

My Favorite Thing About JOB

Job 13:15-16

May 29, 2021

Many are irritated by the book of Job and either discount it as purely fiction or ignore it all together for one reason – the unfair suffering of Job.

Humans care very deeply about fairness and justice and if Job had been a terrible, awful person, we might very well have cheered when his life fell apart – he got exactly what he deserved.... and that's the problem. Job was, according to scripture, blameless and up right, he feared God and turned away from evil {Job 1:1} --- AND his life fell apart and we scream, **"HOW UNFAIR!! GOD, HOW COULD YOU ALLOW SUCH A THING?"**

Today I am going to throw a grenade in the fox hole. I don't think the Book of Job is primarily about suffering or patient endurance, although those are certainly elements in the story. I think the book of Job is about a relationship. A relationship between one man and God. A relationship so deep that it with stood the **VERY** concerted efforts of Satan to destroy it. A relationship so deep that Job clung to it even when he didn't understand the reasons for his suffering. A relationship so deep that a wrong world view and less than helpful friends could not break it.

It was a relationship that became an example for the entire universe.

That's My Favorite Thing about Job ---- The Unbreakable relationship between Job and God.

I think this story is especially relevant today because when God doesn't do what we want or allows something we don't like or don't understand, we feel perfectly justified in **"cancelling"** Him, just like we cancel everything else that doesn't fit within our **"how things should be"** point of view.

Job was **"the greatest of all the men of the east."** He was blameless and upright.... So, of course, he had lots of kids and lots of stuff **BECAUSE** good things happen to good people ---- right?

Abruptly the scene shifts and the curtain of heaven is peeled back. God has called a meeting and all the planetary representatives are there, including earth's representative, Satan **"the Villain"**.

God goes over to Satan and asks him what he's been up to.

Job 1:7b - ... "I've been roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

In other words, he'd been **prowl**ing around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. {1 Peter 5:8}

So... what God does next sometimes derails people – He says, **"Interesting.... but have you noticed My servant, Job? There is no one like him in all the earth. He is blameless and upright. He is loyal to Me and doesn't listen to you."** {Job 1:8}

Why would God start a conversation with Satan? Why would God pick Job out of the crowd? Just tip your hat and move on!!

Context is important. This conversation is taking place in Heaven – ground zero of the Great Controversy.

3 things are going on:

- Satan's campaign platform centers around the lie that God is unfair. His laws aren't fair. His judgments aren't fair. His grace and mercies aren't fair – nothing God does is fair. Life would be better for everyone if Satan was in charge.
- The Universe is watching and from their perspective it would seem that Satan's campaign strategy is working on Earth – his outright lies and conspiracy theories have been very successful and they may be wondering if there are any faithful people --- at all --- anywhere.
- Job **IS** faithful and God is proud of their relationship. In other words, Satan has **NOT BEEN** completely successful.

Satan acknowledges that Job is blameless, upright and loyal **BUT ONLY BECAUSE** God has protected him and everything he has. He insinuates that Job's loyalty is self-serving and that God has bought him off. The relationship is not genuine and if the hedge was removed, Job would curse God to His face.

A crowd begins to gather. Is Satan right? Could he be telling the truth?

God's position is that Job **IS** faithful because their relationship **IS** real. God knows how Job will respond, but Satan does not and neither does the listening universe and so He takes up Satan's challenge and stakes His own reputation and the truth of His government on the character and faithfulness of Job. God puts everything on the line based on His friendship with Job.

And Chaos ensues..... In one day, Job loses his employees, his businesses and his children **{Job 1:14-19}**.

And the universe holds its collective breath ---- How will Job respond?

Job 1:21-22 - "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.**

Some time passes.... God calls another meeting.... Satan is there and he's still causing havoc, death and destruction on earth.

The stakes have not changed and the question remains the same, **"Who is telling the truth?" Job 2:3-6:**

God: Let's talk about Job for a moment. 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**, in spite of what happened last time you were here.

Satan: And we all know why.... **BECAUSE** I wasn't allowed to touch **HIM**. But if You let me touch him, he **WILL** curse You to Your face!

God: Okay, you can touch him, but you are not allowed to kill him.

And all eyes turn toward earth. What will Satan do and how will Job respond?

Boils!! Job is covered with boils – from the top of his head to the soles of his feet! He is sitting alone on a pile of ashes scrapping at his skin when his wife shows up and suggests that now is the time to Cancel God. Job disagrees, **"Is it right that we only accept good things from God and not trials?"**

Job has truly lost everything – wealth, health children, wife and YET.....

Job 2:10b - In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

God has been vindicated, so far, in His assessment ---- **"Job is loyal and faithful because we are friends."**

But wait! Satan isn't done, because here come Job's **"friends"** and for a whole week they silently mourn with him.

Job is suffering and he doesn't know why.... Neither do his friends. Neither side can see the whole picture as God sees it and when God seems silent in the midst of suffering it is human nature to attempt to come up with an explanation. So, for the next 33 chapters Job and his **"friends"** try to do just that – find an explanation.

The **"friends"** are convinced the problem is that Job has committed grievous sin that he either doesn't know about or is refusing to admit. Therefore, he is getting exactly what he deserves and maybe, just maybe he's getting less than he deserves.

At the heart of their argument is the **World View** that in this life, God **ALWAYS** blesses and prospers the righteous and **ALWAYS** inflicts punishment on the wicked.

Obedience = wealth and health and happiness ---- ALWAYS.

Disobedience = poverty and sickness and despair ---- ALWAYS.

Unfortunately for Job, he holds to the same world view, which is why he is so confused and hurt and angry. He knows that his **"friends"** accusations are wrong. It's all a **HUGE** misunderstanding. He has done nothing to deserve this and if he could just get an audience with God and be given the opportunity to defend himself, all would be made right. Through it all, Job maintained his claim of innocence.

Even though Job's world view was wrong and as a result, his argument was wrong, he did not cancel his friendship with God. If anything, he held tighter to it because it was the only thing he had left.

Job 13:15 - Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...

It would seem then, that the story is over and we are at an impasse.

- Job's friends insist he has done something pretty awful.
- Job insists that he has done nothing to deserve this severe of punishment. He has demanded an audience with God and has bombarded heaven with questions – yet God has remained silent.

But then..... In dramatic fashion, God shows up and Job gets what he has been asking for {Job 38:2-41:34}:

God: Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? ³ Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me....

- Where were you when....
- Have you ever....

Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!

- Where does....
- Can you....
- Do you know....

Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!

- Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? ⁹ Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his? Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty. ¹¹ Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at every proud man and bring him low, then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you.
- Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope? If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again! No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me? ¹¹ Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.

Job has been talking about things he does not understand as if he has a PhD and God needs him to understand that even though their friendship is real and genuine and deep, they are **NOT** equals. Job simply has no ability to understand the ways of God.

- **Deuteronomy 29:29** - The secret *things belong* to the LORD our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.
- **Isaiah 55:8-9** - For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD. ⁹ "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.
- **Ellen White {3BC 1141.1}**: Men of the greatest intellect cannot understand the mysteries of Jehovah as revealed in nature. Divine inspiration asks many questions which the most profound scholar cannot answer. These questions were not asked, supposing that we could answer them, but to call our attention to the deep mysteries of God, and to make men know that their wisdom is limited; that in the common things of daily life there are mysteries past the comprehension of finite minds; that the judgment and purposes of God are past finding out, His wisdom unsearchable. If He reveals Himself to man, it is by shrouding Himself in the thick cloud of mystery.

Despite all the evidence, some might take this opportunity to argue with God and insist upon an answer for their suffering – even suggest that the friendship is on the line if God doesn't respond as they'd like, but not Job:

Job 42:3-6 - I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.... Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.... My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Job has just had a face-to-face encounter with his friend. It has been an uncomfortable conversation and none of his questions were answered, but he is content. He has been able to separate the relationship from the blessings.

To the onlooking universe there are 2 unmistakable conclusions:

- Satan was lying all along. He had taken his best shot and lost.

- God was telling the truth all along. His friendship with Job was based on love. It was real and genuine and deep. It had withstood loss. It had withstood a questionable world view. It had withstood the **“encouragement”** of Job’s friends and the abandonment of his wife. It was everything God said it was and more.

Many of us don’t even come close to experiencing what Job experienced before we throw in the towel. We’re **“fair weather”** friends. We stub our toe.... We decide that God has let us down and **BLAM** – cancelled!!

This book has caused me to think about my own relationship with God. Is it what God says it is ---- a true, genuine and deep relationship based on love and faithfulness or is it what Satan says it is ---- a fake and shallow relationship based on convenience and false expectations?

This I know for sure; I want to be said of me what was said of Job:

“Have you noticed My servant, Job? There is no one like him in all the earth. He is blameless and upright. He is loyal to Me and doesn’t listen to you.” {Job 1:8}