

Job has a happy ending.

**42:7** It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.

**42:8** "Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you according to your folly, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

**42:9** So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job.

**42:10** The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold.

Job's friends no doubt thought that they had spoken wisely and pleaded God's case, but we are told that God was deeply angry with them. In verse 7 He says to Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has." The measure of God's anger is seen in the extravagant sacrifice (14 animals!) that He demanded of them to be reconciled. In addition, Job, whom they abused and treated contemptuously, must pray for them; God will accept his prayers (and, by implication, not their own!).

This is a beautiful instance of the nature and propriety of intercession for others. Job was a holy man; his prayers would be acceptable to God, and his friends were permitted to avail themselves of his powerful intercession in their behalf. . .

It is also an instance showing the nature of the patriarchal "piety." It was "presumed" that Job would be ready to do this, and would not hesitate thus to pray for his "friends." Yet it could not be forgotten how much they had wounded his feelings; how severe had been their reproaches; nor how confidently they had maintained that he was an eminently bad man. But it was presumed now that Job would be ready to forgive all this; to welcome his friends to a participation in the same act of worship with him, and to pray for them that their sins might be forgiven. Such is religion, alike in the patriarchal age and under the gospel, prompting us to be ready to forgive those who have pained or injured us, and making us ready to pray that God would pardon and bless them. (Barnes)

**42:11** Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities that the LORD had brought on him. And each one gave him one piece of money, and each a ring of gold.

**42:12** The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys.

**42:13** He had seven sons and three daughters.

**42:14** He named the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch.

**42:15** In all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers.

**42:16** After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations.

**42:17** And Job died, an old man and full of days.

God then blessed Job beyond what he had previously experienced. His friends and family came to his side (42:11); he had seven more sons and three more daughters (42:13), and greater material wealth than before his trials began (42:12). Lastly, he lived to a ripe old age, seeing his children and their children to the fourth generation (42:16). Eventually he died, “old and full of years”(42:17)—an epitaph reserved for the choicest or most favored of God’s servants (Abraham [Gen 23:8], Isaac [Gen 35:29], David [1 Chron 29:28], and Jehoiada the priest [2 Chron 24:15]).

People are sometimes bothered by this because it appears that Job was now happy because he has more children to replace the ones he lost and more wealth than he had before. But this is reading more into the text than it actually says. Job is comforted in that he has more children, but he no doubt had lasting pain over the ten children he knew and loved and had died. No matter how happy the ending, nothing can remove the scars of the suffering itself. The losses Job faced would always be with him. A happy ending is better than a miserable one, but it does not transform the suffering he endured into something less than suffering. A survivor of the Holocaust has not suffered less because he ultimately settles into a comfortable life in America.

Chapter 42 is not making the case that Job could be happy again because he had a family and wealth returned; rather, it is God publicly demonstrating His approval of Job. Job had been a righteous man and God approved of his life.

Did Job serve God for nothing?

There is no mention about Satan’s failure to prove God’s assessment of Job wrong. However, the implication is clear that Job did not serve God for what he received. Throughout his excruciating suffering, Job has demonstrated that he serves the Lord out of a pure heart. Job may utter words that darken God’s counsel, but he does not lose his integrity or abandon his God. Even his demand that God present Himself before Job and give an answer is the cry of the believer seeking to find out what on earth God is doing. God has won his wager with the devil.

Job still does not have all the answers; he still knows nothing about the wager between God and Satan. He must simply trust God that something far greater was at stake than his own personal happiness. He has now stopped hinting that God is unjust; he has come to know God better and enjoys the Lord’s favor in rich abundance once again.

### ***SOME FINAL THOUGHTS:***

#### ***1. God does not play games with His creatures.***

Although we have said that God entered into a wager with Satan, there is a danger that this may sound as if God is capricious -- as if He plays with the lives of his creatures so that He can win a bet.

Clearly, that is not true. The challenge to Satan was not a game; nor was the outcome, in God’s mind, obscure. Nothing in the book tells us why God did this. The solemnity and majesty of God’s response to Job not only mask God’s purposes in mystery, but presuppose they are serious and deep, not frivolous.

Nevertheless, the wager with Satan is in certain ways congruent with the rest of history. God’s concern for the salvation of men and women is part of a larger, cosmic struggle between God and Satan, in which the outcome is certain while the struggle is horrible.

At the end of the day, the ultimate test is of our knowledge of God. If our faith is robust enough, we will not permit even the most severe trial to turn us away from God. But perhaps the matter is seen more clearly from another perspective. The God who put Job through these trials is also the God of whom it is said that He will not let believers be tempted beyond what they can bear. But with the temptation, He will provide a way of escape also so that they will be able to endure it (1 Cor 10:13). God could not trust me with the intense suffering that Job endured; I could not take it. But we must not think that there was any doubt in God's mind as to whether He would win His wager with Satan over Job!

When we suffer there will be mystery, but will there also be faith?

### ***2. The question of disinterested piety – do we serve God for nothing?***

By “disinterested piety” we mean that when we serve God or do what is right, we should do so without any ulterior motives or self-interest. For example, we should help someone in need without expecting anything in return -- simply because helping is the right thing to do.

Jesus said in Luke 6:33-35, “If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.”

However, to denounce all self-interest is almost like asking someone to renounce their humanity. Human beings have needs and concerns about where our decisions will lead us. It is part of being human to take into account what it means for me personally when making a decision.

Jesus Himself does not expect that our devotion to Him and our discipleship will be entirely disinterested. Consider, for example, Matthew 19:29. Jesus says, “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.” Jesus is plainly saying if you will be His disciple and pay the ultimate cost of losing houses, family, and relationships for the sake of Christ, you will receive a reward. You will receive eternal life and benefits and joys beyond which you could ever imagine, both in this life and in the next. This is not disinterested devotion.

Even people willing to die for Christ do so because they believe God sees and God rewards. However, righteousness demands service that comes with a cost; and the suffering does not always end in a tangible blessing in this life. So, we can say that devotion to God is not disinterested in the sense that there is no reward whatsoever. On the other hand, we cannot say that devotion to God is easy. It can be very painful.

### ***3. The Book of Job teaches us that suffering is redemptive.***

Job's suffering was not meaningless; it brought about change for the better. Suffering made Job more fully human and gave him a deeper understanding of God.

When Job spoke of his life prior to his suffering, it's clear that his life was free from pain, suffering, and almost any kind of hardship that the majority of the world suffer. For example, in chapter 29 Job says, “my steps were washed with butter, and the rock poured out for me streams of oil. . . . When I took my seat in the square, the young men saw me and hid themselves, and the old men arose and stood. The

princes stopped talking and put their hands on their mouths" (29:6-8) . . . My glory is ever new with me, and my bow is renewed in my hand. To me they listened and waited, and kept silent for my counsel. After my words they did not speak again, and my speech dropped on them. They waited for me as for the rain . . ." (29:20-23).

Job was so wealthy, highly honored, powerful, and blessed that he could not fully understand what it was to be poor, oppressed, or weak. He was compassionate to the poor (31:16), but no one can truly understand what the poor go through unless they have had the same experiences.

But once Job was stripped of everything he had, he truly understood what it is like to be human. In Job 24:5-12 Job said, "Like wild donkeys in the desert, the poor go about their labor foraging food; the wasteland provides food for their children. They gather fodder in the fields and glean in the vineyards of the wicked. Lacking clothes, they spend their night naked; they have nothing to cover themselves in the cold. They are drenched by mountain rains and hug the rocks for lack of shelter. The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt. Lacking clothes, they go about naked; they carry the sheaves, but still go hungry. They crush olives among the terraces; they tread the winepresses, yet suffer thirst. The groans of the dying rise from the city; and the souls of the wounded cry out for help, But God charges no one with wrongdoing."

Could Job have ever said such things before he was afflicted? Would Job have recognized the enormity of the scandal of human suffering? Would he have been able to even ask the question, where is God? It was Job's pain, his suffering, his embracing of what it was to be a human that enabled him to give this beautiful, eloquent, powerful, and painful statement on the nature of human suffering. In other words, after his suffering, Job could really say what it is to be human and in pain. When he was impoverished and twisted with physical agony, he became the voice of all who live in such a condition.

Job in his suffering could even speak with compassion toward common sinners; not just people who suffer, but even people who suffer because of their sin. In Job 24 he denounces the wicked deeds of sinners, but he also says, they hide all the time. They are trapped in darkness. Their only friend is the terrors of the night. They live for a while and then they vanish. Their names are forgotten. They are cut off. They have no place in the world and God Himself strikes them down.

Yes, they are sinful. But Job is able to speak of them as not just bad people, but as people who suffer, people whose lives are wasted, people who are crushed and broken and entrapped in darkness.

In other words, in these two chapters of Job (Job 24 and 29) there is a remarkable contrast between Job, the man who knew nothing of pain and suffering, and Job, the man who suffered and who had nothing. In his suffering he knew fully what it is to be human and could embrace humanity in their suffering, sin, weakness, and mortality. Job had gone from a very high status to a very low status; but in the process, he had, in a sense, become much more human.

Secondly, Job's suffering was redemptive because he came to a deeper understanding of God.

Job's suffering brought to him the reality of evil in the world as he had never confronted it before; but it also brought him to an understanding of God that he had never had before.

The question of evil and suffering was much more complex than Job had thought. There was no denial that chaos existed, but Job had come to realize that God controls the chaos. If God were to instantly put

an end to evil, He would judge humanity and the human race would end. But God is longsuffering. He is merciful; He does not give us what we deserve. He waits for people to repent. All of this must be factored into the way that God works and why evil still exists.

In short, Job came to understand that the wisdom of God is opaque and our knowledge of it is limited. Job did not understand that Jesus would conquer sin and death at the cross and resurrection. Nevertheless, he held to his faith that God will do a great work of salvation.

We know more than Job did, but we are essentially in the same position that he was in. There is evil. We cry out for God to do something about it. God tells us that our faith and our perseverance is our righteousness and that there may be more suffering ahead. Our response is to trust God who knows when it is time to act.

In sum, suffering led Job to a deeper compassion for people and a deeper knowledge of God. Thus, the book illustrates the importance of redemptive suffering in the context of an evil world.

#### ***4. Job became aware of the need for a Mediator and Redeemer***

Job needed to fully embrace the sufferings of humanity to really understand what it was all about and to be able to speak for humans who suffer. He also needed to know that he was in need of a mediator and a redeemer. These lessons go together.

On the one hand the mediator has to be equal with God because he has no standing before God unless he is equal to God. On the other hand, in order to be in that position the mediator must fully embrace the suffering of humanity. He would have to go through the same experience as the rest of us, the experience of suffering, pain, and even temptation, if he is to know what it is to be truly human and to stand in our place.

The book of Job tells us we need a mediator that cannot be shielded from life's pains and sorrows. He must be someone who gets hungry and is not able to escape the hardships of humanity, mortality, and weakness. He cannot be shielded from pain if He is one of us. Jesus, our Mediator, needed to be truly human to understand the weaknesses of humanity. Hebrews 2:10 says that it was fitting for God to perfect the author of our salvation (i.e. Jesus) through sufferings. "Since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (Heb.2:18).

This also teaches us something about our ability to minister to others. Many of us would like to serve God with god-like powers. We would like to just pray for people and they get well. Or if someone has a problem, we would want to have this deep well of wisdom and know all the answers. We think, if I could just be more like God then we could be a true servant of God. However, it is, in fact, in our suffering and in our pain that we are most redemptive. When we are most human and yet rely upon God in our ministry to people, then we are truly imitating Christ and we are also repeating the experience of Job.

#### ***5. Job's reward was God.***

In the end, Job learns that his reward is not in having a lot of kids, wealth, or living a long life. All of those things he receives, but those are all secondary. His actual reward is God Himself. Job knows God. And in the face of all the evil and suffering that is in the world, Job has confidence that God will set it all right. And whether Job is rich or poor, he can now hold fast to his relationship to God and be unshaken in it because he has God in his life.