

## A Man Named Job

Job 1:1–2:10

*Studies in Job #1*

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**E**VERY weekday for six months in 159 sermons, John Calvin preached through Job. Every three weeks for 24 years the Puritan preacher, Joseph Caryl, gave one of his 424 lectures on Job. It's said his son once sailed from England to India and back only to find his dad had barely made progress!<sup>1</sup> You've heard of the patience of Job but I'm not going to try yours!

I planned to continue the Psalms but as I was reading through Job, I had to preach it! Finishing the first book of Psalms last Sunday is a natural break before returning to the Psalms. There is so much to say but I will try to keep it to 10–12 sermons. Martin Luther said of Job, “The language of this book is more vigorous and splendid than that of any other book in all the Scriptures.”<sup>2</sup> In his massive commentary, Gregory the Great said the Word of God is like a river, shallow enough for a lamb to wade and deep enough for an elephant to float.<sup>3</sup> I'll try to stay in the shallow end!

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<sup>1</sup> *The Congregational Review, Volume 10* (Chicago: G.S.F. Savage, 1870), 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament I*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 35:252.

<sup>3</sup> He also said the Word of God “exercises the understanding of the wise” and “nurses the simple-minded. It present[s] in open day [what] the little ones may be fed; it keep[s] in secret [what] men of a loftier range

When you think of Job, what do you think its message is? You're probably thinking it's about why we suffer. But if we turn to Job expecting an answer to our "why" question when we're suffering, we're going to be severely disappointed. The message to us is when we suffer whose wisdom are we going to trust? Man's or God's?"<sup>4</sup> The book of Job isn't about Job at all; it's about the God whose ways and wisdom are not ours (Isa. 55:8-9); whose answers to our questions are not what we expect. In the end, while God never answered Job's question of why he suffered, James 5 says Job patiently submitted to his Heavenly Father's all-wise plan for his life even in suffering. Chapters 1-2 set it all up with *A Man Named Job*.

## **A Description About this Man**

It opens with *a description about this man*. He lived **in the land of Uz** (1:1), which we learn from the book of Genesis was somewhere east of the Promised Land (Gen. 10:22-24; 22:21 cf. 36:1; Jer. 25:20-23; Lam. 4:21).<sup>5</sup> Job was one of those Old Testament believers not part of the line of promise.

More important is what the narrator tells us about this man's external and internal godliness: he was **blameless**, meaning, his life was full of

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may be held in suspense of admiration." Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job: Volume I: Parts I-II* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844), 9.

<sup>4</sup> On this as the heart of the debate in the book, see Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, 203; Kline, 462.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, *Job*, 40.

integrity; he was **upright**, meaning, he lived righteously according to the ways of the Lord; he was **one who feared God**, which is the beginning of knowledge and piety; and he **turned away from evil** (1:1). He wasn't sinless (6:24; 7:20–21; 13:26; 14:16; 42:1–6), but he was a God-fearing man.

He was fruitful, multiplied, and filled his little corner of the earth with **seven sons and three daughters** (1:2) while he was a business mogul with **7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants** (1:3). Later in chapter 29 he goes on to say that he “lived like a king among his troops” (29:25). The conclusion was that **this man was the greatest of all the people of the east** (1:3).<sup>6</sup> It's important for us to realize that the Bible does not condemn wealth itself; it's how we gain and use it. This is why Paul could say in the same breath, “As for the rich in this present age”—not condemning riches—“they are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Tim. 6:17, 18).

Then we see his piety in action. He was no, “Do as I say not as I do” kind of man. His family had a calendar of festivals as verse 4 says. After the frolicking and fun of such festivals, **Job** acted as the priest of his large family

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<sup>6</sup> On this and other internal evidence for why Job lived in the patriarchal or even pre-patriarchal period, see Dillard and Longman, 201; Hywel R. Jones, *A Study Commentary on Job* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2007), 24–25.

as he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. Why? For Job said, “It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed<sup>7</sup> God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually (1:5). What a model of a man! Like the blessed man of Psalm 1 he “walk[ed] not in the counsel of the wicked...but his delight [was] in the law of the LORD” and “in all that he [did], he prosper[ed].”

### A Dialog About this Man

This description leads to a *dialog about this man* between Satan and God, between the One who cannot lie and the one who cannot tell the truth.<sup>8</sup> For the first time we read **now there was a day** and on that day **the sons of God...present[ed] themselves before the LORD**. These are angelic beings later called “holy ones” (5:1; 15:15). With them was **Satan** or as he is called throughout, **the Satan**, which means, the accuser or adversary (1:6). Scholars debate his/its identity, but I’ll follow our forefathers that this is the Devil, the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 6:12), the accuser of the brethren and the dragon (Rev. 12), the roaring lion (1 Peter 5), and the liar and murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). **The sons of God and the Satan** present themselves as servants before their master, **the LORD**. Here

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<sup>7</sup> On the meaning of this word, see Jones, *Job*, 43.

<sup>8</sup> Jones, *Job*, 30–31.

the veil between the heavenly and earthly is opened just a little. For those of us who've left hyper-spiritual forms of Christianity, don't forget that excess doesn't negative the reality of the spiritual realm.

Notice something interesting in verse 7: **The LORD said to Satan.** Who initiates this dialog? The Lord! Children, have you've heard an adult say that you show respect by not talking until you're talked to? No one, not even Satan himself, can present himself before the Lord unless the Lord grants access and no one can say a word until the Lord speaks first. The Lord initiates, **"From where have you come?"** and Satan responds, **"From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it"** (1:7). This is not a leisurely stroll along PCH to feel the ocean breeze! These terms can describe the turbulence of an oar, a swimmer, or whip in the air. Satan is going around causing chaos in the affairs of men. Caryl said, "When Satan walks about the world, his walking is working; he goes about to tempt, to try and lay snares and baits to catch and captivate the souls of men."<sup>9</sup> The LORD asks **the Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"** (1:8) The Lord's initiation glorifies himself:

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Caryl, *Seed Thought, or Selections from Caryl's Exposition of Job* (1869; repr., London: Forgotten Books, 2015), 160.

**my servant...there is none like him.**” What’s he doing? Re-preaching the Genesis 3:15 promise: “He shall bruise your head.”<sup>10</sup> “As Satan stalked the saint of God, trying his soul, the tempter was himself under trial.”<sup>11</sup>

What can **the Satan** say? He can’t attack Job’s outward piety, because that’s evident to all. So he attacks Job’s inner motive. Of course this is ludicrous, as if the Lord has no idea what’s in Job’s heart! “**Does Job fear God for no reason?**” (1:9) This dialog is a spiritual battle between the Lord’s declaration and Satan’s lies! He’s saying, “Job is a deceiver like me. He’s faking it.” His challenge is “**stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face**” (1:11). Since Job is a righteous man Satan’s only recourse is to try and get Job to do what God says he won’t. Note how Satan tries to trick God—again, of course this is ridiculous—**stretch out your hand**. We know from James, for example, that when we are tempted we are not to say, “I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one” (James 1:13). How does the Lord respond? “**All that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand**” (1:12).

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<sup>10</sup> Meredith G. Kline, “Trial By Ordeal,” in *Through Christ’s Word: A Festschrift for Dr. Philip E. Hughes*, eds. W. Robert Godfrey and J. Boyd (Phillispburg: P&R, 1985), 82.

<sup>11</sup> Kline, “Trial By Ordeal,” 84.

**Against all that he has** Satan reaches out his insidious hand on another **day** when **his sons and daughters** were having a feast (1:13). Then come a series of four messengers, whom Satan's hand spared only to deliver devastating news: Job's 500 **oxen** and 500 female **donkeys** were stolen while **the servants** who cared for them were **struck down with the edge of the sword** by **the Sabeans** (1:14–15; cf. 1:3). Job's 7,000 **sheep** and **the servants** were destroyed by **the fire of God...from heaven** (1:16; cf. 1:3). Job's 3,000 **camels** were stolen and **the servants** who cared for them were **struck down with the edge of the sword** by **three groups** of **Chaldeans** (1:17; cf. 1:3). Job's seven **sons** and three **daughters...are dead**" (1:19; cf. 1:2).

But Job didn't do as Satan expected so on yet another **day** this scene is repeated all over again (2:1–3a). Job said, "**Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return**" (1:21), which Satan then uses against him before the Lord: "**Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life**" (2:4). So the Lord put Job in Satan's **hand** but **only spar[ing] his life** (2:6). **Satan** caused Job's whole body to be covered **with loathsome sores**, which Job could only scrape off with **a piece of broken pottery...while he sat in the ashes** (2:7–8). Satan even spared Job's wife, but only to use her against him: "**Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die**" (2:9).

## A Declaration About this Man

All of this brings us to the Lord's *declaration about this man*. Job is in your Bible not to give you a secret answer to why you are suffering today. It's in your Bible to show you that when you suffer it's within the sovereign permission and care of your Heavenly Father but most importantly of all, to show you that what God says about you is true and is final!

While everyone is saying Job either serves God for what he can get from God (1:9, 11) or that God is unworthy of worship because he forsakes his own, God is saying something else. We sang this morning, "When Satan tempts me to despair." And Job despaired; you despair. But God declares something about us that sounds so good that it has to be too good to be true, right? "**Have you considered *my servant Job*?**" He hasn't forgotten you or forsaken you when you suffer! "**There is *none like him on the earth*.**" God hasn't thrown you away like yesterday's trash; you're a treasure to him! "***Blameless...upright...fears God...turns away from evil***" (1:8; 2:3) God says this about Job who is going to go on to wish he was never born, to say he's a wretched sinner out of one side of his mouth while claiming to be righteous out of the other. But God says of him and of us, "He's mine! He's forgiven! He's covered by the blood of the Lamb! He's justified! He's adopted! He's an



heir of it all!”

Do you see what the Lord is saying to us in this story? This is a window into heaven to see how God sees us: he allows suffering to come into our lives to justify his own declaration to Satan and his hordes of hell that we truly are righteous in his sight! When you suffer God holds you up to the world as a trophy of his saving grace and his inscrutable wisdom.<sup>12</sup>

And this is why with Job we can demonstrate with our confession his own declaration of us: **“The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD,”** which is a play on words from Satan’s saying he would curse God (1:21). **“Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?”** (2:10).

And this is why we can endure suffering as God’s children, considering it his work. One old preacher said this is how we “sprinkle it with gospel-grace...to make it tolerable” and that when we discern the Father’s hand in suffering this “will take out much of the bitterness of it, and sugar the pill to you.”<sup>13</sup> Amen.

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<sup>12</sup> Meredith G. Kline, “Job,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody press, 1962), 461.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Boston, *The Crook in the Lot; or, The Sovereignty and Wisdom of God in the Afflictions of Men* (London: James Nisbet, 1832), 104.