

A Happy Ending: Job 42
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This morning we come to the end of our study through the Old Testament book of Job. And what we're going to see in these final verses of the book of Job is a very happy ending. Job has suffered much emotionally, relationally, physically, spiritually. In every way he has been deeply wounded and brought very low. And finally God has spoken to Job, which was a wonderfully humbling experience which brought him to a point of repentance. Job's repentance is what we considered last week. We have seen how suffering exposes our sin, and should lead us then to repent of our sin. And in all of this God is being very good to us as He shows us Himself and shows us our sin. This is what happened to Job as the Lord spoke to him. Job says in 42:5-6, "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes." In the midst of intense suffering, God revealed Himself to Job in a profound and personal way, and that experience caused Job to despise himself for his sin and to repent of his sin.

Last week we wife, Stacy, read about a family who has seen these things happen in their own lives over the last several years. It's a family in Gaithersburg Maryland who are members of Covenant Life Church, and I want to share their testimony with you because I think it's such a wonderful illustration of these main lessons of the book of Job.

This is a portion of what the wife has written:
"Three events brought life-altering change to our family and our finances and taught us lessons about God's faithfulness, love and commitment to us. We were living in Roanoke, Virginia with our two teenaged sons and toddler daughter, part of a gospel-centered church with many deep and godly friendships. My husband's business was established and very successful. We were very comfortable and our lives were good in every way. Those three events – the recession at the beginning of 2001, the 9/11 tragedy, and an auto accident in October 2002 that left my husband with permanent injuries – each contributed to the gradual dismantling of our business and necessitated the move that would bring us to Covenant Life Church. God used the pressures of these events to reveal misplaced affections, deeply rooted patterns of sin, and to teach us to trust Him as our true provider in spite of what our circumstances tell us. I'm sharing the details below with the blessing of my husband; we are both grateful for the new fruit in our lives and pray that, in some small way, our experiences can serve to encourage others.

As we entered the fall of 2003 our financial reserves were exhausted and the consulting income Steve was able to generate was barely enough to cover our very basic needs, much less maintain the life we had built over the previous eleven years. That September, Steve attended a men's retreat and had an amazing encounter with God. His heart was laid bare as the Holy Spirit revealed the depth of his pride, self-sufficiency, dishonesty, and a plethora of other sins that had taken root and ruled him. In His kindness God granted Steve the gift of repentance. It didn't take long for my own heart to be revealed. I was sure I was not as big a sinner as Steve. I was angry that his sin was costing our family the comfortable life we deserved. In His kindness God did not allow me to remain in this state. I studied idolatry to help me see how materialism was affecting my life and in the process a deep root of self-pity was revealed."¹

Her testimony goes on as she describes how God blessed them through these trials. God took away many of their worldly comforts, and in doing so revealed sin in their lives and brought them to a point of true repentance.

Maybe you can identify with a story like this. I hope you can, and I hope that as we see God working like this in our trials that we will testify to His goodness to us. He has a good plan for us, especially when it involves things that are difficult for us. He continues to work on us, refining us and sanctifying us, revealing our sin to us so that we can humble ourselves before Him and repent. As we conclude this study of Job I hope that these lessons will remain with us, and that we will see God's faithfulness and goodness in every hardship we face.

The Three Friends Rebuked and Reconciled (verses 7-9)

Following Job's repentance, there are two remaining pieces of this story that bring the book to a close. In verses 7-9 we see the three friends rebuked and reconciled. Then verses 10-17 record how the Lord richly blessed Job in his latter days. There are many additional questions we might have that are left unanswered in this conclusion. A few key characters are not mentioned in these verses. There's no mention of Satan who featured prominently in the opening chapters of the book. We might expect that there would be some kind of public proclamation that Satan had been wrong. But we don't see that here. There's no record of Job being told about those conversations between the Lord and Satan. Another character who is conspicuously absent in the closing of the book is Job's wife. We're told that Job sires a new family, and we may assume that he does so with the wife who was mentioned

¹ "Grace in a Recession" found at <http://www.girltalkhome.com/blog/grace-in-recession>

at the beginning of the book. But we're not told that for sure. And then Elihu is also missing here. The three friends are rebuked, but not Elihu. And this may point to the fact that Elihu was more accurate in his comments than the others.

But even though this epilogue to the book may not satisfy our curiosity in every way, it does tell us what is important. It reveals to us the details of the story that are relevant to understanding the lessons for us in this story.

In verse 7, after the Lord has spoken to Job and Job has repented, the Lord turns to the three friends. We might wonder what the friends were doing while the Lord spoke to Job out of the whirlwind. It may be that they were listening in and taking some delight in the way Job was being humiliated. They may have been congratulating themselves for having understood the situation rightly. God was, indeed, rebuking Job for his sin.

The Lord's words to them in verses 7-8 must have come as quite a surprise. "After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer."

Imagine how humbling this would have been for the three friends. They had been looking down on Job in a self-righteous way, but now the Lord crushes their pride with this harsh rebuke. The Lord tells them that they have not spoken of Him what is right, but Job has. Now, this doesn't mean that Job was entirely right in everything he said. The Lord has just finished a long interrogation of Job to show him that he had spoken without understanding. But compared to the three friends, Job's words were far more accurate than the words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Remember, their assumption was that Job's suffering must have been owing to some unconfessed sin in his life. It was the theology of immediate retribution. You sin, and God immediately punishes you in a very tangible way, like taking away your children and taking away your material possessions and afflicting you with sickness. But Job was right to reject this assumption. He had observed enough situations to know that often times the wicked are the ones who seem to be prospering in this world, while the righteous often suffer. The friends had misrepresented God. They did not accurately perceive

what was going on in this situation. Job was right to reject their conclusions.

The Lord's final words here, then, are the exact opposite of what the friends would have expected. They expected that Job would be rebuked, which he has been, and then they would have expected that God would commend them. But instead they are now rebuked and Job is commended. Notice in these verses that four times God refers to Job as "my servant." "You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." Then He instructs them to go to "my servant Job . . . and my servant Job will pray for you." And then at the end of verse 8 He says again, "For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

This recalls for us the opening chapters of the book where God 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?" (1:8; 2:3). Job, of course, then faced much pain in his trials, including the pain of seeing his own sin and finally repenting of it. But through it all he remained the Lord's servant. He had his struggles, but he did not reject God as Satan had hoped he would. Job was the Lord's servant, and God is pleased to commend Job here at the end of the book. He has rebuked Job, but he also honors him. As the Lord is chastising the friends, He is also, in effect, saying to Job, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (see Matthew 25:21, 23).

The friends are made to humble themselves by offering a sacrifice. But they can't just offer the sacrifice on their own. The Lord, in this beautiful turn around in the story, requires the friends to have Job intercede for them. They had to take seven bulls and seven rams and go to Job and offer up a burnt offering for themselves. God required that Job serve as a mediator for them, an intercessor. In the beginning of the book Job had interceded for his children, making burnt offerings for them. In this sense, Job was functioning like an Old Testament priest, and God has him assume that role again, this time on behalf of those who had mistreated him and persecuted him and spoken untrue things about him. This is a profound picture, and it shows us several things that are very relevant to our own lives.

First, it humbles the friends and forces them to be reconciled to Job. In order for them to be reconciled to God, they need to be reconciled to Job. And as we think about our own lives, we should consider what relationships need to be reconciled. We shouldn't think that we can grow closer to God and flourish in our relationship with Him while we are harboring bitterness toward other people. We should pursue peace and reconciliation.

Secondly, the purpose of the Lord's instructions here are not only for the benefit of the friends, but also for the benefit of

Job. For Job is required to forgive these men. They have hurt Job very deeply, and Job has been very angry with them. But now he shows that he has been truly humbled, because he is willing to intercede on their behalf.

Like Job, we should intercede for those who have treated us badly. And not only will those prayers be used of God to bless those individuals, the prayers will be a great blessing to us as well. For intercessory prayer is a powerful antidote to bitterness. Are you angry or bitter or resentful toward someone who has hurt you? Pray for that person. Intercede for that person. If the person is an unbeliever, pray that they will be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Pray that they will repent of sin and embrace the glorious truth of Christ's death and resurrection on behalf of sinners. If the person is a fellow believer, pray that they will grow in their relationship with the Lord and that they will be richly blessed by God. Intercessory prayer can have a tremendous effect in our lives as we pray for those who have hurt us. Jesus says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

Thirdly, we see in these verses a stirring portrait of Christ our mediator, our intercessor. We've observed earlier in the book how Job foreshadows Christ as the righteous suffering servant. Of course, Job is not sinless or perfect. But as a righteous sufferer he points to the ultimate Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ. Jesus is sinless and perfect, and He suffered the agony of the cross undeservingly. He was innocent, sinless, and yet He was executed as a criminal. He experienced the ultimate pain of bearing God's wrath. And now in these events of chapter 42 we see Job acting as a type of Christ again, as he intercedes and offers a sacrifice for those who have persecuted him. And here we must put ourselves in the place of the three friends. For we have scorned Christ in so many ways. We have sinned against him, we have ridiculed him with our words and thoughts and actions, we have spoken of him what is not true. And yet Christ is our mediator! He intercedes for us and offers Himself as a sacrifice for the very people who have done so much to hurt Him.

Matthew Henry writes, "as Job prayed and offered sacrifice for those that had grieved and wounded his spirit, so Christ prayed and died for his persecutors, and ever lives *making intercession for the transgressors*."² In the middle of verse 8 the Lord says, "I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly." That is grace, friends. That is God's amazing mercy not to deal with us according to our folly. We have truly acted as fools. We

²Henry, Matthew: *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody : Hendrickson, 1996, c1991, S. Job 42:7

have sinned, and continue to sin in various ways. And we deserve eternal punishment for our sins. That is what would happen to us if God dealt with us according to our folly. But through Christ our Mediator God forgives our sin. And instead of receiving the punishment we deserve, we instead receive the great inheritance of heaven which we don't deserve. This is God's grace coming to us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He is our Mediator. He is the One through whom we have access to the Father. He is the way and the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6).

If you are an unbeliever, I exhort you to come to Christ. Humble yourself and ask that He make intercession for you. Repent of your sins, and trust that Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient to cover your sins. And then live in the freedom of knowing that God will not deal with you according to your folly, not because you deserve His favor, but because Jesus Christ is our mediator. Embrace and cherish this mediator, our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself became a sacrifice for those who scorned Him. This is the best news in the universe! It is the Gospel, and I beg you to receive it. I pray that all of us here will have a fresh appreciation of what Christ has done for us.

Job is Greatly Blessed (verses 10-17)

In the final section of verses we see how Job is greatly blessed by the Lord. The things he lost at the beginning of the book are given to him now in double measure. Verse 10 says, "And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave job twice as much as he had before." God used Job's family and friends to be a means of this blessing. Verse 11, "Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold." Then verse 12 records how his possessions doubled, and if you compare this to the figures in chapter 1 you can see that they are exactly doubled. Before he had 7,000 sheep, now he has 14,000, and so forth. He doesn't receive twice as many children as he had before. He had lost 7 sons and 3 daughters, and now God gives him 7 more sons and 3 more daughters. We might wonder why God didn't give him 14 sons and 6 daughters. But I think it's because the children who died were not ultimately lost. Job would be reunited with them when he died. So in a real sense the number of his children *was* doubled.

Verses 14-15 focus on the 3 daughters. "And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second

Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers." These things highlight the extravagant blessings that God was pouring out in Job's life. He is given three beautiful daughters, with beautiful names, and he is so wealthy that he gives them an inheritance along with their brothers.

Then verse 16 tells us that even Job's span of life was doubled. Psalm 90:10 speaks of the years of our life as seventy, or possibly eighty. Job lived more than twice this long. His age at death would have been similar to the age at which the patriarchs died (Abraham, 175, Gen 25:7; Isaac, 180, Gen 35:28; Jacob, 147, Gen 47:28). Job lived long enough to see his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. Even though he continued to feel the loss of his first 10 children, he lived the rest of his days with children always around him. Children and grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. Verse 17 concludes by telling us that "Job died, an old man, and full of days." It is a very happy ending. All of these details are recorded in order to show us God's amazing blessing on this man following his severe trials.

This ending, as happy as it is, may seem to present a problem as we try to figure out how this applies to our lives. Does this mean that when we go through a hardship, we will receive great material blessings afterward? Does this mean that the person who loses a child will receive another? That the person who loses a job will receive another position that pays twice as much? That the stock market losses will be restored two-fold? That the sickness will go away and you'll have perfect health? This ending to Job's story could be hijacked by a health, wealth, and prosperity message to say that if you just have enough faith your problems will go away and you will be blessed with material prosperity and physical health. But that is simply not true. It's not true to our experience, and it's not true to what the Bible tells us.

We know that many situations are not resolved in this way. Many trials continue all the way to the end of life. The pain of losing a loved one, financial hardship, sickness, broken relationships. These things do not always find a happy resolution in this life. We can think of the Apostle Paul, for example, who lived a life of suffering, and never experienced anything like the material blessings that Job received. One particular example demonstrates this very clearly. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 12 about the thorn in the flesh. He says, "So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three

times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Here we see that Job’s experience is not the pattern that we should always expect. God removed Job’s afflictions and restored his fortunes, but not so with Paul. We also think of the many saints listed in Hebrews 11 who suffered greatly in this world, and yet by faith they were looking to a better country, that is, a heavenly one (Hebrews 11:16). Listen to these verses from the end of Hebrews 11 (vv. 35-40): “Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy— wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

The Bible does not promise that affliction will always be followed by affluence. Pain will not always be followed by peace or prosperity. That is, in this life. We cannot expect that our suffering in this life will result in material blessings in this life. But we *can* expect something far greater than that. We can anticipate the eternal blessings we will have in our heavenly home. All our trials will end someday. Maybe not in the here and now, but they will end. And we will dwell forever in heaven, where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4).

And this, I believe, is what the ending of Job is pointing to. It’s not to hold out the hope of material prosperity. But it is to hold out the hope that our suffering will one day end, and God will graciously and abundantly bless us beyond what we could even ask or think. We will dwell with Him, and we will be blessed by Him forever and ever. Derek Thomas sums it up well by saying, “There is no guarantee, this side of eternity, that Job’s pattern will be anyone else’s. Some are asked to carry their sorrows to the grave (but no further than the grave!).”³

³ Derek Thomas, sermon on Job 42, found at www.fpcjackson.org

This study of the book of Job has been a great blessing to me personally, and I pray that we will all cling to these truths that we've seen in these chapters. I pray that as God walks us through various trials in our lives that we will remember what we've learned from this book—that God is absolutely sovereign over suffering, that He ordains suffering for our good, that suffering exposes our sin and should bring us to a point of humble repentance for that sin, and finally the hope that our suffering will not last forever. In God's good plans He is refining us and sanctifying us in order to prepare us for glory. I'll close with these brief words from Robert Alden, "It would be great if we could be in Job's position at the end of the book without going through what he did throughout the book—gain his knowledge without suffering. But it is doubtful that it can happen. It takes fire to refine gold (Job 23:10)."⁴

⁴ Robert Alden, *Job*, New American Commentary, pg. 413.