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Title: The Symphony Of Suffering

Bible Book: Job 0

Author: Steve Wagers

Subject: Suffering

Objective: There is hardly a question more difficult for most people than the inquiry into the causes and purposes of human suffering. The Bible does not dodge this subject; on the contrary, the Scriptures describe the trials of mankind and show how God works in and through them. Dr. Steve Wagers continues his Book by Book study of God's Word by sharing a message on the Book of Job.

Introduction

Booker T. Washington was born in slavery.

Thomas Edison was deaf.

Abraham Lincoln was born of illiterate parents.

Lord Byron had a club foot.

Robert Louis Stevenson had tuberculosis.

Alexander Pope was a hunchback.

Admiral Nelson had only one eye.

Julius Caesar was an epileptic.

Louis Pasteur was so near-sighted that he couldn't find his way in his laboratory without glasses.

Helen Keller could not hear or see, but who graduated with honors from a famous college.

But all made history in spite of their handicaps.

It's safe to say that a man named Job made history in spite of his handicaps as well. If God uses suffering as a symphony for his saints, then Job would have been the master conductor.

The book of Job begins the Poetic division of the Old Testament.

The Law Books: Genesis-Deuteronomy

The Legacy Books: Joshua-Esther

The Linguistic Books: Job-Ecclesiastes

Alfred Tennyson called Job, "The great poem, whether of ancient or modern literature."

Job is not a fictitious person. He is a real character, mentioned in the OT (Ezekiel 14: 20) and the NT (James 5: 11). Most believe that the book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible.

John Phillips comments that "Almost certainly Job lived before the giving of the law, and some claim he lived before Abraham, placing the book between Genesis 11-12."

If Job is the oldest chronological book in the Bible, then its authorship must be considered. Was it written by Job himself? Was it written years later about Job? Or, was God the author of it?

The book of Job is written in poetic prose.

(1-3): Prologue

(4-41): Dialogue

(42): Epilogue

Job asks questions that have been asked for centuries: "Why do godly people suffer? Why do the wicked prosper? Why is God silent? Why does God allow tragedy and trouble?"

Central Theme

A righteous man is tested by trial, tragedy and tribulation. He loses everything, but is faithful to God and is restored with twice as much as he had to begin with.

Central Truth

“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” (13: 15)

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” (19: 25)

“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” (23: 10)

Central Thrust

Suffering is not restricted to the ungodly. When suffering visits the Christian, and there is no explanation on this side of Heaven, we must rest in the knowledge of the fact that God is so loving to be unkind, and so wise to make a mistake.

Genesis: The Book of Ruin

Exodus: The Book of Redemption

Leviticus: The Book of Regulations

Numbers: The Book of Readiness

Deuteronomy: The Book of Remembrance

Joshua: The Book of Realization

Judges: The Book of Regret

Ruth: The Book of Romance

1-2 Samuel: The Book(s) of Royalty

1-2 Kings: The Book(s) of Revolt

1-2 Chronicles: The Book(s) of Renewal

Ezra/Nehemiah: The Book(s) of Rebuilding

Esther: The Book of Rescue

Job: The Book of Restoration

I. A Fine Man Is Regarded

Job is one of the most impressive men in all of Scripture.

A. His Unmistakable Integrity

[1: 1] “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”

Job could sing with Charles Albert Tindley:

Nothing between my soul and the Savior.

Naught of this worlds' elusive dreams.

I have renounced all sinful pleasure,

Jesus is mine, there is nothing between.

Perfect: “Blameless”

Eschewed: “To turn away”

Job wasn't sinless, but he was blameless. When it came to sin, or any form of wickedness, Job got as far

away from it as he possibly could.

Job's resume is quite impressive.

A Perfect Man (1: 1)

A Prosperous Man (1: 2-4)

A Praying Man (1: 5)

A Popular Man (29: 21, 25)

A Proven Man (42: 10, 12)

B. His Undeniable Prosperity

[1: 2-3] “And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. [3]His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.”

The land of Uz: South of the Dead Sea - OT—Edom - Today—Saudi Arabia. Some of the world's wealthiest people live in Saudi Arabia, and it all began with Job.

Job was not only a respectable man, he was a rich man.

C. His Unbelievable Adversity

In spite of his integrity and prosperity, Job is about to face unbelievable adversity. Adversity does not escape the pauper, and it does not exclude the prince.

Job's adversity is the main character of the book. It engulfed every area of his life. The amazing thing about Job's adversity is that it came at the recommendation of God Himself.

[1: 6] "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them."

God, who is presiding over a meeting of heavenly beings, is about to assign his angelic messengers specific tasks to perform. All of the sudden, Lucifer, the former angel of light appears.

[1: 7] "And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

God offers a suggestion.

[1: 8] "Hast thou considered?? my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"

Satan, "the accuser of the brethren" brings an accusation against both Job and God.

[1: 10] "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance? is increased in the land."

Satan's accusation is that nobody is good without a cause. Nobody loves God just for the sake of loving God. Satan said in effect, "Everyone is selfish. Men only love God because God is blessing them. Job loves you only because of what You have given him, not because of who You are. "God says, "Well, we'll just see about that."

He hands Satan a permission slip.

[1:11-12] "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. ? [12] And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

I used to say that I wanted God to brag on me; but, that was until I realized that Job's trouble came all because God bragged on him.

What follows is some of the most unbelievable adversity every experienced by any one person. In just 1 day; 24 hours, 1440 minutes, 86,400 seconds Job encountered a lifetime worth of adversity. It's all because God served Job up on a silver platter to be tempted and tried.

1. His Fortune

[1: 14-15] He loses 500 yoke of oxen

[1: 16] He loses 7000 sheep

[1: 17] He loses 3000 camels

2. His Family

[1: 18-19] All 10 children die-Visits 10 different funeral homes

[2: 9-10] "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. [10]But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

3. His Fidelity

[2: 7-8] “So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. [8]And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.”

Most believe that Job suffers from black leprosy, an excruciating, debilitating disease. His only means of relief was a “potsherd,” a broken piece of a pot.

God Uses Broken Things

4. His Friends

Times of prosperity bring out people who want to be your friend. Times of adversity show the true color of those you thought were your friends.

Job’s 3 friends cause no one to want to have any enemies. They came to Sympathize, but then they began to Sermonize.

[19: 14] “My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me.”

a) Eliphaz: Voice of Philosophy (Mysticism)

[4: 12-17] “Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. [13]In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men.

[14]Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. [15]Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up. [16]It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying.

[17]Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?”

Eliphaz uses philosophy to try to explain why Job is experiencing such suffering. He claims that God gave him a vision, or an experience.

The Devil Gives Experiences Too

The Experience Must Line Up With Scripture

Eliphaz says, “Job, the reason God has allowed this is because you are a sinner.

b) Bildad: Voice of History (Traditionalism)

[8: 8, 10] “For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers... [10] Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?”

[8: 3-6] “Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? [4]If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression. [5]If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty. [6] If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.”

Bildad wants to review the history books and see what the ancient fathers would have to say about Job’s condition.

[8: 13-14] “So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish. [14]Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.”

Bildad says, “The reason God has allowed this is not only because you’re a sinner, but you’re a hypocrite as well.”

c) Zophar: Voice of Orthodoxy (Legalism)

Zophar is the harshest of all Job’s friends. He has a rulebook for a mind. He’s got all the answers of orthodoxy/legalism.

[11:5-6] “But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee. [6]And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know Therefore That God Exacteth Of Thee Less Than Thine Iniquity Deserveth.”

Zophar says, "Job, count yourself lucky. God has allowed this because you're a sinner, you're a hypocrite and God hasn't given you half of what you deserve."

Eliphaz-Job is a Foolish Heathen

Bildad-Job is a Fake Hypocrite

Zophar-Job is a Fortunate Human

Job's friends conclude:

Sin=Suffering

Righteousness=Riches

The adversity affecting his fortune, family, fidelity and friends, cause him to question:

5) His Faith

[3: 1-4] "Job cursed his day. [2] And Job spake, and said, [3] Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. [4] Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it."

[3: 11] "Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?"

[12: 4] "I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn."

[13: 24] "Hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?"

[14: 1-2] "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."

[14: 10] "But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

[16: 11-12] “God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. ? [12] I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark.”

[19: 8-13] "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths.? [9] He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head.? [10] He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree.? [11] He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies.? [12] His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle.? [13] He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.”

I have often heard people say, “We shouldn’t question God.” But, Job did. In fact, he questioned God repeatedly. He questioned his faith. He questioned his future. He questioned his Father.

There is a vast difference between questioning God and challenging God. Questioning God is human nature, because we aren’t God. We don’t understand His ways, His workings, and His will.

But, when a person charges God they are bringing an accusation to God. They are challenging God’s authority and ability. They are shaking their fist in the face of God in defiance and rebellion.

This was something of which Job wasn’t guilty.

[1: 22] “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”

I am certain of 2 things: (1) There Is A God - (2) I’m Not Him

He didn’t give Job an explanation, and He’s never given me an explanation. Someone has well said, “We don’t live by explanations, we live by promises.”

II. A Forgetful Man Is Reminded

Throughout all of Job's questions, God has remained silent. But, when you come to Job 38 the court of Heaven is called to order. The audience is called to rise as he gavel goes down on the bench, and God shows up and speaks up.

I don't believe that Job forgot about God, even though He has questioned God. But, just in case Job did forget, God reminds him of some things.

A. Sovereign Authority Cannot Be Denied

[38-41] Approx. 60 questions—All Asked By God

[38: 2-6] "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?? [3] Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer? thou me. ?[4] Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast?? understanding. ? [5] Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?? [6] Whereupon are the foundations?? thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof?"

[40:7-14] "Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.? 8 ?Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?? 9 ?Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?? 10 ?Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty.? 11 ?Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him.? 12 ?Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place.? 13 ?Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret.? 14 ?Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee."

God sets the record straight once and for all. Job is reminded of how little he is, and how big God is.

[38-39] Natural Realm

[40] Moral Realm

[41] Spiritual Realm

“Job, just because you don't see Me, you can't hear Me, or you're not able to understand Me, that doesn't

mean that I am any less God. I am the One who created it all, controls it all, conducts it all, and completes it all!”

B. Supernatural Ability Cannot Be Doubted

[42] Job gives an answer to God’s series of questions

[42: 2-3, 5-6] "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. ? [3] Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not... [5] I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.? [6] Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.?"

Job admits, “God, I’ve been running my mouth about things I know nothing about. I’m sorry Lord for ever doubting You!”

[1-37] Job Saw Adversity

[38-42] Job Saw Deity

The Bigger Job's God-The Smaller Job's Grief

III. A Faithful Man Is Rewarded

Not that J. Sidlow Baxter said, “Behind all the suffering of the godly is a high purpose of God, and beyond it all is an ‘afterwards’ of glorious enrichment.” [3]

Job passed the test just like God knew He would. Job 42 is the Restoration chapter of the Bible.

A. Friends Rebuked

Do you remember Eliphaz the voice of Philosophy that said, “Job, you’re a Foolish Heathen?” Do you remember Bildad the voice of HISTORY that said, “Job, you’re a Fake Hypocrite?” Do you remember Zophar the voice of Orthodoxy that said, “Job, you’re a Fortunate Human?” Well...they’re back in Job 42.

They come to present an offering to God.

[42: 7-8] "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. [8] Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him?? will I accept."

These 3 men have played the part of spiritual know-it-alls in their critique of Job’s life. Job has been down, and they have kicked him while he was down.

They come to give an offering, but God tells them that he will not accept their offering. Rather, they are to go and have Job pray for them, and God will accept Job’s offering of thanksgiving.

I can just see these 3 boys, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar as they try to digest crow for lunch. They walk up to Job, clear their throat and say, “Brother Job, uh, would you mind praying for us?” What a turn of events!

[42: 9-10] “So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job. [10] And The Lord Turned The Captivity Of Job, When He Prayed For His Friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

I wonder if, while Jesus was preaching the greatest sermon ever preached titled, “The Sermon on the Mount,” He was thinking of Job’s story when He said:

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; [45] That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the

unjust.?” (Matthew 5: 44-45)

If people are talking about you, mistreating you, tearing you down, discouraging you, or accusing you; you need not jump on the telephone and talk to Mr. Forked-Tongue, Mrs. Dirty-Laundry Lips, Brother Jabber jaw, or Sister Snaggletooth about them. You should pick up Heaven’s hotline and talk to Doctor Jesus about them.

B. Fortune Recovered

[42: 11-12] “Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. [12]So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.”

Job 1—7000 sheep

Job 42—14,000 sheep

Job 1—3,000 camels

Job 42—6,000 camels

Job 1—500 she asses

Job 42—1000 she asses

[9] “The Lord accepted.”

[10] “The Lord gave.”

[12] “The LORD blessed.”

Job was accepted. Job was given. Job was blessed. Who did it? God did it! Job may not have demanded it, desired it, or deserved it; but, God delivered it.

Any Gift Of God Is A Gift Of Grace

C. Family Reborn

Job received double fortune/not Family

Job 1—7 sons/3 daughters

Job 42: 13—7 sons/3 daughters

Can I Suggest That The Reason Job Didn't Receive Double Children Is Because He Didn't Lose The First Children. They Were Dead, But Not Lost. Job Knew Exactly Where They Were.

Names of his 3 daughters

[42: 14] “And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch.”

Jemima: “Beautiful”

Kezia: “Fragrant”

Kerenhappuch: “Plenteous”

[42: 15] “And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.”

I can just imagine Job sitting on his porch. He looks like hell, he smells like hell, because he has been through hell. He looks down at his arms and can still see the scab of his boils. He vividly remembers the day, which seems like an eternity, where he lost it all.

But, then, he remembers that God brought him to it, and God brought him through it. He remembers that God guided, but God also provided. He remembers that, even when he may have forgotten God, God did not forget him, forsake him, fool him, flee him, or fail him.

Then, he looks and sees Jemima playing in the yard and says to himself, “That’s the most Beautiful sight I have ever seen.” Kezia jumps up in his lap and Job thinks, “That’s the most Fragrant, and best smelling kid I’ve ever been around. He looks at Kerenhappuch and considers how Plentous and bountifully God has blessed him.

Names Are His Testimony Of Thanksgiving Unto God.

He is reminded that what the devil tried to use to defeat him, God used to deliver him. He sees that what the devil meant to crush him, God meant to crown him. He understands that what the enemy tried to use to humiliate him, God used to elevate him.

He knows that what the devil tried to make ugly, God had made Beautiful Through Jemima. He knows that what the devil tried to make a foul odor, God had made Fragrant Through Kezia. He knows that what the devil tried to use to deplete him, God used to make him Plenteous Through Kerenhappuch.

Devil: Destroy you/God: Distinguish you

Devil: Demote you/God: Promote you

Devil: Crush you/God: Crown you

Devil: Break you/God: Bless you

Devil: Ruin you/God: Reward you

D. Future Revealed

[19: 25] “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”

Job: Oldest book/oldest man

Looked thousands of years into the future

Redeemer: Virgin Birth/Vicarious Death

Liveth: Victorious Resurrection

Stand: Visible Return (Second Coming)

In the midst of suffering, sorrow and sickness, Job could Testify:

[19: 26-27] “And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. [27]Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

In the midst of despair, doubt, and facing death, Job could Trust:

[13: 15] “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

In midst of trial, trouble, tragedy and tribulation, Job could Triumph:

[1: 21] “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

When I was young I read the remarkable novel, "Treasure Island," by Robert Louis Stevenson. His father was a chief engineer in establishing lighthouses all up and down the coast of Scotland. While just a boy, his father took him on an ocean voyage inspecting the lighthouses and the towers along the coast of England. They were not out for very long, when suddenly a tremendous storm came upon them. For over 24 hours they literally fought for their lives.

During the course of the storm, Robert Louis Stevenson's father made his way up on deck instructing his son to stay below. There was only one man up there, the captain of the ship. The waves were so boisterous; the winds were so loud; the rain was so hard; and, the storm was so strong that he had taken a rope and literally strapped himself to the mast of the ship so he would not be swept into the ocean.

When Robert Louis Stevenson's father finally made it to the deck, he took one look at the face of the captain, and without saying a word, went back downstairs into his cabin. With his little boy waiting at the door, he heard him asked, "Daddy, are we going to drown? Is the ship going down? Are we going to die?" His father picked him up, held him to his chest, and said, "No son, we are going to make it through the storm." Young Robert said, "Daddy, how can you be so sure?" His father said, "Son, I just looked into the captain's face, and

everything is going to be all right."

Job looked into the face of the captain, and when we look in the face of the captain, we will endure the symphony of suffering.

Endnotes

- 1) ""What the Bible is All About," Henrietta Mears, pg. 183.
- 2) "Exploring the Scriptures," John Phillips, pg. 91.
- 3) IBID, pg. 92