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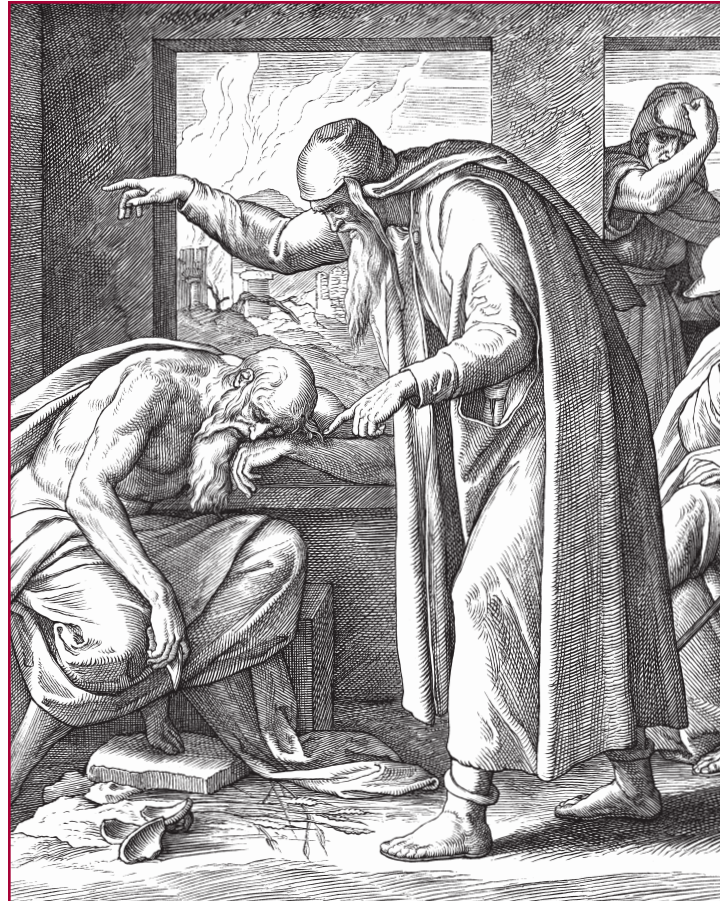
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Pertinent Lessons from the Book of Job



"Job's Affliction," by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1794-1872.

There are certainly occasions while serving in public office that our world falls apart, whether or not by the orchestration of Satan. When that happens, Job stands as our example of the way we should respond—with an inalterable and unshakable confidence in the God of the Bible who has revealed Himself to us and mankind. Like Job, will we stand on the promises of God during these times of upheaval? Absent personal abilities or resources of our own, will we hold steady as God leads us through insurmountable hurdles that only He can provide the solutions to or deliver us from?

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Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff: Wednesdays 7 am, Zoom.
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The views expressed in each Bible study are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study Sponsor.



★ PUBLIC SERVANT QUOTE

Doug Lamborn

*U.S. Representative, Colorado
5th Congressional District*



“Capitol Ministries gets back to the basics of what the Bible is all about. An in-depth Bible study is good for every person, but for lawmakers who are under pressure from a lot of different directions, the encouragement and guidance that come from Scripture is vital. It is wonderful that Capitol Ministries offers the opportunity for policy makers to be exposed to the Bible; the more people in Congress who have that opportunity, the better.”

— DOUG LAMBORN

Like Job, God calls us to faithfulness, both personally and professionally, no matter what crises we may be encountering. May Job daily encourage us to stand firm and be rock-solid in our perseverance through the myriad of present national difficulties.

Ralph Drollinger

I. NAME

As with many Old Testament (OT) books, the title is derived from the chief character of its narrative. The Hebrew word Job appropriately means “persecution.” (Be careful what you name your children!)

II. AUTHOR AND DATE

The book states that Job never knew of the drama unfolding in heaven; therefore, he could not have been its author. The leading candidate for authorship is Solomon. Although Job lived at a different time, Solomon could have written about Job, with divine enablement—just as Moses wrote about Adam and Eve. The style of writing is reminiscent of Solomon’s book of Ecclesiastes.

The date of Job’s life in biblical time can be deciphered by the following book-ends of internal evidence: the mention of Adam and Eve (31:33) and life after the flood (12:15) so Job lived after those circumstances. He probably lived before the Covenant of Abraham (Genesis 12), the Exodus, and the Law of Moses since they are not mentioned. Accordingly, he most likely lived in what is referred to as the Patriarchal Period of the OT—probably at the beginning of that period.

This supposition is further evidenced by the book’s descriptions of conditions contemporaneous with the Patriarchal Period such as the existence of the Chaldeans (1:17; cf. Genesis 11:28); the measurement of wealth in livestock (1:3; 42:12); Job’s conducting of priestly functions within his family (1:4, 5) as opposed to the existence of a nation with priests (cf. Leviticus 1:4).

All of these observations lead me to say that Job probably lived at an unspecified time after the time of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9) but before or simultaneous to Abraham (Genesis 11:27ff.). Therefore, the book of Job could be best thought of as a 42-chapter footnote in Genesis 11.

III. BACKGROUND

Not long before this account in Job, Satan, an angel who had fallen when tempted, then tempted Adam and Eve, who also fell as well. Grasping this perspective is important. After the flood, God, in a sense, is starting over. Satan, perhaps feeling flush with victory, thought he could tempt and defeat one of God’s most faithful individuals (1:1) in the beginning of the start over. Perhaps Satan thought the defeat of Job was as strategic a victory as the defeat of Adam and Eve; it makes parallel sense.



Accordingly, the book of Job begins with this overall insight to the reader (1:6–2:10). Satan, ever the accuser, asserts to God that Job is only faithful because of His blessings, so God allows Satan to test Job. In the end, Job illustrates the power and perseverance of true saving faith. Bereft of his worldly blessings with neither theological explanation nor pragmatic solutions, Job trusted in the very nature of God’s goodness—no matter the disasters (temporarily) in his personal life and his standing before others. The crescendo of the book is God’s ultimate reward for Job’s unswerving faithfulness.

May this be our take-home application as well, again for emphasis, as stated in the preamble: when your world is falling apart, and certainly those occasions occur while serving in public office, whether or not by the orchestration of Satan, Job is an example to believers of inalterable and unshakable confidence in the God of the Bible who has revealed Himself to us and mankind.

Like Job, will we stand on the promises of God during these times in our lives? Absent personal abilities or resources of our own, will we hold steady as God leads us through personally insurmountable hurdles and obstacles that only He can deliver us from or provide the solutions to? Like Job, God calls us to faithfulness no matter what we may be encountering. May Job encourage you to stand firm and be rock-solid in your perseverance through the myriad of present difficulties!

IV. EMPHASIS AND THEMES

Why do you trust in God? Why do you serve him? Is it because of the benefits? Job’s faith was tested, and all such

thinking was forever removed. His only reason for belief was pure: he believed because of the attributes of God—who He is. God is deserving of worship, adoration and respect, if for no other reason than that He is our Creator. If He is who is revealed in Scripture, then ultimately it matters not what He may or may not do for His created! That point is a huge message of the book.

Another main theme relates to suffering. Even when a person cannot resolve his personal plight, he need only trust in the sovereign integrity of Holy God. The ultimate answer to personal pain and suffering may not be in finding a solution, but in submitting himself to the forging of a closer communion with Abba Father (cf. Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).

**Presented with the
mystery of suffering,
intimacy with God soon
becomes the only salve.**

And in that light, suffering always makes perfect sense! Why? Because God desires communion, now and for all eternity! As Francis Schaeffer has insightfully noted, the very fact that God is triune in His being serves to inform of His desire for fellowship and close proximity; the suffering of the saints fulfills those objectives! If sometimes the reason for suffering is unknown and accompanied by personal innocence, think of God’s desire to commune throughout it. Remember:

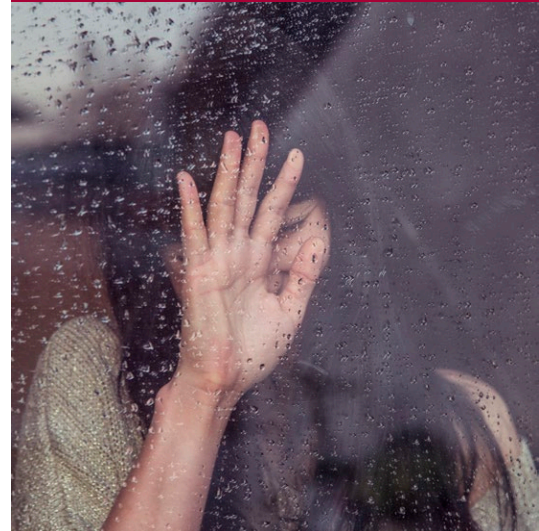
**The created are sometimes
ignorant pawns in a
heavenly chess match.**

The Scripture also teaches that there are other purposes for suffering, and any

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

James 5:11

“You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”



Trust in God’s providence.
He cares for you—
right down to the last detail.





Samuel Adams



“The name of the Lord (says the Scripture) is a strong tower; thither the righteous flee and are safe (Proverbs 18:10). Let us secure His favor and He will lead us through the journey of this life and at length receive us to a better.”

— Samuel Adams, signer of the Declaration of Independence, “Father of the American Revolution,” ratifier of the U.S. Constitution, Governor of Massachusetts.

Letters of Delegates to Congress: August 16, 1776–December 31, 1776, Paul H. Smith, editor (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1979), Vol. 5, 669–670, Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams on December 26, 1776.

Pertinent Lessons from the Book of Job

study would be incomplete and imbalanced without mention of them. Suffering can also relate to humanly-comprehensible reasons. A brief description of each of these purposes follows.

A. SUFFERING FOR STRENGTHENING

In 2 Corinthians 12:7–10, the Apostle Paul states why God allowed a “*thorn in [his] flesh*.” Unlike Job, he knew exactly why he suffered per verse 10:

“Therefore I am well content with weakness, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

God intended continual suffering in Paul’s life for the purposes of keeping him dependent on Him in contrast to “*exalting myself*” (12:7). God’s strength, states this passage, is perfected in a person’s weakness (12:9).

B. SUFFERING TO COMFORT OTHERS

Second Corinthians 1:3–7 states how an individual’s suffering builds character and compassion in order to effectively comfort others who may be suffering. Note verse 3 and 4 in this regard:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

C. SUFFERING FOR CHASTENING

In Hebrews 12:5b–12 the writer of the book states, “*MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM.*” The passage goes on to say in verse 10b, “*He disciplines us for our good, that we might share His holiness.*”

Like a father raising his children and not sparing the rod (Proverbs. 23:13), God “*scourges every son whom He receives*” (Hebrews 12:6b) in order to mature His children, and they, in turn, embody Christ-likeness.

D. SUFFERING FOR SIN

In Numbers 12:1–2, Aaron and Miriam showed a lack of respect for Moses—making statements in public in order to undermine his leadership.

“Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman); and they said, ‘Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?’ And the Lord heard it.”

God confronts their sin personally in verses 10–12, and Miriam is plagued with leprosy. As part of her punishment, she was expelled out of the camp for seven days. In this case the public sin of defamation was requisite of public acknowledgment and punishment.

E. SUMMARY ON OTHER FORMS OF SUFFERING

Concluding that all suffering is parallel to Job’s situation is a wrong assumption. There are at least four other biblical reasons. While no other person has the



right or the discernment to accurately judge why another is suffering, (cf. the error of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar), it is incumbent on every believer who is sinning to **“examine himself”** (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:28–29) lest at the communion table he eats and drinks in an unworthy manner and brings judgment on himself.

V. OUTLINE

In between the prologue (chapters. 1–2) and the epilogue (42:7–17) lies the heart of the book (3:1–42:6). Herein are three similar debates with three cycles voicing three respective opinions. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, three friends of Job’s, who are also ignorant of the heavenly setting, attempt to theologically and pragmatically deduce why Job is suffering. The first cycle, wherein each of the three presents his respective argument, is found in 3:1 to 14:22. The second round of debate by each is contained in 15:1 to 21:34, and the third

round by each is in 22:1 to 26:14. Job responds in his defense in 27:1 to 31:40. After Job’s rejoinder, Elihu singularly takes the stand and attempts to make the concluding argument regarding the purposes of suffering. After that (38:1 to 41:34), God talks directly to Job prior to his vindication in the epilogue.

VI. APPLICATION TO GOVERNING AUTHORITIES

The following seven truths can be distilled from careful study. Each has application to the life of a governing authority:

A. TRUST BEFORE REASONING

Job’s three friends tried their best to explain what was happening to Job, but in the end, their faulty theology was rebuked by God (42:7). Perhaps this is why the book is so long; the length



“Job and His Friends,” by Ilya Repin, 1869, Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

Gouverneur Morris



“Your good morals in the army give me sincere pleasure as it hath long been my fixed opinion that virtue and religion are the great sources of human happiness. More especially is it necessary in your profession firmly to rely upon the God of Battles for His guardianship and protection in the dreadful hour of trial. But of all these things you will and I hope in the merciful Lord.”

— Gouverneur Morris, revolutionary officer, member of the Continental Congress, signer of the Constitution, “Penman of the Constitution,” diplomat, U.S. Senator.

Letters of Delegates to Congress: February 1, 1778–May 31, 1778, Paul H. Smith, editor (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1982), Vol. 9, 729–730, Gouverneur Morris to General Anthony Wayne on May 21, 1778.



Roger Sherman



“True Christians are assured that no temptation (or trial) shall happen to them but what they shall be enabled to bear; and that the grace of Christ shall be sufficient for them.”

— Roger Sherman, signer of the Declaration of Independence, signer of the Constitution, “Master Builder of the Constitution,” judge, framer of the Bill of Rights, U.S. Senator.

Correspondence Between Roger Sherman and Samuel Hopkins (Worcester, MA: Charles Hamilton, 1889), 26, from Roger Sherman to Samuel Hopkins, October 1790.

serves to illustrate, express and then dismisses the futility of their theological reasoning. That’s to say this: no pastor or theologian has all the answers regarding suffering! Why? Scripture doesn’t provide all of the reasons regarding suffering. *“We see in a mirror dimly ...”* states Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12. Deuteronomy 29:29 says that *“The secret things belong to the Lord....”*

At the end of the day theodicy remains an antinomy.

How finite man explains the existence of evil in light of God’s justice, omniscience, omnipotence, and sovereignty (theodicy) requires humility and Job-like faith. Such is akin to personally stating, “God is infinite, I am finite, therefore I cannot expect to understand everything perfectly—antinomous to me; it is not to God!” The greatest and most profound lesson of the book is that a person needs trust in God over and above his limited, finite and fallen personal reasoning. Job hugely underscores the necessity of this kind of mindset in this life. Born from such is humility and subsequent God-given strength: **“GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE”** (James 4:6). Meekness is the result.

An illustration of this principle: Why hard-working godly men and women lose political races remains a mystery. Nonetheless, we still trust in Him if such a disappointment happens.

B. HEAVENLY MATTERS AFFECT EARTHLY LIVES

Satan sought from God the right to test Job (1:9–12)—just as he asked permission of God to *“sift Peter like wheat”*

(Luke 22:31). As I have already stated, Job knew nothing about this heavenly matter. Accordingly, the adversity a person suffers in this world could relate to unknowable heavenly matters. Reinforcing this precept (again) is Deuteronomy 29:29a, *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God ...”* In that God is the Creator and man is the created, He is not obligated to inform His workmanship (*poiema*, lit. “What has been made”; Ephesians 2:10) about all of His plans. States Romans 9:21, *“Or does not the potter have a right over the clay ...?”*

It is not as if the finite are co-landlords with the infinite.

It is not requisite of God to confer with His tenants before dealing with His proprietary affairs! Lest there be any doubt, Isaiah 55:8 makes it clear: **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.**

Even though Job was blessed in the end, God never informed him about the heavenly matters behind the scenes. In a similar sense, the reasons why injustice and evil might befall a righteous governing authority may never be known in this life; Job says that’s okay. Don’t necessarily expect them to be known.

C. THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER

James 1:2–5 is an excellent, principled New Testament distillation of the overall narrative of Job:

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be per-



fect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

Wisdom (*sophia*) is the existence of emotional sobriety necessary to view life's circumstances through the objective lens of biblical truth. More generally, it is the skill at living life for God's glory.

God might not unveil the reasons for suffering, but he promises to give wisdom in suffering.

Hopefully, working through the hurt will result in a keen sense of clarity to pursue personal growth and spiritual maturation. Adversity draws a person nigh unto God because closeness is often the only antidote that comforts.

As a governing authority, view righteous suffering as good. It is God's means of achieving a more intimate relationship with Jesus. What could be of greater value?

D. DON'T JUDGE SPIRITUALITY IN RELATION TO SUFFERING

Since bad things happen to good people all the time, we need always to refrain from judging another's spirituality based on his or her painful circumstances (cf. Matthew 7:1–2). Don't be like Job's buddies! Job had neither material wealth nor physical health during his time of intense trial, yet throughout, he remained a very godly man.

E. PERSEVERANCE IS

PRIMARY

Perseverance in the faith is a most noble virtue as demonstrated throughout this book. The believer in the midst of suffering should not walk away from God but draw intimately close. Only out of pain is peace birthed—an unexplainable peace—*"the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7).

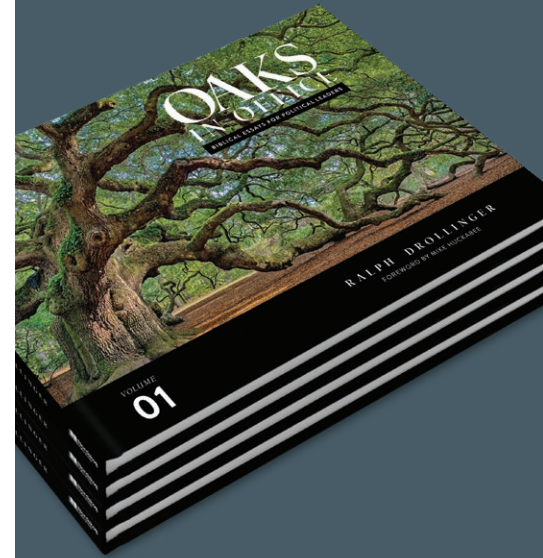
When the search for explanations seems to end in a frigid cold yonder, a person's perseverance discovers the tent of warm communion.

F. GOD IS GOOD

No matter the tumult, we can safely be assured that our well-being lies in the warm hands of a loving Father. And those warm hands may be a person's only comfort for a time. Short on anesthesia, God typically appears in the operating room with several tools in His pocket—scalpel, pliers, sandpaper, and a needle. But even though surgery is rough, He holds the best interests of the redeemed; the patient always comes through the procedure, heals, and is stronger in Christ.

G. GOD IS FAITHFUL AND BLESSES THE RIGHTEOUS

Suffering may be intense, but for those chosen of God (cf. John 15:16), adversity always ultimately ends in blessing—if not in this life, in the heavenlies. States James 1:12 and echoed in the last chapter of Job (42:10) are these marvelous attestations to the faithfulness and



OAKS IN OFFICE

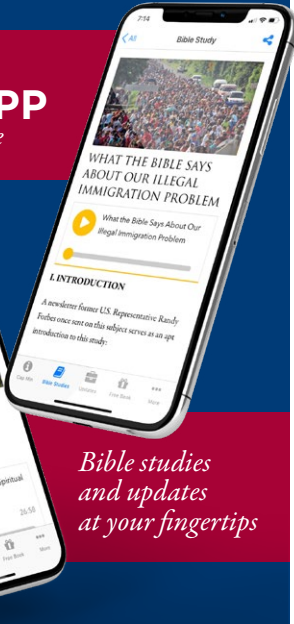
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blessings of God Almighty:

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

“The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the Lord increased all that Job had twofold.”

James 5:11 is an apt summary of the faithfulness and eventual blessing of God relative to His own:

“You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”

Amen!

VII. SUMMARY

If a person’s suffering is not explainable via strengthening, comforting, chastening or sinning, the book of Job affords much insight into how the believer should deal with suffering when at a loss for explanations. Here then is how he or she should think and react. May these seven truths guide and inform our thinking as we journey down the path of life this side of heaven.

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