



Job 1:13 - 2:13

Part 2- The Innocent Sufferer

4/23/2023

We are going to Job 1:13 today. There are a number of layers to this passage so we will look at much of the same passage next week as well. Today we will peel back the first layer and look at how Job suffered, and what that means for us in our suffering and for how we view Jesus, and next week we will look at God's hand in suffering and the reasons for suffering.

So where we pick up the story, Satan has been roaming around in the earth, digging for dirt on people, looking to accuse. And one day he presents himself before God, and God brings Job to his attention. And God is beaming like a proud dad: have you considered my servant Job? There's nobody like him in all the earth. He fears the Lord, he turns away from evil (1:8).

So Satan says, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Of course he acts like he loves you, you've blessed him with wealth and a happy family, a good name, influence, perfect health. Who isn't delightful when it's all going well?"

Who can't allow 'rejoice evermore' to roll off his tongue when life is amazing. So take away all that stuff, and you'll see what he's really made of. He will curse you to your face."

Job 1:12 "And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD."

So we know it's about to go down. Satan's intent here is to humiliate God. To prove that God has no real worth to Job. Job just likes God's stuff.

God has said that Job is the best guy He's got. And if Satan can get Job to curse God to his face, God's glory will be tarnished. The legitimacy of God's work in hearts will be questioned.

And we know how this is - when enough people claiming to be Christians fail to keep following God, prove to be false, or run away from God, we can doubt a bit the work of God in the world. On dark days we can ask, "Is the gospel working? Is the Spirit at work in hearts? Does claiming to know Christ and being involved in church community make a difference at all when so many fall? Are there any true believers? Is God really worth it to anyone?"

And so Satan would love to see Job fall. To diminish the worth of God before His heavenly counsel, before the angels, and before people. So he sets off on his mission.

Job 1: [13] Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,

This day starts as a day of joy and togetherness. Job's kids are all together, and they're eating and drinking wine - this is a celebration, a day of happiness and joy. Which only contributes to the shock of what is about to happen next.

Probably half of us are old enough to remember September 11th, 2001. And one of the elements that contributed to the shock of that day was what a beautiful day it was outside. It was a late summer day, with bright blue skies, low humidity, a perfect morning. It was a good day to be in New York. And then calamity struck suddenly. If anything could make it worse, the perfect start to the day made the events even more unexpected and traumatic.

And here in Job 1:13, it is a perfect start to the day. This looks like an idyllic family Christmas dinner.

But Satan intrudes on perfect places - he once was a snake that intruded on a perfect garden with lies about God, and he destroyed the absolute peace and tranquility in the garden. He creeps in to the happiest and most innocent of places to bring pain. It's part of the trauma he inflicts.

Which is why families today are under so much pressure - the best things are being ruined by the lies of the evil one. It's why churches have so many problems - ruining the

best of places is Satan's M.O. It's why children are preyed upon by evil people. Because the snake loves to ruin the garden.

He loves to interrupt tranquility with calamity.

And here, doing what he does, Satan strikes on a day of joy and peace:

Job 1:14-15 [14] and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, [15] and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

So the Sabeans, a group of people from a kingdom to the south of Uz, come and steal the oxen and the donkeys and kill the servants. You need the oxen to plow, they were a major source of Job's wealth. So, in a moment, Job has lost a huge portion of his wealth. Verse 3 said he had 500 yoke of oxen - that's 1000 oxen, and they're gone. So he lost the thing that made him the most prosperous man in the east, and lost probably many of his friends who served him there. This is already a life-changing level of devastation in a moment.

Job 1:16 [16] While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

"Fire of God" in scripture usually means a huge bolt of lightning.¹ And in the book of Numbers it was sent as divine judgment on sinning Israelites.²

And today, it fell on the herds of sheep and the servants that worked with them.

Job 1:17 [17] While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

¹ Hartley, John E.. The Book of Job (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament) (p. 76). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

² Numbers 11:1-3, Numbers 16:35, Numbers 26:10

Now the Chaldeans come from the North and take away the camels and the servants that worked with them. This transportation industry that Job owned, and all the people involved in it, are destroyed.

Job 1:18-19 [18] While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “Your sons and daughters ...

Imagine how Job’s heart sinks to hear this. Anything but my sons and daughters.

were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, [19] and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

Now an east wind came across the desert, it knocked down the house and killed his children. When they were in the middle of festal joy.

Absolute calamity hits Job in an instant.

It’s like the whole world has turned against him - from every direction, Chaldeans from the north, Sabeans from the south, a killer wind from the east, and lightning from the sky.

This is too much for anyone to bear, and too much to ever be thought of as coincidence.

One huge calamity in a day could just be the luck of the draw, and maybe 2, but 4, all aimed at the heart of Job, there must be **some intelligent design somewhere behind all of this suffering.** (We’ll talk about that design more next week.)

And we can suppose that Satan is watching Job - Satan wants to be proven right here. He thinks that Job only worships because he is blessed. So when Job inevitably curses God, Satan can say, “I was right - and parade himself back into the divine throne room and boast that there is no real faith out there - these people don’t really believe, God hasn’t really changed any hearts or any lives - God isn’t valuable, even to the people we think know Him best.

And if it works on Job it will work on anyone - Change their circumstances and they’ll curse God like Job. That will prove that God is not doing any good work in hearts and lives.

Job 1:20-22 [20] Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. [21] And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”[22] In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Job, through tears and pain and grief and shock, **worships**.

He doesn’t sin. He doesn’t curse God. He doesn’t say God did anything wrong to him.

It’s not that Job isn’t grieving or mourning or crying or despairing. He’s doing all of those things. God doesn’t command us to give up our pain and sorrow and grief so that we can worship. We’re not stoics who refuse to feel and instead we pray.

He calls us to worship through it all.

So Job is feeling all of this deeply, and not running away from God who has now taken everything from him, but worshipping. Honoring. Lifting up the value of God. Saying “God is enough,” even through the worst loss imaginable.

So Satan’s plan has backfired - God is getting more glory from Job than He was when Job had it all. Praise comes easy when you’re a billionaire with a perfect family and a great reputation. But here, God is getting the kind of worship that doesn’t easily roll off the tongue. The kind that is forged in tears and pain.

So the evil Satan intended to do is accomplishing the opposite of what he intended.

Job is not only not cursing God, He is worshipping. He is re-asserting his faith in God, doubling down on his allegiance to God.

He is no fair-weather worshiper, He worships God because God is God, not because God gives him everything he wants.

So Satan has failed, The Lord is getting His glory, Job is faithful.

Satan and his demons are hanging their heads in shame, it looks like the Bills locker room in January. But they give it another go:

Job 2:1–3 [1] Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the

LORD. [2] And the LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” [3] And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.”

There's important repetition here - God says the same thing to Satan he said before - Job is still his servant, there is still none like him in all the earth. The servant of God is still standing, tested now, and approved. Satan was wrong.

But Satan admits no wrong - even when he couldn't have been more wrong. His accusations are for everyone else, never for himself, there's no humility in Satan. (Beware the Satanic way of living - always blaming, always right, never self-aware, no amount of evidence could convince you you're wrong, everyone else is wrong.)

Job 2:4-6 [4] Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. [5] But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” [6] And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”

So Satan says, “The problem is you didn't put enough pressure on Job. Job' will break, take away his health, and watch his disgust at God flow.

So now Satan has permission to do even more - with one limit, Job gets to live. Job won't be thrilled about this soon, he wishes soon that he had never lived.

But Satan is about to afflict Job as much as you possibly can without killing him. It's the definition of torture. He has permission to make Job's life as close to hell as a life can get.

Job 2:7-8 [7] So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. [8] And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

So now Job is afflicted with sores.

And this is a rare word for sores, used in Deuteronomy 28:27 to describe the afflictions that Israel will suffer if they are faithless³:

Deuteronomy 28:[27] The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed.

So whatever this condition is, it is bad. It is hopeless - seems like the kind of thing that can't be healed.

And Job sits in the ash heap. Which was a way of mourning and feeling utter humiliation and anguish.⁴ It was where the outcasts went to sit among the disposed ash and broken pots from the town.

So before the pain and loss of his family was great, but now the physical afflictions are great:

From around the book of Job, we see that his symptoms included:

severe itching (2:8),

disfiguration (2:12),

sores that scab over, crack, and ooze, and are infected with worms (7:5),

fever with chills (21:6; 30:30),

skin shriveling and falling off (30:30),

eyes red and swollen, not just from his disease, but from weeping (16:16),

sleeplessness and delirium (7:4, 13–14),

choking (7:15),

Weight loss (19:20),

Excruciating unceasing pain throughout his body (30:17),

And to top it all off, bad breath (19:17)⁵

Now where do you turn? At least he still has his wife - the one person who hasn't been taken from him.

³ Piercing Leviathan, God's Defeat of Evil in the Book of Job, by Eric Ortlund. (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 2021). 20.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Hartley, John E.. The Book of Job (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament) (p. 82). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

Job 2:[9] Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.”

So the one person that has the most potential to comfort him offers him no comfort. Her take on the whole thing is, “You are clinging to God even though he allows this harm to come to you. Curse him - announce your disgust at God, and then die and be done with it all.

So this has been enough to break her faith, just like it probably would be for many of us. We can be hard on Job’s wife, but if we knew someone who had lost this much and their faith waivered and they had some dark moments and harsh words, we’d understand. It’s not OK what she says, but when you lose that much and speak out of that much pain, it isn’t necessarily a reflection on your true character. So go easy on Job’s wife (IMO). She’s not right, she sins here, but we’re patient with people in situations like this.

And she says, why are you clinging to your faith in God? What has that done for you?

You’re still clinging to God and worshiping? Still singing blessed be the name of the Lord?

Sing “Cursed be the name of the Lord” and die.

You’re the best man I’ve ever met, and God is doing to you all the stuff He said he would do to judge sinning people. Give up on that God!

But once again, he remains faithful:

Job 2:[10] But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

That’s not you - you are doing what foolish women do, and you’re not one of them. God is our God when He gives us what is good and when He gives us what is bad.

Job is still faithful.

So his friends come to comfort him:

Job 2:11–13 [11] Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. [12] And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. [13] And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

So the friends, well-meaning, come to comfort him but they’re shocked to see him. He’s unrecognizable, swollen eyes, emaciated, covered in sores and worms. They came to comfort him, but they see him, and they weep.

They sit in silence for 7 days with him, with no words that can help any of this. (And we’ll get to the friends more in a couple of weeks, but this is actually their finest moment in this book, when they’re not speaking.)

So Job is as low as you can go without being in a grave. And he hasn’t done anything wrong to deserve this, even God said so.

Next week we will talk more about why God allows suffering. It isn’t all the same. Sometimes it is because of our sin that needs to be burned off of us, but other times we are righteous and our suffering isn’t some discipline from God. More on that next week.

But to be clear in this situation: Job is suffering innocently.

And he is suffering in every category:

Physically - unspeakable pain and disfigurement.

Socially - his friends can’t even speak to him yet, his wife has lost her faith, he’s isolated in the ash heap.

Emotionally - he has lost his kids

Economically - he is in utter poverty

Reputationally - nobody in their day would see someone suffer like this and not think that they must have done something awful to deserve it.

Spiritually - he is wondering why God is doing this, why are all these signs of God's judgment in his life? (He has fire of God hitting him, boils, raiding nations - all signs of God's disapproval.)

And he has done nothing wrong. Nothing worse could happen to him except dying.

How easily does our loyalty to God topple over compared to Job's!

How far we often are from Asaph in the Psalm who prayed:

Psalm 73:25-26

25 Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail,

but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

We so quickly say, "But I was hurt!" and deny Him like Peter. But Job suffered and worshipped.

And God gets so much glory when someone is experiencing searing loss and stays faithful. When they say, "This is as terrible as it can get, but God will sustain us. God will be enough for us. God is somehow, though I couldn't fathom how, good to us, even in this. God is worthy of worship."

People like that show the worth of God. And sometimes that's the reason for our suffering.

John Newton: "Some Christians are called to endure a disproportionate amount of suffering. Such Christians are a spectacle of grace to the church, like flaming bushes unconsumed, and cause us to ask, like Moses: 'Why is this bush not burned up?' The strength and stability of these believers can be explained only by the miracle of God's sustaining grace. The God who sustains Christians in unceasing pain is the same God —

with the same grace — who sustains me in my smaller sufferings. We marvel at God’s persevering grace and grow in our confidence in Him as He governs our lives.”⁶

I pray that God would strengthen our faith so we could suffer well, be confused well, endure pain and hurt, and say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

We fall short of that. My faith can get so wimpy - ready to give up on God when the slightest breeze pushes back against me. I pray that God would teach us to look to great sufferers like Job and learn from him.

Nobody in all of the Bible suffers more than Job, and nobody in the Bible is more innocent and righteous than Job.

Except for One.

So let’s consider Him.

Hebrews 12:1-2 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider this cloud of witnesses - the Hebrews 11 men and women of faith who suffered greatly to follow the Lord, people of whom the world wasn’t worthy, but who kept their faith. And more than anything, consider HIM - who for the joy set before Him endured the cross.

We don’t have to deny that our loss is loss, that our suffering is real, that we’ve been hurt by people, that God is mysterious and doesn’t make sense. Job admits all of those things. But let it all drive us to Him, not away from Him.

And the author of Hebrews says that by looking to Him and His suffering, we get strength for ours.

So look at His suffering:

⁶ Quoted in [A Spectacle of Glory: God’s Light Shining through Me](#). Joni Eareckson Tada. Zondervan. 2016. Page 7.

Physically - the agony of Gethsemane and the cross.

Socially - his friends have abandoned him, they couldn't stay awake in the garden. (This is the help we need when so many don't stick with the faith and so many of our friends fail.)

Emotionally - He is rejected by his whole nation, betrayed by someone he served.

Economically - They've even taken away his clothes.

Reputationally - He's dying on a criminal's cross with nothing but indignities and mockery and slander.

Spiritually - He is experiencing signs of God's cursing:

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 ““And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.”

Like Job, Jesus didn't curse God. In fact, he didn't even curse his enemies who were nailing him there.

But Jesus is better than Job:

Job was relatively good, Jesus was absolutely good.

Job suffered as much as you can without dying, Jesus suffered that much and then did die.

Job was blindsided by suffering, but Jesus embraced it willingly.

Job's suffering was an example, a bright shining light that glorified God. Jesus's suffering was that, and it was ALSO a substitution. It wasn't just to teach us or show us, but to save us.

Because, once again, Satan's plan backfired. The evil he intended was accomplishing the opposite.

Because the suffering of Jesus paid the price for our sin. And the suffering that came into His life brought us peace with God if we will believe.

He received the curse of God, in our place, so we could receive the blessing of God.

There was, once again, intelligent design behind the suffering.

Isaiah 53:5 "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."

And now, for all eternity, God will get His glory because of the faithful suffering of his son, through the many sons He redeemed.

Prayer of Confession:

Father, as we look at the suffering of Job and the suffering of Your Son, it's clear that we don't measure up. In our suffering we resent you, we run from you, we keep looking for comforts in our suffering ending as opposed to in our Father. When we lose your good gifts, we get bitter against you, and at our worst, we curse you.

So Jesus we thank you for your righteous suffering on our behalf. Thank you that in every moment of your life, you worshipped and glorified the Father. Jesus, you never gave up your trust in the Father. So forgive us for the ways we fall short of that standard of faithful suffering, and thank you for suffering for us.

Spirit, we pray that you would train our eyes to look to the suffering of Jesus. For our righteousness, for our hope, for the evidence we need that we are loved by God even in the midst of trials, and for the strength to suffer well. Help us to trust your love for us, and delight in it.

Assurance of Pardon:

Colossians 1:13-14 [13] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Sermon Discussion Questions:

- 1) Discuss the difference between worshiping through sorrow and “not feeling sorrow” so that we can worship. Which are we called to?
- 2) What kinds of doubts are we tempted toward when we suffer?
- 3) How are we tempted to curse God’s name when we suffer?
- 4) Why is God glorified through worshiping sufferers?
- 5) Read Hebrews 12:1-2. How do we look to Jesus? And how does that keep us faithful?
- 6) How have you seen Satan’s plans backfire in your life or the lives of others?