

Double-time!

It is probably the oldest written account of scripture; at least that's what many Bible scholars think. No, it's not the story of creation but rather of destruction. It's the journey of Job – a trek that most of us can only faintly fathom. And though it is ancient in its origin, it is thoroughly contemporary in its applicability.

Though its language is poetic, it is not simply an allegory or a parable but a painfully accurate account of one man's tragedy and ultimate triumph. Yet, in that one man is the universal burden of humanity. And so, among the many lessons we could ponder we will consider herein the mystery of unexplainable misery as well as the pain and peace of patience.

Job 'had it all', or so it would appear. The scripture describes his circumstances as far beyond abundant. His riches in livestock alone made him "the greatest of the men of the east". His family was totally 'together' in loving unity – so much so that his children gathered together regularly to celebrate with feasts. On top of that, Job himself was known on earth and in the heavenly kingdom of God as an extremely righteous man, a man of prayer and confession, of godly counsel and encouragement to all who were in need. Ah, but Job didn't really 'have it all'...not yet.

You may remember the story – God had 'bragging rights' and as he was declaring the exemplary life of

Job to Satan, the first shoe dropped so to speak. The devil claimed that Job was only living a righteous life because God had hedged him in and protected him from all trouble. It is here that some people have a hard time for it appears that God allowed incredible evil to come into his servant's life simply to prove a point to Satan.

Indeed, God did permit the destroyer to have his way with all that Job had – in one fell swoop, the devil devastated Job's fortune and family. It seems that only his wife was left.

It was at this point however that Job showed a heretofore hidden aspect of his character – his utter submission to God's authority. Here, he proclaimed what is perhaps the most powerful praise of the Old Testament when he confessed, *"Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."*

Oh, it is far too easy to glibly pass over this story with simply an intellectual assent to Job's losses. Who among us can comprehend the grief associated with losing ten children together with every form of sustenance -- all in one horrific day? Apart from the sufferings of Christ, this is perhaps the greatest account of individual grief and suffering in scripture. Nevertheless, the 'other shoe was about to drop'.

Again, Satan approached God and again he obtained permission to take the test even further – he could plague Job personally in any way he desired short of taking his life. As if his holocaustic tribulation hadn't

been crushing enough, Job himself was then pulverized by poisonous and painful boils from head to toe – he became unrecognizable even to his friends. Scraping the puss from the infections with broken pottery, he lamented in a pile of ashes – what a sight! What a horrendous plague!

Still, Job did not let the intense misery corrupt his respect for the Almighty. He cursed the day he was born and wished it out of existence. He longed for death and was clearly near the end of his rope.

Consequently, Satan brought along some 'lubricant' – enter, three of Job's 'friends' with their 'slick' counsel on the reasons behind his condition. As if it were even possible, they made Job's trial worse. But Job, though he did not understand the reason for or purpose behind his plight, did not cave in to their slippery words nor to his wife who advised him to "curse God and die."

Wow! How could a man be more isolated, more desolate, more devastated, more broken? Only one way...I'll get to that.

Satan had done his worst, yet when God threatened to bring judgment upon Job's miserable counselors, Job prayed for them. How could a man be more generous, more forgiving, more overcoming? Only one way... I'll get to that too.

The misery of the righteous is indeed a mystery. And it can seem like God's 'tuned out' somehow or angry. Nevertheless, these trials work out to far, far more blessedness and ultimate good than mere mortal minds can appreciate.

No, God is not far away in our times of tempest. No, He is not indifferent to our turmoil. No, He is not taking out His anger with sin on us. This is exactly what our enemy wants us to believe.

There is in the overall process a glorious and purposeful result – patient perseverance, godly character and the hope of heaven. *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."*
Rom 5:1-4

Now, in reading the last chapter of Job, you might get the impression that Job's perseverance in the trial paid off so to speak. We read, *"And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold."*

"Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys."

He also had seven sons and three daughters.” Job 42:10-13

(Sounds like the first ‘prayer of Jabez’ so to speak was not with a me-focus but rather an unselfish intercession on the behalf of some confused friends.)

Yes, his self-righteousness was exposed and he repented of it, but there is more to this story than that. Job, though he may have found out what happened in the heavenlies to cause his calamity, it’s not evident that he ever understood why. It remained a mystery. But, in allowing it, God produced in him a far greater capacity. You see, his perseverance wasn’t limited to the time in which Satan had license to lay on heavy trials. He also obtained the capacity to persevere an additional 140 years! Do you think he came by the latter days blessings in the course of a day? a month? a year? How about decades? At least several decades!

The capacity to persevere only prospers when it is planted in persecution or trial. By definition, it cannot come about suddenly. To persevere -- in Greek the word is HUPOMONE. *“In Classical Greece it described the ability of a plant to thrive in a harsh environment - literally in the deserts and rocky slopes. In later Greek and Jewish literature, it was used to refer to the ‘spiritual staying power’ which enabled the faithful to die for their God.”* Scott Coltrain

And next, there was character. Perseverance in turn produced in Job a character capacity – that is godliness, which most of us can only faintly imagine. He is alluded to in scripture as one of the three

most righteous men, apart from Christ, who ever lived (Eze 14:14,20) -- not in spite of the trials but because of them! Understand -- this was, is and will be to his benefit for all eternity.

And next, there was hope – specifically the hope of heaven. Why do I say that? First, because the Bible tells us that like the Colossians, the way we live is, *“Because of the hope [of experiencing what is] laid up (reserved and waiting) for you in heaven. Of this [hope] you heard in the past in the message of the truth of the Gospel...”* (Col 1:5 Amplified Version).

Second, Job had treasure laid up in heaven. You see, as we look at how God blessed his latter days we can specifically note that in all his possessions he received double – twice as many sheep, twice as many camels, twice as many oxen and twice as many donkeys. What does that have to do with heaven? Hang with me.

Now, we all know that these things, these earthly possessions don’t go with us. When the incredibly wealthy J.D. Rockefeller died, someone asked, “How much did he leave behind?” The answer came tersely, “All of it!” What was lost or stolen during Job’s trial was gone.

With that in mind, it may at first seem odd that after doubling of all his earlier possessions, the Word then goes on to say that God gave him another seven sons and three daughters – the same as before. Hey, you might wonder, why not 14 sons and 6 daughters? ‘I thought this was double-time?’ Think with

me – this was indeed a doubling as well. See, he already had seven sons and three daughters -- waiting in heaven.

Yes, some misery is a mystery, but in the pain of patient perseverance there can also be peace – peace with God. It, in turn, will bring forth the capacity for godly character and the hope of heaven – NOT suddenly, not like a ‘Mc-blessing’, but in God’s good time.

Job understood this – he specifically named his latter three daughters in such a way as to make that evident. They were called Jemima meaning “day by day” or “warmth and affection”, Kezia which means “cassia” the cinnamon-like spice so lovely it was part of the recipe for the holy anointing oil, and finally, Keren-happuch which means “a striking mascara that beautifies the eyes.”

Job undoubtedly learned that this terrible, troubling and mysterious work of God, day by day, brought, in the end, warmth, affection, the beauty of a holy anointing and a strikingly beautiful countenance before the Lord -- not only of benefit in this short earthly life but throughout eternity.

“For the Christian, perseverance is not an unbearable burden. It’s not a matter of just trudging along, day after day, bowed down by grief and sorrow. On the contrary, by faith, our hearts can always be lifted up, because we’re not bearing our burdens alone; Christ is bearing them with us and for us. As Paul prays for the Roman Christians, ‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope

by the power of the Holy Spirit.’ (Romans 15:13)” Alan Perkins

In closing, how could a man be more isolated, more desolate, more devastated, more broken than Job? How could a man be more generous, more forgiving, more overcoming?

Only One way – only one person can make that claim in truth – only our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Job is a picture of Jesus – in suffering, in patience, in gracious intercession, in ultimate blessing and with children both in heaven and on earth one day to be united in Him forever.

You know, Job thought in the beginning that he was a pretty together guy. But at the end of the book when he actually saw the Lord (undoubtedly Christ) he said that he abhorred himself by comparison. It’s kind of like Isaiah in Isaiah chapter six. Just seeing Him made all the difference – no more justifications, no more pity parties, no more self-centeredness. Simply beholding the King of kings settled the whole issue.

God never gave him answers to his tragedies, never explained a thing to Job. Yet his life turned around, his head was lifted up, his perspective on everything changed when He saw the Lord Jesus. That’s frankly because in Christ everything is right, redeemed and restored. Such is heaven and the heavenly minded. Now, Job truly has it all. Someday, so will you.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must

finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4

He's coming soon – so persevere dear friend.

For your consideration and further study: 1 Chron. 16:11; Job 17:9; Ezek. 18:24; Hos. 12:6; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 10:22; Mark 4:3–8; Luke 22:31–32; John 8:31–32; John 15:4–10, 14; Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:21–22; Rom. 2:6–8; 1 Cor. 10:12–13; 15:1–2, 58; 16:13; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 5:1–4; 6:9; Eph. 6:13, 16, 18; Phil. 1:27; 3:12–15; 4:1; Col. 1:22–23; 2:5–6; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Thess. 2:15–17; 1 Tim. 6:11–12; 2 Tim. 2:12; 3:14; 4:7–8; Heb. 2:1; 3:14; 4:14; 6:4–6, 11–12; 10:23, 35–36; 11:27; 12:1–13; James 1:2–4, 12; 5:10–11; 1 Pet. 1:5–7; 2 Pet. 1:10–11; 3:17; Jude 21; Rev. 2:10, 17; 3:5, 11–12, 21; 14:12; 16:15; 21:7; 22:11