

FPFWC Christian Development



Justice and Adversity

February 2022

Winter Quarter

February 26, 2022

Lesson #4 – Job and the Just God

SCRIPTURE TEXT –Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Key Verse - Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.—Job 42:3b–c

ICE BREAKERS –

1. *Why is repentance necessary for the believer?*
2. *What difference does it make that God made Job prosperous again?*

LESSON BACKGROUND

Job’s response, described in this week’s lesson, follows a lengthy and pointed reprimand from God. Out of a storm (Job 38:1; 40:6), God appeared to Job and warned him to “gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me” (38:3). Elsewhere in Scripture, God spoke to humanity through what could only be described as a storm (compare Exodus 19:16; Ezekiel 1:4; contrast 1 Kings 19:11–12). Out of the midst of this storm came the voice of God, demanding full attention as He presented His glory.

From that point, God proceeded to ask questions concerning Job’s knowledge and understanding of the world, beginning with, “Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding” (Job 38:4).

After asking about Job’s understanding of the observed world (Job 38:5–39:30), God invited Job to provide an answer (40:2). In a response that mirrored his later reply (see commentary on 42:3b, below), Job expressed that he could not provide answers to God’s line of questioning and was in no place to accuse God further (40:4–5). God’s response became even more pointed as He asked Job if he would “disannul my judgment” and “condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous” (40:8). God made it clear that Job, as a mere creature, was in no position to question the justice and judgment of the eternal Creator.

God’s response was not an attempt to belittle Job or to provide answers for Job’s suffering and lament. Rather, God’s intent was to show Job the limit of his understanding of God’s purposes and plans. God’s just nature will not be thwarted, brought into question, or limited by humanity.

LESSON COMMENTARY

42:1–6. In Job’s second response to God, he acknowledged that God is sovereign, and he confessed that he had contended with God in ignorance (vv. 1–3). He recognized his need to be instructed by God (not for him to teach God anything). Then he admitted that what he now knew about God compared with

what he knew before was like a contrast between hearing someone and then seeing that individual in person (v. 5). So he repented **in dust and ashes** (v. 6).

It would be natural to ask, “Why does God speak to Job without answering his questions directly?” Nowhere does God offer an explanation about the cosmic challenge made by the devil. Why is this? In response, David McKenna writes,

The answer is that Job is casting a dark shadow between his mind and God’s mind with the *why* of ethical questions about his suffering, which the human mind cannot comprehend or understand. We lack the perspective of God’s view in *creating* the universe, *controlling* its forces, and *caring* about its creatures. Job needs to learn that the issue is not ethical, the question is not *why*, and the need is not understanding. The issue is spiritual, the question is *who*, and the need is trust. (*Job*, CCSOT, vol. 12 [Waco, TX: Word, 1986], 293)

When believers face the kinds of suffering that Job faced, it is not answers to intellectual questions that are really necessary. The tendency is to ask, “Why did this tragedy happen?” Yet the *answer* is not what is truly sought. Believers want their sons or daughters or spouses back, their marriages restored, their financial losses reversed, or their bodies healed. The answer to the question would not satisfy. But a deepened sense of God’s love, sustaining tenderness, sovereign goodness, and gladsome presence will steady us. John Piper writes,

Pain and loss are bitter providences. Who has lived long in this world of woe without weeping, sometimes until the head throbs and there are no more tears to lubricate the convulsing of our amputated love? But Oh, the folly of trying to lighten the ship of suffering by throwing God’s governance overboard. The very thing the tilting ship needs in the storm is the ballast of God’s good sovereignty, not the ... [casting off] of [this] deep and precious truth. What makes the crush of calamity sufferable is not that God shares our shock, but that his bitter providences are laden with the bounty of love. (*Misery of Job and the Mercy of God* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2002], 8–9)

Job’s Restoration by God (42:7–17)

42:7–17. Walther Eichrodt faults Job’s friends for believing in what he refers to as “a mechanical doctrine of retribution” (*Theology of the Old Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967], 2:88). Yes, some suffering is a result of personal sin, but there are other reasons for its occurrence in the life of a believer or unbeliever. One purpose for suffering is that the glory of God might be displayed both in the life of the sufferer and to others, as Jesus said concerning the man born blind (Jn 9:3, cf. commentary above for Jb 9:25–35). It is instructive that in this case, the man’s blindness also became the vehicle for leading him to faith in Christ. Elihu’s speeches also pointed out that God sometimes uses suffering in the life of a believer to bring about repentance and restoration.

God told **Eliphaz the Temanite** that He was angry with him and his two friends because they misrepresented Him to Job. Eliphaz was singled out probably because he was the eldest and spoke first. Although the three men had related many truths about God, they also mistakenly insisted that God always sent

suffering in retribution for sin, limiting His sovereignty and reducing Him to a Deity who always acts in predictable ways. In this way they had **not spoken ... what is right** of God (v. 7), as Job had done. Twice in these verses, God affirmed that Job had **spoken ... right** about Him. How did Job earn this commendation, since he had accused God of being unjust to him? The answer seems to be that God saw “the thoughts and intents of Job’s heart” (Alden, *Job*, 412), knowing that Job was innocent of sin. Also note that Job repented of anything he had said that impugned God’s goodness. The three friends apparently repented only after God commanded them to sacrifice **seven bulls and seven rams as a burnt offering** in the presence of Job for their sins and to ask Job to **pray** for them.

God **accepted Job** and did not judge his friends for their **folly**. They did as the Lord told them, and Job was restored to fellowship with God and to even more prosperity than he had known before his trials.

Job’s siblings came and **comforted him** and **gave him ... money** and each a **ring of gold**. Though they apparently had done nothing before to comfort Job, at least his extended family responded then with acts of mercy.

The LORD blessed Job’s **latter** years more than the earlier years of his life with **14,000 sheep ... 6,000 camels ... 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys**, exactly twice what he had before (1:3). Job and his wife also had **seven** more **sons** and **three** more **daughters**, and Job lived to see his offspring to the fourth generation.

Since he lived **140 years** after his calamities, and since he was probably 40 or 50 years of age when the calamities struck, he lived close to 200 years; he **died ... full of days**. It is also possible that Job was closer to 70 years of age when he lost everything, which would make his remaining 140 years twice what he had lived before, in accordance with God’s **twofold** blessing (cf. v. 10). Interestingly, Eliphaz had prophesied Job’s longevity and it came true—but not for the reason Eliphaz suggested. He had said to Job, “You will come to the grave in full vigor, like the stacking of grain in its season” (5:26), providing that Job would acknowledge and repent of his sin. Job’s long life put him the company of the great patriarch Abraham, who also died “in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life” (Gn 25:8).

Some readers of Job might conclude that God’s goodness to Job was a reward for his upright behavior. But it is important to understand that “God was freely bestowing His goodness, not obligingly rewarding Job’s piety” (Zuck, *Job*, 188). Job’s latter blessings were not in payment of a debt that God owed to him. That idea brings one closer to the mechanical view of God’s actions that Job’s three friends propounded, that God always rewards piety with blessings just as He always punishes sin with calamity, because He cannot do otherwise.

But that idea was shown to fall far short of God’s infinite, incomparable, and often (to humans) incomprehensible wisdom, which is on display throughout the book of Job. Delitzsch states,

This is the twofold point of view from which the suffering of Job was to be regarded. It was designed, first of all, that Job should prove himself in opposition to Satan, in order to overcome him; and since Job does not pass through the trial entirely without sinning, it has the effect at the same time of

purifying and perfecting him. In both respects, the history of Job is a passage from the history of God's own conflict with the evil one, which is the substance of the history of redemption, and ends in the triumph of the divine love (*Biblical Commentary on the Book of Job*, 1:32).

LESSON NUGGET – Job had wanted to go to court and argue law, but instead he went to the altar and experienced grace. He received forgiveness, friends, family, wealth and honor, twice as much as he had before. God does not guarantee this kind of happy ending in this life to everybody who goes through trials (Heb. 11:36-40), but He does promise to reward all who are true to Him (Rev. 2:10). Job came out of the furnace a better person (Job 23:10), and so can you if you will trust God and let Him have His way.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*