

Through the Bible Book by Book

Old Testament

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Job

Theme: The book of Job deals with one of the greatest of mysteries - that of suffering. The question that rings out all through the book is, Why do the righteous suffer?

Job, a man described as being perfect, is stripped of wealth, children and health. He bears these afflictions with fortitude. He does not understand the cause of these calamities, but resigns himself to the thought that GOD sends evil upon men, just as He sends good, and that being GOD, He has a right to do as He pleases with His own creatures. Therefore men must accept evil uncomplainingly just as they accept good at GOD's hands.

Job's friends argued that, since suffering was the result of sin, and that Job was the most afflicted of all men, therefore Job must be the most wicked of men. Job indignantly denies the charge that he has sinned and carries this denial to the point of self-righteousness. At the conclusion of the discussion between Job and his friends, Elihu speaks up, condemning the former for his self-righteousness and the latter for their harsh condemnation of Job. He then proceeds to explain that GOD had a purpose in sending suffering to men; that He chastens man for the purpose of bringing him nearer to Himself.

GOD used the afflictions as a trial of Job's character, and as a means of revealing to him a sin of which he had been hitherto unconscious - self-righteousness.

Author: The author of Job is not known. It is believed that Elihu may have written it (32:18-20).

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I. Satan's. Attack on Job (Chs. 1 to 2:10)

Where else is Job mentioned in the Scriptures (Ezekiel 14:14; James 5:11)? What is said concerning his character? His prosperity? His piety?

The "**sons of God**" mentioned in 1:6 are evidently the angels who appeared before GOD on certain occasions, probably to give a report of their ministry on the earth (Hebrews 1:14). As a Judas among the apostles, Satan appears with the angels.

Why he had access to GOD's presence is a mystery, but Revelation 12:10 teaches clearly that he has admittance to heaven, and that there he acts as "**accuser of the brethren.**" (See also Luke 22:31).

Notice in verse 7 what Satan says concerning his activity in relation to the world (compare I Peter 5:8).

GOD holds up Job as a perfect God-fearing man, one who has escaped the corruption of the world. Satan admits the fact but impugns Job's motive. His contention is that Job is serving GOD for the sake of policy, because it brings him prosperity.

In assailing Job, Satan attacks also GOD, for his words carry the insinuation that GOD is not able to win the unselfish love of man. GOD desiring to vindicate His own character and that of His servant, has no alternative but to subject Job to a trial. It is comforting to note that Satan's affliction of the children of GOD is only by Divine permission.

From chs. 1:21 and 2:10 we see that Job justified GOD's confidence in him.

II. Job and His Friends. (Chs. 2:1 to 31:40)

We have seen the cause of Job's afflictions from the Divine viewpoint. We shall now listen to the opinions of his friends concerning the cause of his troubles. It should be remembered that their utterances in themselves are not inspired, for the Lord Himself charged them with error (42:8). It is the record of those utterances that are inspired.

Though these men said many things that were true, they did not tell the whole truth.

Learn the following points summing up the discourses of Job's friends:

1. They contend that suffering is the result of sin. Therefore if a person is afflicted, it must be taken for granted that he has transgressed.
2. The measure of affliction indicates the degree of sin. They argue that, since Job is the most afflicted of men, he must be the greatest of sinners.
3. They tell Job that if he will repent of his sins GOD will restore his happiness. They warn him that his trying to justify himself will only delay his restoration.
4. They admit that sometimes the wicked prosper, but they claim that this prosperity is only transient, for it will soon pass away and retribution overtake them.

We may sum up Job's answers to his friends as follows:

1. Job maintains that it is possible for a righteous man to be afflicted. He considers it cruelty on the part of his friends to accuse him of sin because of his afflictions. He himself does not understand GOD's purpose in afflicting him. He takes it for granted that GOD, in distributing good and evil, neither regards merit nor guilt, but acts according to His sovereign pleasure. He believes that there are times when a sufferer has a right to justify himself and repine at GOD's decree.
2. Later Job retracts some of his extravagant assertions, and admits that GOD generally afflicts the wicked and blesses the righteous. Still he insists there are exceptions to the rule as, for example when a pious man is afflicted. Because of these exceptions, it is unjust to conclude a man is sinful because of afflictions.
3. He believes that it is our duty to adore GOD even though suffering calamities not deserved; but we should abstain from harshly judging of those who, when distressed, send forth complaints against GOD.

III. Elihu's Message (Chs. 32-37)

Elihu's discourse may be summed up as follows:

1. He tells Job that he was wrong in boasting of his integrity (33:8-13), and making it appear that rewards were due to him from GOD. GOD is no man's debtor (35:7). However righteous Job may be, he has no claim on GOD, for all men are sinners in GOD's eyes.
2. He admits that calamities are punishments for sins committed, but at the same time they are corrective. They might be inflicted on the comparatively most righteous in preference to others.

If the object of affliction was attained and the distressed acknowledged his fault, GOD would bless him with greater happiness than he had before (33:14-33).

He then sets forth the majesty and perfection of GOD in creation, and reproves Job for trying to reason with Him instead of humbling himself and confessing that he was at fault (chs. 36, 37).

IV. The Lord's Answer to Job (Chs. 38:1 to 42:16)

"GOD deals with Job only in taking up the discussion. He does not Himself argue with Job, but He gives him the most effective revelations, by which He challenges Job on his own mistaken grounds. He first challenges Job on the mistake of calling the Almighty into question.

In judging GOD, Job was assuming a power of measurement commensurate with the person and ways he was measuring namely, the Eternal, the Creator of all things. In Chs. 38, 39, he challenges Job's ability to judge from the standpoint of one acquainted directly and personally with all things in their origins.

This silences Job, a man of so brief a span of existence and of original knowledge. GOD then reveals to Job His amazing skill in fashioning and benevolently governing the most frightful monsters of the ancient world, behemoth and leviathan, the hippopotamus and the crocodile of the Nile, evidently as an illustration of His skill. So creating, so to speak, and benevolently

governing the most frightful troubles that an all-wise and loving Father may permit the "**roaring lion**" to inflict.

This brings Job out of silence into self-abasing adoration of GOD. He confesses that what he had learned theoretically before the certainty of Divine wisdom and goodness is now a blessed reality to him, so satisfying and rejoicing his heart that all thought of arguing one's desert under any dispensation of GOD is forever precluded." - Stevens.

V. Conclusion (Ch. 42:7-17)

The last verses of Job illustrate James 5:11, "**Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy**" (i.e., you have seen in the issue of GOD's dealings with Job, the exercise of His compassion and tenderness).

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