

### Job's Test of Faith – Personal Health

#### Job 2

**Job 2** - *"On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. <sup>2</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."*

<sup>3</sup> *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. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason." "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. <sup>5</sup> But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." <sup>6</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."*

<sup>7</sup> *So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. <sup>8</sup> Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. <sup>9</sup> His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!" <sup>10</sup> He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.*

<sup>11</sup> *When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. <sup>12</sup> When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. <sup>13</sup> Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was."*

#### Background Notes

Job 1 gave us the first test of Job's faith - the test of losing possessions. God allowed Satan to take away all Job owned, including all his children. But Job remained faithful. He even worshiped the Lord, and gave a strong testimony to the sovereignty of God: *"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD" (1:21).*

So Satan was wrong about Job! He thought that Job was like most other people (including some believers). If you take away their possessions, they'll blame God. But not Job! *"In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong" (1:22).*

Satan didn't give up. He still thought Job trusted in God for selfish reasons. So when the angels gathered before God again, God reminded Satan that Job's faith was steadfast after losing his possessions (v3). And Satan answered,

“*Skin for skin!*” Satan meant that Job was willing to give up all his many flocks and herds, and even the lives of his own children - not because he was so committed to God - but if he could “save his own skin.” Satan was convinced that if he could just get at Job’s body, Job would curse God. Satan thought, “a man will give up anything to save his own life!”

So, once again, God allowed Satan to test Job’s faith by afflicting Job’s body with sickness and disease. But he couldn’t take Job’s life. God’s protective hedge around Job was taken down only as much as God allowed, and only under God’s control. It’s been said, “*When God allows us to enter the oven of affliction, He keeps His sovereign hand on the controls.*” We see that in the book of Job, and we know that it’s been true in our own lives as well.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. “Health and wealth” evangelists misunderstand a believer’s sufferings.

“*So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. <sup>8</sup> Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.*”

Job was really in very bad shape. Even his own friends didn’t even recognize him (v12). He had oozing boils all over his body that he scraped with a piece of broken pottery. In Job 7:5 he said, “*My flesh is caked with worms and dust; my skin is cracked and breaks out afresh.*” How horrible! A number of suggestions have been made for Job’s particular medical condition, but we can’t be sure. In any case, God allowed Satan to horribly afflict Job’s body, but not to take his life. Job’s awful test was meant to prove to Satan that Job did not trust in God for selfish reasons.

The “prosperity preachers” have a hard time with the book of Job. Advocates of the “health and wealth gospel” say that if your faith is strong enough, you should be healthy and wealthy. “After all,” they say, “you’re a child of the King, so you should live like royal children of the King.” And they teach if you’re sick or in financial trouble you must have sinned - or your faith must be weak.

Well, what about Job? That’s the first question I ask folks who start pushing a “prosperity gospel.” The health and wealth evangelists are not wrong about justification. They believe that there is only one way of salvation, through Jesus Christ. And they’re not wrong when they say that Satan may be involved in a believer’s sickness, as long as they recognize that God is in ultimate control. But the prosperity proponents **misunderstand suffering! They fail to see God’s good purposes in suffering.** They don’t acknowledge that it may be the will of God for a believer to suffer and be poor.

The idea of having the kind of faith that guarantees health and wealth, or of “casting out” Satan, is **not taught in the Bible!** Challenge your prosperity gospel friends to seriously study - and then seriously interpret - the book of Job. There may be a change in their shallow theology if they **seriously** consider the book of Job. Health and wealth evangelists misunderstand a believer’s sufferings.

## **2. Family and friends may misunderstand a believer's sufferings.**

*"His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!"<sup>10</sup> He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said" (v9-10).*

I guess that we'd have to conclude that Job's wife was not the most supportive wife in the world, right? She was convinced that God is unfair, and she had given up hope that her husband would be healed. Job's wife's counseled him: 'Why not just curse God, and thus commit suicide, and be out of your misery?'

Job's response was the right response, because *"in all this, Job did not sin in what he said."* And what was Job's reply? He said that her conclusion was not the right conclusion. The right conclusion was that God gives prosperity, but allows adversity as well. That is **solid biblical doctrine** – then and today. But it is often misunderstood - even by believing friends and family members.

In verses 11-13 we're introduced to Job's three friends. *"When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.<sup>12</sup> When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads.<sup>13</sup> Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was."*

Job's friends were good news and bad news! The good news is that they cared for Job, and they went to comfort him. The bad news is that they gave bad counsel - because they misunderstand Job's sufferings. Family and friends may misunderstand a believer's sufferings.

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. When confronted with the question of euthanasia, don't forget Job.**

I once wrote an essay entitled "Is Euthanasia a Euphemism?" The following paragraphs are excerpts:

"The word *euthanasia* literally means 'good death' or 'easy death.' Euthanasia is the act of killing, for reasons of mercy, persons who are terminally ill or injured. Consequently euthanasia is sometimes known as 'mercy killing.' But is killing for reasons of mercy somehow different - or less - than killing? Isn't 'mercy killing' just a euphemism for murder?

But what about the person who is experiencing extreme suffering or intense pain because of a terminal illness or injury? Isn't euthanasia justified in such a case? The book of Job gives us some guidelines.

Job is well known for his patient endurance through great suffering. Wouldn't an easy and merciful death have been better for Job than the continuous torture of boils, and maggots crawling over him and eating at his body? Even Job's wife suggested that it would be better to curse God and die than to go on living in such a miserable and painful condition. In fact, Job himself **wanted** to die. He "longed for death" (Job 3:20-22).

But Job chose to endure. His response was, "*Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?*" Job recognized that his suffering was by divine purpose and permission. The fact that Job 2:10 states that "Job did not sin in all of this" leaves no doubt that Job's analysis of the situation was correct. His decision to endure the suffering rather than having his life taken before God's time was right.

Again, the reason **why** God allows suffering is not the question here. (Read the whole book of Job for part of that answer.) Nor is the use of pain-killing drugs the point here. Proverbs 31:6 indicates that the medicinal use of drugs for pain relief is justified. The conclusion **here** is that to "mercifully terminate" a life because of suffering or pain is not justified. It is the wrongful taking of human life. It is murder." (<http://www.growingchristians.org/dfgc/euthanas.htm>)

When confronted with the question of euthanasia, don't forget Job.

## **2. Comfort your hurting friend with your silent presence.**

When we want to try to encourage and comfort a seriously ill friend, one of our biggest obstacles is, "What do I say?" Did you ever fail to visit a friend in the hospital, or fail to write a note of comfort, because you didn't know what to say?

The truth is, you don't have to say much. Just your presence can bring comfort. Just a short note shows you care. In fact, Job's friends sat with him for **seven days without saying a word!** But the fact that they grieved with him, and wept with him, and identified with his affliction, was enough at this point.

Don't feel that you have to talk, or preach, or defend God, or be a professional counselor or comforter with your friend.

**Just be there!**

Comfort your hurting friend with your silent presence.