

JOB: SOME LESSONS ON INEXPLICABLE SUFFERING

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Introduction

Most of us have encountered suffering we couldn't understand
e.g., loved one goes thru painful illness before dying
promising young person cut off in prime of life
Book of Job very helpful in understanding some of the most difficult of such cases

Sketch of Job:

Job most righteous person on earth in his day
(and no reason to suppose our day much better)
also wealthy, with happy family
Satan claims that Job's righteousness understandable since he is *paid well* to be good
Take away Job's *wealth* & **Job will curse God to his face**
God permits a test to see whether or not this is so:
1st Test (chapter one)
Satan takes away Job's (1) wealth *and* (2) children timing arrival of messengers to
build impact.
Job doesn't curse God
2nd Test (chapter two)
Satan not about to admit he was wrong, so raises stakes by claiming **Job will curse
God** if he loses his *health*.
Now Satan takes about Job's (3) *health* and (4) support of wife.
Still Job doesn't curse God.
Rest of Book:
Why all these chapters 3-42?
Wouldn't message be clearer with just chapter or two on Job's friends, then another
on interview with God?
Looks like God *continues test* to take away things Satan left (not sure what part
Satan plays in this, since he took away others things in first two tests):
(5) support of friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar)
(6) support of being right (Elihu)
(7) support of God (who comes w/ accusations)
But lo and behold, when God appears face-to-face, Job does not curse him, but
comes to see own sin, and repents (if we find it hard to imagine doing this, it
shows we are not in Job's league!).
Then God commends Job (tho he said bad things re/ God) as better than his friends
(who tried to defend God).
Job remained (relatively) faithful under far more serious provocation than
they did.

Finally (ruining story for many liberal commentators) God gives Job double what he lost.

Some Lessons from Job:

1. The Two Worlds:

The reader has a great advantage over Job & friends. We see (in story) what is happening in unseen world.

Job's friends don't:

To defend God (which they know is right) they wind up falsely accusing Job (since they only have Job's words as evidence against their "secret sin" theory). Their theology (& Satan's !) is closely akin to today's health & wealth gospel.

Job doesn't see unseen world either:

He knows God must have allowed it to happen (he is right here [vs. health & wealth gospel], whether or not he knows about Satan).
He knows friends' accusations are false, so their preaching tends to drive him *away* from God rather than to repent.

We don't see unseen world in our life or lives of friends:

Will we respond like Job in his worse moments?
Or like Job's friends?
Or will we cling to God & trust him for vindication in the long run (in his time)?

Much apparently inexplicable suffering may really be persecution by Satan from the unseen world.

2. Job's Response:

Tho Satan claimed Job served God for what he got out of it, Job (et al) came to see that Job served God for who God is.

God is *worthy* of our worship whether or not we get anything for it (recall Moses' and Paul's willingness to be condemned rather than fellow Israelites be destroyed and God's promise seem to fail.

We should be able to understand this. Don't we sometime appreciate an artist, musician, basketball player for their skill, even if it doesn't benefit us directly?

Do we serve God for who he is? Or for what we get out of it?

3. Satan's Response:

Satan clears out before end; he is defeated but not willing to admit it!
Not until *real* end, when every tongue will confess... will he admit it.
So don't *expect* vindication in this life. You may get it, you may not.

4. God's Response:

It is important that Job *not* know what is happening or this won't be the right kind of test (endurance vs. trust).

God cannot intervene to bail out Job until test is over, or test will be *invalidated*.

Instead God goes beyond Satan's charges to take away *everything*.

Once Job has seen God, admitted God's charges, worshiped him, *test is over*; God praises Job, humbles friends.

God gives Job *double* (2x wealth, same number *more* children).

Job's other "friends" come back.

God is no *cheapskate*: though we serve him for nothing, he will not let us go away emptyhanded; but the full reward cannot come until the test is over.