

A CONVERSATION IN HEAVEN

Philippians 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

The book of Job is not religious fiction – he was a real person, with real problems. The Bible tells us he was "perfect and upright" and that he "shunned evil" and had "integrity" – in other words, he was not a hypocrite in the sight of God. What Job was on the outside, he was on the inside; what he was in public, he was in private; he was REAL.

Job was a prosperous man with a large family and an abundance of land, animals and servants. But being rich did not turn Job away from God, for he acknowledged that the Lord gave this wealth to him, and he used it generously for the good of others. Job also had friends; today, we disparagingly call them "Job's comforters" but they were still friends!

But in one fateful 24-hour period, Job was stripped of his wealth and his family. One after another, four frightened messengers reported that 500 yoke of oxen, 500 donkeys, and 3,000 camels were stolen in enemy raids; 7,000 sheep were struck by lightning and killed; and all 10 of his children were killed as a windstorm collapsed the house they were in. Shortly after, Job lost his health and his wife angrily turned against him.

Job knew WHAT happened, but he did not know WHY it had happened; and that is the crux of the matter. Because this book allows us to visit the throne room of heaven and hear God and Satan speak, WE know who caused the destruction. BUT JOB DID NOT HAVE THE BENEFIT OF THIS KNOWLEDGE! And if we did not have this insight, we would probably take the same approach as Job's friends and blame Job himself for the tragedy (even if we did not SAY it we would probably THINK it).

Job 1:8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

This verse states clearly that God had no reason to punish Job! However, He allowed Job's trials for a higher purpose ...

James 5:11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. 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.

"Patience" – "consistent, cheerful, hopeful endurance"

Most people say that the theme of Job is the age-old question, "WHY does a loving and righteous God permit the godly to suffer?" But if that is the theme of this book, the question is never answered! Instead, this book answers the question, "HOW do the righteous endure suffering?"

WE DON'T LIVE BY GOD'S EXPLANATIONS, BUT BY HIS PROMISES!

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never (*GREEK: three negatives precede the verb - "I will never, I will never, I will never"*) leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

The most common Bible command is some variation of "Fear not!"
The most common Bible promise is some variation of "I will be with you!"

Matthew 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

God is sovereign, and even Satan can do nothing to God's people without permission. HE IS LIKE A MEAN DOG ON A STRONG LEASH.

The opening chapters of Job are a courtroom scene, but God and Satan deliver very different verdicts about Job! Satan said **"Guilty!"** because he is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10), but God said **"Not guilty!"** and in the end that is all that matters!

Satan's accusation against Job was really an attack on God. We might paraphrase it like this: "The only reason Job fears You is because You pay him to do it. You two have made a contract: You protect him and prosper him as long as he obeys You and worships You. You are not a God worthy of worship! You have to pay people to honor You."

Can you imagine it? The fundamental reason for Job's suffering was to silence the blasphemous accusations of Satan and prove that a man would honor God even though he had lost everything. It was actually a war in the heavenlies, but Job did not know it! Job's life was a battlefield where the forces of God and Satan were engaged in a spiritual struggle to decide the question, "Is Jehovah God worthy of man's worship?"

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Some of the so-called tragedies and trials in the lives of God's people have really been weapons of God to "still the enemy and the avenger."

Psalms 8:2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

Matthew 21:16 And said unto him, Hearst thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

Notice that DAVID said “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength” while JESUS said “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.” Jesus did not misquote David; rather He interpreted the Scripture and explained the truth David had discovered. When we praise God – even though we do not understand situations (we are “children”) – we win the battle in the heavenlies.

The book of Job appears at first to be a collection of long speeches from Job and his friends, and the conversation never seems to make much progress. But there are incredible lessons for those who are suffering!

The term "Job's comforters" is a familiar phrase for describing people whose help only makes you feel worse. But these three men had some admirable qualities – for one thing, they cared enough for Job to travel a long distance to visit him. And when they sympathized with him, they didn't sit in a comfortable place; they sat with him on the ash heap, surrounded by refuse. Because their grief was so great for him, they couldn't even speak for seven days.

However, Job's friends eventually did begin to speak, and regrettably chose to become prosecuting attorneys instead of supportive witnesses. In the end, the Lord even rebuked them, and they had to ask Job for forgiveness. Job's friends heard his words but did not feel the anguish of his heart, so they took the wrong approach in trying to help him handle his trials. They tried to give explanations when there weren't any to give!

ELIPHAZ

- **Job 4:13-17** In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?
- **Based his opinion on a spiritual experience he had (“the Lord gave me a word for you that will fix everything”)**

BILDAD

- **Job 8:8-10** For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers: (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow:) Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?
- **Based his opinion on traditional wisdom from the past (“if you just do what they did it will fix everything”)**

ZOPHAR

- **Job 11:2-6** Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.
- **Based his opinion on hard-line legalism (“it doesn't matter what you do anyway because it can't be fixed”)**

ELIHU

- **Job 32:7-10** I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment. Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion.
- **Based his opinion merely on the fact that no one else's ideas had worked (“let's just try anything to try and fix it”)**

BUT AFTER ALL THIS THERE WAS STILL NO ANSWER TO “WHY?” (THAT ANSWER WAS GIVEN BEFORE JOB STARTED SUFFERING!)

Job 1:10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

The devil accused God of putting a hedge of blessing around Job, so God allowed the devil to tear that hedge down. But once he did, he found another hedge that JOB built – his unshakable faith!

Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

Job 19:25-27 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

Matthew 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

JOB SAID, “THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN TO ME IS DEATH!”

Daniel 3:17-18 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Philippians 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO A MAN THAT WILL WORSHIP IN SPITE OF THE “WHYS” OF LIFE? ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!

“I CAN’T TELL YOU WHY I AM SUFFERING, BUT I CAN SHOW YOU HOW I’M GOING TO SUFFER! I’M GOING TO PRAISE GOD IN IT!”

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

ALL THINGS IN LIFE ARE NOT GOOD! BUT GOD PROMISES THAT ALL THINGS WILL “WORK TOGETHER” FOR OUR GOOD!

Steve Willoughby: “God, I’m willing to be used as much or as little as You want – it’s Your purpose that is most important.”

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Priscilla McGruder: “What once looked like a mountain’s just a hill, from Heaven’s point of view.”

“You have heard of the patience of Job ...”

“You have heard of the patience of (ME!) ...”