

## **JOB 1:8-22 - FAITH TESTED - Believers Show the Depth of Their Faith in Adversity.**

Most of us hold to an idea that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. But how do we explain bad things happening to good people? Adversity can blindsides us and leave us reeling in shock and dismay. We struggle to look for answers, yet answers are not always found, just more questions. Job experienced unexpected tragedies in his life and demonstrated the depth of his faith as he faced them.

What is the most difficult challenge you have faced? What did you learn about what you trusted during that challenge?

### **UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

#### **JOB 1:1–2:10**

Job 1:1–2:10 lays the groundwork for the Book of Job. It begins by identifying Job as a real person who lived in the country of Uz. Jeremiah the prophet mentioned the land of Uz being in proximity to Edom, south of the land of Canaan (Jer. 25:20; Lam. 4:21). The text also clearly states Job was a man of integrity (Job 1:1). At the outset, the book establishes that none of the tragedies that are to beset him as the narrative unfolds happen as God's punishment or discipline on account of Job's sin. Everything about Job was sincere as he sought to live according to God's will. In fact, he was not only meticulous about continuing in faithful obedience to God, he was deeply concerned about the spiritual condition of his children (Job 1:4-5). Job's uprightness is essential to the message of the book.

Job 1:6 introduces Satan into the narrative. Satan's name means "accuser" or "adversary." He belittles God (Job 1:11; 2:4-5), demonstrates he is an enemy of those faithful to God by seeking to destroy them (Job 1:13-19; see also Luke 22:31; 1 Pet. 5:8), and is the accuser of the people of God (Job 1:9-11; see also Zech. 3:1; Rev. 12:10).

Satan raised the questions that are at the heart of the Book of Job: "Is God worthy of worship for who He is, or is He worth worshiping only for what one can get out of Him?" Is it possible for those who belong to God to remain faithful to Him in the midst of great suffering? God allowed Satan to take away Job's wealth, health, and family while sparing Job's life (1:13-19; 2:4-8), demonstrating that Satan was under God's authority and but a pawn. God was the One who providentially directed all that would transpire. Furthermore, these actions laid the groundwork for God's answer to Satan's challenging questions. God used His servant Job to silence the Accuser through Job's faithfulness (1:20-22; 2:9-10).

**As you read Job 1:8-22, what do you discover concerning what faith in God looks like in the face of adversity?**

### **EXPLORE THE TEXT**

## **PERMISSION GRANTED (JOB 1:8-12)**

8 Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." 9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." 12 The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

## **VERSE 8**

Verse 8 begins with the word **then**, referring back to the preceding verses. The scene is reminiscent of the prophet Micaiah's vision of seeing the Lord sitting on His throne and the whole heavenly army standing at both sides of Him (1 Kings 22:19). What is unexpected about this scene is that Satan also attended. Satan came with the "angels" (Job 1:6), but he certainly was not one of them.

The Lord asked Satan, "Where have you come from?" (v. 7). Satan's cloaked reply revealed his reason for coming was for no good, saying, "From roaming throughout the earth" (v. 7). Satan's answer was true but incomplete because he failed to reveal what his purpose for "roaming through the earth" was. Peter later revealed what Satan's intentions were and continue to be, stating: "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan had found someone in his roaming he wanted to devour, and that someone was Job.

God knew Satan's intentions. Therefore, He got straight to the point, asking Satan: "**Have you considered my servant Job?**" In other words, "Is Job your next target?" God made some powerful statements about Job. Saying that Job feared the Lord meant Job had a deep-seated reverence and awe for God that caused him to want to please God at all costs. It involved wonder, submission, worship, love, and admiration inspired by God's authority over him and all of creation.

The fact that God initiated the conversation with Satan demonstrates that He was orchestrating what was going on and what would transpire going forward in the Book of Job. Satan appears to have thought he had an opportunity to destroy one of God's saints while at the same time bringing disrepute to God. However, God was about to use both His servant, Job, and the adversary and accuser of the saints, Satan, to bring glory to Himself. As the narrative unfolds, God will silence Satan through the life of His servant Job, such that Satan will no longer be mentioned in the book after Job 2:7.

**Why is it important for believers to remember that while we may be surprised and shocked by sudden calamities, God is not and He is in complete control?**

## **KEY DOCTRINE: The Kingdom**

**The kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King (Rom. 5:17).**

## **VERSES 9-11**

The question in verse 9 gets at the heart of the message of the Book of Job. Satan's question was dripping with cynicism, questioning Job's motives and suggesting that the only reason Job feared God was for the material blessings he could get from God. According to Satan, God was just a means to an end for Job. Satan was saying that Job did not really love God, honor God, or worship God because God is worthy. Rather, Job's piety toward God was a ruse, and the object of Job's affections and his true god was Job himself.

Stating that God had **put a hedge around** Job, his family, and possessions means that God had protected Job and everything that belonged to him from harm. Satan's claim was that God had secured Job's loyalty with bribery. Satan implied that Job's faith was untested because Job had not experienced any difficulties in life. Instead, God not only protected Job but also continued to bless and prosper Job in his **work**. The phrase **spread throughout the land** describes the vast swath of land that spread in every direction with which God had blessed Job. Job 1:2-3 attests to the validity of Satan's claims concerning what God had done for Job.

Satan suggested God test Job to see if Job's motives for worshiping Him were because of his love for God or his love of self. At the heart of the matter is the question: Can a person truly love God for who He is and not just for what he or she can get from God? The stretching out of one's arm or hand was a common ancient Near Eastern idiom meaning "to go and attack." Satan implored God to aggressively destroy everything that Job owned, and if He did, then Job would **curse** Him.

**Can a person truly love God for who He is and not just for what he or she can get from God?**

## **VERSE 12**

The Lord accepted Satan's challenge and gave him permission to do whatever he wanted to do with Job's family and possessions. However, God stipulated to Satan: on the man himself do not lay a finger. God's response to Satan highlights that while Satan is powerful, his power is limited and under God's sovereignty. God's ways are sometimes mysterious to us, but we can rest assured that whatever He does will be for our ultimate good and His ultimate glory.

**How should knowing that Satan seeks opportunities to attack those who are faithful followers of God affect how we think and live?**

## **ATTACK EXECUTED (JOB 1:13-19)**

13 One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, 15 and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" 16 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" 17 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" 18 While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 19 when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the

desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

### VERSES 13-15

**Job’s sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house.** This appears to be a harmless picture of a family enjoying time together. However, in the context there is a foreboding aspect to it that foreshadows the impending annihilation of the blessings Job and his family had experienced.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Sabeans were nomads from the southern part of Arabia and descendants of Sheba, the rich queen who visited Solomon (1 Kings 10). Later in Job they are called “traveling merchants” (Job 6:19; see also Joel 3:8).

The scene highlights the unexpectedness and suddenness of Satan’s strike against Job and his family. In a matter of moments, Job’s blessings would be replaced with sorrow and grief. One after another, Job’s messengers came and reported the swift succession of ruin of Job’s material wealth. The first to fall were Job’s **oxen and donkeys**. Verse 3 indicates Job had five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred female donkeys. The text does not indicate how many **servants** were tending to the oxen and donkeys, but one can assume there was quite a substantial number. Like a swift bird of prey, the **Sabeans attacked** them to snatch all of the animals and kill all of the servants except for the one who was able to escape and inform Job of what had transpired.

### VERSES 16-19

While this servant was still reporting to Job what happened to his servants, oxen, and donkeys, a second servant arrived to report yet another disaster. This servant reported that **the fire of God fell from the heavens** and consumed Job’s **sheep** and the other **servants** with them. This could be describing lightning strikes, but whatever it was, it was the act of Satan. While this servant was **still speaking**, a third servant arrived, exclaiming three bands of **Chaldeans** from northern Mesopotamia raided Job’s **camels** and seized them after killing all the rest of Job’s **servants**. In a matter of moments, Job’s assailants came from what must have seemed like every direction—the south, the north, and even the sky.

Job’s most devastating report came from yet another servant who arrived while the third one was **still speaking**. This fourth messenger pronounced the deaths of all of Job’s children as they were at the oldest brother’s banquet. **Suddenly a mighty wind** struck the young man’s home, causing it to collapse. All of these tragedies happened without Job’s being aware of what had transpired between God and Satan. He was surely at a loss of understanding why these things happened as they did.

**What can believers learn about the timing, suddenness, and severity of Satan’s attacks from these verses?**

## **TRUST MAINTAINED (JOB 1:20-22)**

20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21 and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." 22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

### **VERSES 20-22**

In response to the surmounting tragedies in his life, Job continued praising God. He recognized God's sovereign rule over all things. All of this is demonstrated by the succession of deliberate actions he took after receiving his servants' jarring reports. Tearing one's clothing and shaving one's head and beard were customary ways of expressing grief in the ancient Near East. After expressing his grief before the Lord, Job **fell to the ground in worship**.

What came out of Job's mouth revealed what was in his heart. He did not blame the culprits who had attacked or the servants who failed to defend Job's interests. In fact, he did not even blame God. Instead, trusting God, Job recognized God's sovereign control over all things. Job realized all that he had was from God's gracious hand. Just as it was God's prerogative to give, it was also God's prerogative to take it all away. Rather than sinning against God, Job voiced his confidence in the sovereignty of God even in the midst of extreme loss and sorrow.

**How does viewing God as sovereign over all His creation impact how a person responds to losses in this life?**

**BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible dictionary.**

Read an article on "suffering" in a Bible dictionary. Make a list of the faithful men and women of the Bible who suffered unimaginable circumstances. How do these examples help you properly frame your expectations of the Christian life? How does their faith teach you and shape your response to suffering?

### **APPLY THE TEXT**

**Satan seeks opportunities to attack God's faithful followers.**

**Believers are not immune from experiencing calamity and loss.**

**Believers can worship God even in the midst of life's challenges, knowing that He is sovereign.**

**Who do you know who is going through a challenging time? What insights from this passage can you share with them as encouragement?**

**As a group, memorize Job 1:21. Discuss what impact having this perspective makes in the life of a believer. How may one's response to suffering be a witness to others?**