

The Themes of the Book of Job

The Loss Job Suffered Was Extensive, from:

- losing children,
- losing servants,
- losing material possessions,
- losing his health,
- losing friends,
- losing respect from others (Job 17:6; 19:13-22), and
- losing his reputation (Job 19:13-22).

Self-Righteousness Is Not Spiritually Healthy

Self-righteousness is a major theme in the Book of Job. Job was righteous in his own eyes.

Job 32:1 So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

Self-righteousness can lead to problems when we encounter misfortune in our lives. We will be reluctant to blame ourselves for any misfortune. We may blame others or even blame God for trouble in our lives. In Job's case, he blamed God for his misfortune and rebuked God for making a mistake.

Job's self-righteousness was so strong that he justified himself rather than justify God. God never makes a mistake. We should never think that we are right and God is wrong.

Job 27:1-5 Moreover Job continued his discourse, and said: ² "As God lives, *who* has taken away my justice, And the Almighty, *who* has made my soul bitter, ³ As long as my breath *is* in me, And the breath of God in my nostrils, ⁴ My lips will not speak wickedness, Nor my tongue utter deceit. ⁵ Far be it from me That I should say you are right; Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.

Job 32:2 Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God.

Job 40:2, 6-8 "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it." ⁶ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: ⁷ "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: ⁸ "**Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?**

A Challenge to Our Faith

Job 1:21 ²¹ And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Job 13:15-16 ¹⁵ Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. ¹⁶ He also *shall* be my salvation, For a hypocrite could not come before Him.

God Is Not the Cause of All Things

Both Job and his counselors were certain that everything that happens, both good and bad, is the will of God. To believe in God as the instigator of all that happens makes it more difficult to trust God when one is in the midst of a series of terrible events. It is a great theological dilemma to maintain that God is in control of all that happens and at the same time grant that humans often act in defiance of God's will. The interaction of God's will and our will and the phenomenon of evil makes for very complicated experiences.

The Importance of Good Friends

Job indicated what a friend should be doing. Job's friends made accusations and Job became angry and retaliated. No one tries to bring peace or seek wisdom from God. Job said that if his shoes were on his friends' feet, he would have been comforting them, not accusing them. This is what friends are for, providing comfort (Job 16:1-5).

Job 16:1-5 Then Job answered and said: ² **"I have heard many such things; Miserable comforters *are* you all!"** ³ Shall words of wind have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? ⁴ I also could speak as you *do*, **If your soul were in my soul's place. I could heap up words against you, And shake my head at you;** ⁵ **But I would strengthen you with my mouth, And the comfort of my lips would relieve *your* grief.**

Job 19:13-19 ¹³ "He has removed my brothers far from me, and my acquaintances are completely estranged from me. ¹⁴ My relatives have failed, and my close friends have forgotten me. ¹⁵ Those who dwell in my house, and my maidservants, count me as a stranger; I am an alien in their sight. ¹⁶ I call my servant, but he gives no answer; I beg him with my mouth. ¹⁷ My breath is offensive to my wife, And I am repulsive to the children of my own body. ¹⁸ Even young children despise me; I arise, and they speak against me. ¹⁹ All my close friends abhor me, and those whom I love have turned against me.

Job 6:14-15 ¹⁴ "To him who is afflicted, kindness *should be shown* by his friend, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. ¹⁵ My brothers have dealt deceitfully like a brook, Like the streams of the brooks that pass away

Proverbs 17:17 ¹⁷ A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 27:9 ⁹ Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man's friend *gives delight* by hearty counsel.

The Need to Encourage Ourselves in Times of Trials

Job 16:4-7 ⁴ I also could speak as you *do*, If your soul were in my soul's place. I could heap up words against you, And shake my head at you; ⁵ *But* I would strengthen you with my mouth, And the comfort of my lips would relieve *your grief*. ⁶ **"Though I speak, my grief is not relieved; And if I remain silent, how am I eased?"** ⁷ But now He has worn me out; You have made desolate all my company.

Psalms 42:5-6 ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul? And *why* are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him *For* the help of His countenance. ⁶ O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore, I will remember You from the land of the Jordan, And from the heights of Hermon, From the Hill Mizar.

There Is Hope

There is hope at the end of the book of Job. God does hear us and He responds. God was listening to Job and He responded to Job in His time. God responded to Job in such a way that Job came to know God better than he knew God before his trial began.

Job 42:5-6 ⁵ "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. ⁶ Therefore I abhor *myself*, And repent in dust and ashes."

Job received double what he had lost. Unfortunately, that is not the outcome that every sufferer can expect. People do not always have their hopes fulfilled in such a positive way. The greater hope may come simply in the reality of God's showing up to address Job, as Job implies in 42:5.

Suffering Is Not Always Because of Sin

Job's friends were also blessed, although they had to repent, they learned that their theology was flawed. Suffering is not always the result of sin in a person's life.

John 9:1-7 Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. ⁴ "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. ⁷ And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool

of Siloam " (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

The Importance of Humility

Job did not recognize the grace of God in his life. Although God called Job blameless (Job 1:8), Job was not perfect. When God responded to Job's complaint (Job, Chapters 38-41), God brought a fear and awe of God, such that Job was speechless. Job never understood the greatness of God until God confronted him with a series of questions that displayed God's mighty hand in His creation. Job saw how vastly superior God was to Job, and recognized that he was vile (Job 40:4). Job abhorred himself (Job 42:6).

Job 40:1-8 Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said: ² **"Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct *Him*? He who rebukes God, let him answer it."** ³ Then Job answered the LORD and said: ⁴ "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? **I lay my hand over my mouth.** ⁵ Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further." ⁶ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: ⁷ "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: ⁸ **Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?**

Job's friends were also humbled (Job 42:8), as they were required to seek forgiveness and they had to offer their sacrifices to Job to be forgiven.

Job 42:7-9 ⁷ And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, **"My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me *what is right*, as My servant Job *has*."** ⁸ "Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you *according to your folly*; because you have not spoken of Me *what is right*, as My servant Job *has*." ⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job.

Also notice that God blessed Job when he prayed for his three friends:

Job 42:10 ¹⁰ And the LORD restored Job's losses **when he prayed for his friends.** Indeed, the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.