

# The Book of Job

Understanding Suffering  
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# Facing Inexplicable Suffering

- ⇒ Most of us have experienced examples of this:
  - Loved one has long painful illness before dying
  - Young person cut off in the prime of life
  - We ourselves experience suffering that seems purposeless
- ⇒ The book of Job is helpful in understanding some of the most difficult such cases.

# The Plot of Job



# How the Book Begins

## ⇒ Job's circumstances:

- Most righteous person on earth in his day
  - No reason to think our day much better
- Very wealthy
- Happy family

## ⇒ God's evaluation

- No one on earth like him

## ⇒ Satan's response

- Job is well-paid to be good !
- Take his wealth away, he will curse you to your face !

# The Tests

- ⇒ God permits a test to see whether Satan's challenge is warranted.
- ⇒ First test (chapter 1)
  - Satan takes away Job's:
    - Wealth
    - Children
  - Satan times arrival of messengers to build impact.
  - But Job doesn't curse God.

# The Tests

- ⇒ Second test (chapter 2)
  - Satan is not about to admit he is wrong.
  - He raises the stakes.
  - Job will curse God if his health is taken away.
  - Satan takes away:
    - Job's health
    - The support of his wife
  - Still Job doesn't curse God.



# The Rest of the Book

## ⇒ Why chapters 3-42?

- Wouldn't the message be clearer with just a chapter or so on Job's friends, plus another for interview with God?
- Looks like God continues the test to take away things Satan didn't (not sure what part Satan plays in this):
  - Support of friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar)
  - Support of being right (Elihu)
  - Support of God (who comes with accusations)

# The Rest of the Book

- ⇒ When God finally does appear (ch 38), Job doesn't curse him.
  - Job comes to see his own sins, and repents.
  - If we find it hard to imagine ourselves doing this, it just shows we aren't in Job's league !
- ⇒ Then God praises Job ...
  - ... though he said things he shouldn't have
- ⇒ God rebukes Job's friends ...
  - ... who were trying hard to defend God



# The Rest of the Book

- ⇒ Job remained (relatively) faithful under far more difficult circumstances than his friends faced.
- ⇒ Finally – ruining the story for many liberals – God gives Job double what he had lost.
  - By the way, if you were Job, this wouldn't ruin the story !
- ⇒ Let us look at the book to see what lessons we can learn from it.

# Some Lessons from Job



# The Two Worlds

- ⇒ As readers, we have a great advantage over Job & his friends.
  - We see what is happening in the unseen world.
- ⇒ Job's friends don't see this other world.
  - To defend God (which they know is right) ...
  - ... they attack Job (inventing a 'secret sin' theory).
  - Their theology (& Satan's) is like today's health & wealth gospel.

# The Two Worlds

- ⇒ Job doesn't see the unseen world either.
  - He knows God allowed these things to happen.
  - He is right about this, whether he knows about Satan or not.
  - He knows that his friends' accusations are false, so their preaching/counseling tends to drive him away from God rather than toward repentance.

# The Two Worlds

- ⇒ Outside the book of Job, we don't see this unseen world either.
  - Will we respond like Job's friends?
  - Will we respond like Job in his worse moments?
  - Will we cling to God & trust Him for vindication in His time?
- ⇒ Apparently much (all?) inexplicable suffering is really persecution from Satan.

# Job's Response

- ⇒ Though Satan claimed that Job served God for what he got out of it ...
- ⇒ ... Job (& friends) came to see that Job served God because of who God is.
- ⇒ God is worthy of our worship whether we get anything for it or not.
- ⇒ Do we serve God for who He is or for what we can get out of it?

# Satan's Response

- ⇒ He clears out before the end.
- ⇒ He is defeated, but not about to admit it !
- ⇒ He won't admit it until the very end ...
  - ... when every knee will bow & every tongue confess.
- ⇒ So don't expect vindication in this life.
  - We may get vindication here and now.
  - We may not.



# God's Response

- ⇒ Important that Job not know what is happening.
  - Otherwise this won't be the right kind of test
  - God cannot intervene to bail Job out, or the test will be invalidated.
  - So God goes beyond Satan's charges to take away everything.
  - Once Job has seen God, admitted God's charges, worshiped Him, the test is over.

# God's Response

- ⇒ God then praises Job, humbles his friends.
- ⇒ Job's other 'friends' come back.
- ⇒ God gives Job double what he lost.
  - Two times the wealth
  - Same number more children
- ⇒ God is no cheapskate.
  - Though we serve Him for nothing ...
  - ... He will not send us away empty-handed.
  - But the full reward cannot come till the test is over.

# Our Response?

- ⇒ Pay attention to the book of Job.
- ⇒ We are experiencing similar things.
  - The unseen world
  - Satan's attacks
  - The same God
  - Our friends are watching too.

# The End?

Not yet!

Therefore, be steadfast, unmovable,  
always abounding... for your labor is not  
in vain in the Lord.