prosperous on the whole in this life, which is a wrong representation of God's providence; and Job to argue, on the other hand, that the righteous are sometimes afflicted here, and that without remedy, but shall be rewarded in the life to come; and that the wicked prosper here, but shall be punished hereafter, which is the true representation of the divine proceedings; and here is a very apparent difference in the drift of the one's discourse, and of the others. For Job, in this view, speaks worthily of God, and the rest unworthily. The best moral argument that mankind have ever had to believe in a life to come is that which Job insists on—that good and evil are, for the most part, dealt out here promiscuously. On the contrary, the topic urged by his friends, and which they push a great deal too far, that God rewards and punishes in this world, tends, in its consequences like that other opinion ... that virtue is its own reward, to sap the very foundation of that proof we have, from reason, of another life. No wonder, therefore, that the sentiments of the one are approved, and those of the other condemned. — Adam Clarke's Commentary

B. Accepted Job 42:8-9

God instructs the three friends to offer seven bulls and seven rams, and have Job pray for them. This they did, for the Lord had accepted Job. (Elihu is never

mentioned, either because he spoke truth about God or because of his blatant egotism.)

IV. **JOB RESTORED, COMFORTED, AND BLESSED JOB 42:10-17**

A. Restored Job 42:10

Upon praying for his friends, the Lord restored twice as much as he had lost. The Lord accepted Job even before he prayed for his friends, but note that it is after Job prayed for his friends that the Lord restored his losses. Job becomes the intercessor for his friends, as were other great Old Testament characters, e.g., Abraham and Moses, and as our Lord would be, whom he prefigured.

B. Comforted Job 42:11

His brothers, sisters and former acquaintances come to eat with him and comfort him. One has to wonder where they all were while Job is going through his loss and suffering.

Note that it says *"for all the adversity the LORD had brought upon him."* While Satan was the instigator of Job's suffering, the LORD bore ultimate responsibility by allowing Satan to test Job.

They each bring a piece of silver (a piece of money: the term is the same as that used in Genesis 33:19; Joshua 24:32), and a gold ring, perhaps for the nose or ear.

It may have been with this money that Job began the process of buying his sheep, camels, oxen and female donkeys.

C. Blessed Job 42:12-17

- 1. Job's latter days were blessed more than his beginning.**
- 2. His livestock is doubled (14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, 1,000 female donkeys).**
- 3. He is blessed with 7 sons and 3 beautiful daughters, the latter to whom he provided an inheritance along with their brothers. God doubled his children also – 7 in Heaven and seven new ones = fourteen.**

The names of Job's daughters (v. 14) corroborate the statement that they were exceptionally beautiful (v. 15): "*Jemimah*" means "dove," "*Keziah*" means "perfume," (perhaps cinnamon) and "*Keren-happuch*" means "horn of eye-paint."

The reference to Job giving them an inheritance with their brothers, an unusual practice in the ancient Near East, reflects the extent of Job's wealth and compassion (see Numbers 27:8 where the law allowed daughters to inherit only if there were no sons).

The equal distribution of the property paints the pleasing picture of family harmony which was given in the commencement of the history. It also implies that Job regained his health and would not be wanting in sons-in-law for his fair, richly-dowered daughters (See 42:16).

- 4. He lived 140 additional years (if his lifetime is doubled also then he was 70 when he began his suffering), saw descendants to the fourth generation, and died full of days.**

His age of 210 places him in the era of the patriarchs.

The length of human life, after the flood, suffered a somewhat regular decline, until, in the time of Moses, it was fixed at about threescore years and ten, Ps 90:10. The follow-

ing instances will show the regularity of the decline, and enable us, with some degree of probability, to determine the period of the world in which Job lived. Noah lived 950 years; Shem, his son, 600; Arphaxad, his son, 438 years; Salah, 433 years; Eber, 464; Peleg, 239; Reu, 239; Serug, 230; Nahor, 248; Terah, 205; Abraham, 175; Isaac, 180; Jacob, 147; Joseph, 110; Moses, 120; Joshua, 110. Supposing... the age of Job ... would fall in with the period somewhere in the time between Terah and Jacob; and if so, he was probably contemporary with the most distinguished of the patriarchs.

– Barnes' Notes

CONCLUSION

Does the fact that God eventually blessed Job materially in life for his godliness prove Job's three friends were right after all? Is the basis of man's relationship with God really retribution? No, God did not reward Job in life primarily because he was good but because God is gracious. The basis of people's relationship with God is grace. The Book of Job does not deny the fact that God blesses the righteous. However, it shows that this principle has exceptions if we look at life only this side of the grave. Because God is sovereign He can deal with anyone as He chooses for reasons only He knows. Nevertheless He always deals justly (cf. Rom. 9:14).

– Thomas Constable, Notes on Job

This chapter assures us that, no matter what happens to us, God always writes the last chapter. Therefore, we don't have to be afraid. We can trust God to do what is right, no matter how painful our situation might be...."His [Job's] greatest blessing was knowing God better and understanding His working in a deeper way.

– Wiersbe, Warren W., "Job."

in The Bible Exposition Commentary/Wisdom and Poetry

The Lord's display of mercy is what James calls "*the end intended by the Lord*" (James 5:11), revealing Him to be compassionate and merciful. There is a beautiful passage in Jeremiah's Lamentations that must always be remembered when going through trials and afflictions.

Lamentations 3:31-33: For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men.

He does not willingly afflict or grieve the sons of men. He will do it because he loves us and we need it, but he does not do it lightly. He feels with us in it. As a good parent with his children, he hurts worse than we do at times. He does not willingly do it. "Though he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love." I think we need to recall that when we are put through times of pressure and danger.

– Ray Stedman

The Book of Job does not answer the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?" It only leads to the conclusion, based on Job's experience and his final response to God's speech, that rather than trying to find the solution, it is better to submit and trust God in whom the ultimate solution is found.

The central idea of the Book of Job is that though evil and suffering may seem to have an upper hand, God is still on the throne, and He remembers His own. His love is never ending, and His grace is sufficient for all our needs; His promises remain true. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:18: *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*