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## The Test of True Wisdom

### Job

We all often face suffering, trials, and difficulties in our lives. How do we respond when those things come? As we continue to consider the issue of biblical wisdom, we quickly realize that we are in the greatest need of wisdom when we consider the issue of suffering or tragedy in life. This is especially true when we face trials in our own lives.

It is encouraging to find that one of the “wisdom books” given to us in Old Testament, the book of Job, was written to help us deal with the very question of suffering, trials, and tragedies in life.

#### The Account

The book of Job is largely written as poetry, but it opens and closes with brief sections of prose as it lays out the account of a man who suffered greatly.

Job was described as a good man: a man “**blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.**” (1:1) He was blessed with a wonderful family of seven sons and three daughters. He was depicted as having great wealth, so much so that he was considered “**the greatest of all the people of the East.**” (1:3)

Satan himself took note of Job and in 1:9-11 he made the accusation before God that the only reason Job worshipped God was because of material blessings: “**...stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!**” was Satan’s claim. (1:11)

God gave Satan permission to strike Job’s possessions and his family. In 1:13-19 we find that in the period of only a few moments, Job was apprised that indeed he had lost all his earthly wealth, and, worst of all, his children as well. How does he respond to such calamitous events? Amazingly, it is recorded that he “**arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.” In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.**” (1:20-22)

Satan was not yet through with Job. He again went before God and claimed that if Job’s physical health was affected, he would then turn his back on God.

God allowed Satan to afflict Job’s body, and the account states that Satan “**struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.**” (2:6)

If this was not bad enough, Job’s wife, certainly herself reeling from these horrendous events, challenges Job: “**Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!**” <sup>10</sup> But he said to her, “**You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?**” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” (2:9-10)

#### The Questions

At this point Job’s four friends who have heard of his adversity came and sat with him to “**mourn with him and to comfort him**”. They sat together for seven days without saying a word. Finally, Job speaks and pours out the anguish in his heart as he “**curled the day he was born**”. (3:1) Job’s friends respond by challenging him that the reason he is suffering is because of some sin in his life.

What follows through the rest of the book is a series of conversations, recorded as Hebrew poetry, between Job and his friends as they discuss the question of why Job is suffering. All four held to the basic belief that *God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked*. Job knew in his heart that he was a righteous man so he struggled to understand why God would allow him to experience such tragedy. Job’s friends were just as certain that Job must have committed some terrible sin in order to experience such adversity. Consequently,

they continually accuse him and exhort him to confess and repent of his sin.

### God's Answer

After each of the friend's accusations and all of Job's protestations and questioning, in chapters 38-41 God speaks and sets the record straight. It is amazing to note that God never gives Job or his friends an answer to the question, "**Why** is Job suffering?" What God did answer was that in His sovereignty and power, God works in ways that may not be understood. Job had not sinned, yet these terrible trials had occurred in his life. Still, Job could trust God that He was in control, that He loved Job, and that everything that occurred was for **Job's good and God's glory!**

After learning from his experiences and repenting of his wrong thinking and attitudes about God, Job is blessed with the restoration of his wealth and the replacement of his family. We learn that "**the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning.**" (42:12).

### Wisdom in Suffering

As we grow in wisdom, we gain a proper understanding of who God is and what He is like. Job and his friends did not have the scriptures as we do, and their understanding of God's character was flawed and incomplete. As God began to reply to Job, He asked "**Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? (38:1)** Job replies to God's rebuke in 42:3, "**I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.**" God rebuked Job's friends in 42:7: "**My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right...**"

Job and his friends had a faulty understanding of God and how He worked in the world. They believed that God blessed the righteous and judged the wicked. Their theology allowed for no other explanation of the events and circumstances in life. This caused Job to question God's justice and goodness, and it caused his friends to falsely judge and accuse him. Through Job's trials and God's revelation of Himself, Job came to know God in a much closer way. He states in 42:5 "**I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.**"

Even after all the blessings he received back from God, his greatest blessing was knowing God better and understanding His working in a deeper way.

We should understand that our own faulty wisdom and understanding of God and His word will lead us to all kinds of problems in our lives as well. It is imperative that we dedicate ourselves to the study of God's word so that we have a proper understanding of God and His character and how He works in our lives.

## New Testament Wisdom on Suffering

### Romans 8:28-29

<sup>28</sup> And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren...

### James 1:2-5

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. <sup>5</sup> But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

In both these passages we find that if we are His children, God will use all of the trials, tragedies, events, and circumstances we face to accomplish His purposes in our lives. Those purposes are always for our good and His Glory. His greatest purpose in our life is to make us mature believers, more like His Son, Jesus Christ.

Each of us are going to face trials and difficulties in our lives. There will be circumstances and events around us that we do not understand. Our theology, what we believe about God, will determine how we respond when those things arise. Pastor Mark Dever summarizes three lessons we can learn from the Book of Job:

**We often suffer.**

**We sometimes understand.**

**We can always trust.<sup>1</sup>**

Job and his friends did not know the "behind the scenes" details and did not understand all that God was doing. Yet in gaining true wisdom Job understood that He could always trust God.

Ultimately, the right question is not "**Why** does God allow tragedy and suffering?" but "**How do I respond** when I face trials and tragedies in my life?" With Job, we need to gain the wisdom to understand that God is in control and that He is using each and every circumstance to accomplish His will in the world and in our lives!

<sup>1</sup>Dever, Mark. *The Message of the Old Testament*. Crossway Books. 2006. Kindle pg. 469.

### BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays, 12:00 Noon

MCMANUS (House) CONFERENCE ROOM

(252-M Located by minority offices near House chamber)