

# The Trial of Job

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At times we will not be able to see any “reason” for the troubles we are enduring, and we may not be able to see anything good at all coming from our sufferings and losses. Job also was a man who could see no reason for the losses and affliction that God had allowed to touch his life.

In reading the book of Job, we are made aware of a “contest”, so to speak, between God and Satan, in which Job was involved. We are also clearly told that Job had done nothing wrong to bring all of these miseries upon himself, because the word of God tells us three times in the first two chapters of the book that Job was “blameless” and “upright”, and a man who feared God and turned away from evil. (Job 1:1, 1:8, 2:3).

Job was a very wealthy man. He was described as “the greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:3). From the beginning of the book, we see that the Lord God Himself brought up the case of Job to Satan, suggesting to Satan that Job was a man of great faith and devotion to Him.

Satan replied to the Lord saying that the only reason for Job's devotion to Him was that He had given him so much in the way of prosperity in life, and He had placed His hedge of protection around him. Satan then challenged God to take all that He had given to Job, insisting that Job's devotion would then surely fail, and he would curse Him to His face.

In response to this challenge, The Lord God agreed to give Satan control over everything that Job had, but He would not allow Satan to touch Job himself. After this, by various tragedies many of Job's servants were killed, and all of his flocks were destroyed. His wealth had quickly been taken from him.

As soon as he found out about this loss, one of his servants came to tell him that all of his seven sons and three daughters were feasting at the oldest brother's house when suddenly a powerful wind swept in from the desert, and the house collapsed on them, killing them all. In a very short span of time, Job suffered the loss of all of his wealth, and if that blow was not enough, he suffered the loss of all of his ten children.

Job's response to these grievous losses is recorded in Job 1, where we read:

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said,

“Naked I came from my mother's womb,  
And naked I shall return there.  
The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.  
Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God. (Job 1:20-22).

After these events, God again brought up the case of Job to Satan, saying that Job still held to his integrity despite all of his losses and suffering. Satan's reply to his defeat at this point was to challenge God again. This time Satan insisted that if Job's physical body was afflicted, his faith and devotion to Him would surely crumble.

Satan was then given permission to afflict Job's health as well, but he was told that he must spare Job's life. And so Satan went out and afflicted Job with painful sores all over his body. All that Job could do at this point was to sit down

in the ashes of what used to be his prosperous life and scrape his sores with a shard.

To make matters worse, Job's wife turned against him and God in the face of these tragedies, as we see in Job 2:9. She mocked him for still holding on to his integrity after all of the tragedy that God had allowed to come upon him, and she told him to curse God and die. Job had now lost his wealth, all of his children, his health, and the sympathies of his wife, who could have provided some comfort to him in this time of suffering. We might assume that she abandoned him because she is not mentioned in the book again.

Job's response again to all that had happened to him is still the same expression of faith in God, as we see from his reply to his wife's suggestion that he "curse God and die". Job told her that she was talking foolishly, and he asserted that we should be willing to accept trouble and suffering from God as well as prosperity and abundance. Up to this point, Job still did not sin by accusing God of wrongdoing or injustice in all that had come upon him (Job 2:10).

Most of us are frightened to think about losing what wealth and resources we may have and becoming impoverished. And we dread the thought of losing one child, let alone all of our children. When we think of losing our health and finding ourselves unable to work and support ourselves, we also become frightened. It is hard for us to imagine the impact that all of these things happening together at the same time had upon Job, but this still was not the full extent of the misery that he was to suffer.

Job had three friends, and when these friends heard about all of the troubles that had come upon him, they went to comfort him. As can be seen from the many discourses they had with Job, it turned out that they only added to his misery by suggesting that all of his troubles were the result of some fault or wrongdoing of his own. Their understanding of God was that He rewarded good people with health and prosperity, and He punished evildoers with tragedy and suffering.

With every erroneous assertion and insinuation of his friends, Job came back with his rebuttals, insisting that he had done nothing wrong. He did not understand God's reasons for allowing all of this suffering to come upon him.

Job had no idea that God had presented him to Satan as blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. Further, Job had no idea that God had determined to demonstrate to Satan, and to all who would read the account of

his trial for centuries to come, that he would be made to persevere in his faith, continuing to fear God and shun evil, regardless of whatever tragedies and sufferings came upon him. Job's response to the weight of his misery and pain up to this point is recorded in chapter 14 where he said: "...All the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes." (Job: 14:14).

### ***Job Accuses God of Wrongdoing***

Early in the account of Job's response to his troubles, the Bible tells us that he did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. Later however, as the weight of his suffering began to wear upon him over time, Job's ongoing misery was overwhelming him. At this point He angrily accused God of wrongdoing, indifference, and injustice in his case, saying to his friends: "Know then that God has wronged me and closed His net around me. Behold, I cry, 'Violence!' but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice. (Job 19:6-7).

Our response too will be much the same when in the depth of our sufferings we become angry at our sovereign God, whom we know could have prevented tragedy and grief from coming upon us but did not. At that point we too may rail against Him for all of the misery and suffering that He has allowed to come into our lives. When this happens with us as it did with Job, let us understand that God knows our weaknesses, and He has compassion on His children. David wrote in the Psalms:

Just as a father has compassion on his children,  
So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.  
For He Himself knows our frame;  
He is mindful that we are but dust. (Psalm 103:13-14).

We as believers have been given many comforts in the Scriptures concerning our sufferings, and we have been given many promises of God's help and sustenance. Job did not have these comforts because the Scriptures had not been written during his lifetime, as many scholars consider the Book of Job to be the oldest book in the Bible.

Job withstood this tremendous trial of his faith not because of some strength that he pulled from deep within himself, whereby he managed to deal with all that had come upon him. Rather he persevered by the same power through which we also will persevere during the trial of our faith, and that is by the power of the

Spirit of God. In the book of Zechariah we read these words: "... 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6).

### ***The Lord God Confronts Job and His Three Friends***

Finally, after enduring all of these losses and then having to endure the accusation of his friends, who in many eloquent speeches said to Job that the tragedies which had befallen him were the result of his own sin, God answered Job saying: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!" (Job 38:2-3).

The Lord then began to ask Job question after question, the answers to which no man has. The Lord did this in order to demonstrate that His wisdom and His ways are beyond the comprehension of man, and to make Job understand that he had neither the right nor the wisdom to complain angrily against Him, accusing Him of wrongdoing for all of the suffering and loss that had come into his life. Job then replied to the Lord's questioning saying:

"I know that You can do all things,  
And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.  
'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'  
Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand,  
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."  
'Hear, now, and I will speak;  
I will ask You, and You instruct me.'  
"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;  
But now my eye sees You;  
Therefore I retract,  
And I repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:2-6)

After the Lord had questioned Job, He turned His attention to Job's three friends. Speaking to one of them, Eliphaz the Temanite, the Lord said: "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because ***you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.*** Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you according to your folly, because ***you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.***" (Job 42:7-8, emphasis added).

In these verses God said twice to Job's friends that they had not spoken the truth about Him, as His servant Job had done. The three friends considered themselves to be wise men with considerable spiritual understanding, but this was not the case.

They possessed no wisdom with which to comfort Job, and they only added to his misery by accusing him of wrongdoing, which they asserted had brought about the troubles that had befallen him. Job had a much greater understanding of the ways of God than his three friends, though he had no idea why God had allowed all of this tragedy to come upon him.

The Scriptures do not tell us that Job was ever given insight about the things that had happened to him, and the conversations that had taken place between God and Satan concerning him. He did however come to the place where he understood that God's wisdom, His ways, and His reasons for events unfolding as they do were far above his own wisdom and ability to comprehend. Job was given the understanding that any questioning of God's ways or angry accusations about what had happened to him would stem only from an ignorance of the ways and thoughts of God, many of which man was never intended to understand.

After Job prayed for his three friends, God restored his fortunes. In fact, God gave him twice as much wealth as he had before, and Job also had seven more sons and three more daughters. After this Job lived to an old age, and the Bible says that he saw his children and his children's children to the fourth generation.

### ***The Days of Job's Hard Service***

At this point, we might wonder why God saw fit to put Job through all of this suffering and loss. And we might wonder what was accomplished by all of the undeserved suffering that God allowed to touch Job's life. One answer to these questions can be seen from Romans 9:17, where we learn that God orchestrates events to display His power on the earth so that His Name will be declared among both angels and men.

We might also wonder what, if any, service did Job render to God through all of the suffering that he endured. ***The service that Job rendered to God through his sufferings was to demonstrate, to both angels and men, God's power and His***

***unchanging, irrevocable decision to preserve His saints through anything in all of creation that would attempt to separate us from His love.***

This is the same message of comfort that Paul gave to us in Romans 8 when he wrote: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39). This service that Job rendered to God was so important to Him, that the account of Job’s sufferings and his perseverance through these sufferings has been preserved forever in the Scriptures, in order to comfort, instruct and edify His people.

One has to suspect that God has His “Jobs” in every generation, those believers whose faith is tested with great suffering and loss that comes about through no wrongdoing of their own. If we find ourselves to be among those who experience such things, then let us recognize that it has been given to us in a measure greater than many others to drink from the cup or be baptized with the baptism of Christ’s sufferings. And as we have seen from the Scriptures before, God has ordained that such things are necessary for those who will be among the greatest in His kingdom (Mark 10:35-40).

### ***In Conclusion***

Job faced his time of trial and started out admirably, but as time went by and his affliction wore on, he eventually became angry with God over the apparent injustice of all that had happened to him. He could not understand what was going on in his life at the time, or why God had allowed such tragedy to come upon him despite his devotion to Him.

There is no indication given in the Scriptures that the reason he suffered was ever revealed to him during his lifetime. More than likely Job never understood why he suffered the way he did, until he was finally together with the Lord in Heaven.

As his losses and affliction began to weigh heavily upon him, Job’s faith in the goodness of God did falter, as ours will at times under the weight of our own sufferings. However, our perseverance in the faith is not brought about by our own devotion; rather we are kept by the power of God (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, 1 Peter 1:3-5).

Though our faith may seem to falter at times, and though we may fail miserably when confronted with our own time of trial, God does not fail. And He does not change His mind concerning those whom He calls to faith in His Son: “for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” (Romans 11:29).

When we experience overwhelming misery and grief as our sufferings weigh heavily upon us, and we respond by railing angrily against God because of the troubles and losses that He has allowed to touch our lives, let us remember that nothing in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord, not even our own anger toward Him (again, Romans 8:38-39). God our Father, for reasons and purposes of His own, allows trials of various kinds to come into the lives of His people. God will see to it that we persevere through these trials, just as He sustained Job in his sufferings.

Deliverance from our troubles and restoration always comes for believers, and it always comes in God’s time. Whether deliverance from our suffering comes in this life, or on the day that we leave this life and go to be with the Lord forever in Heaven, restoration and abundance is always coming for us as God’s people.

James comforted believers when he wrote: “As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.” (James 5:10-11).

James wrote that those who “endure” are counted as blessed. He also spoke of the “endurance of Job” and “the outcome of the Lord’s dealings” as a result of all that Job had suffered. James also emphasized the great compassion and mercy of our God and Father.

Ultimately, as Job’s faith in the goodness of God began to falter under the weight of his suffering, ***he was made to endure and persevere by God Himself; he was upheld by the power of God.*** Through the compassion, mercy and power of God, Job was sustained through his trial, and he was ultimately blessed because of all that he had suffered (Job 42:10, 12).

In God’s time, Job’s trial came to an end, and he was restored and made twice as prosperous as before. God demonstrated his power among angels and men by sustaining Job through his trial, and then He demonstrated His power again

when He delivered Job out of his trial and restored him. Also in God's time, the trials that we are facing will come to an end, and we too will be delivered and restored.

For some losses, full restoration and healing will not be realized until we are with the Lord in Heaven. But as James has assured us, "the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful", and the end intended by our God is one of blessing and abundance. Paul gave us similar encouragement when he revealed that the troubles of our present lives will be made to achieve for us an eternal measure of glory that far exceeds the weight of the troubles themselves (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Just as Job could very well have lived out the remainder of his days on earth never fully understanding what God was doing through all that he had suffered, so also the same may be true for many believers. However, the word of God assures us that our present sufferings, as painful as they may be, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will one day be revealed in us as a result of having endured them (Romans 8:18).

None of the things that happen to us happen by chance. Our God is sovereign over His creation. God has ordained all of the events that touch our lives as they happen to each of us individually (Psalm 139:16).

We know from God's word that it has been given to every believer to share in the sufferings of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the "Man of Sorrows", who was Himself familiar with suffering and grief (Isaiah 53:3). And we also know that this share in His sufferings will achieve for us a share in His eternal glory (Romans 8:17).

When we find ourselves facing hardships that are far beyond our ability to endure, and so much so that we despair even of life itself and having to live on to face these burdens, we will be sustained and delivered, not by our own power or steadfastness, but by the power of God Himself, who raises the dead (2 Corinthians 1:8-11). Just as it happened in the life of Job, we also will be sustained through our trials and ultimately delivered from them by the infinite compassion, mercy and power of God.