

## Job 2 • When the Test Gets Personal

### Introduction

It is well worth noting that even when Satan engaged Christ directly and failed, it did not discourage him from returning and trying again.

<sup>13</sup>When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. — Luke 4:13

Just as Jesus' final hours in the Garden of Gethsemane turn very personal and was capped off with the personal betrayal of a previous close friend animated by Satan's agenda, such occurs with Job and can be expected to be experienced by us. Successfully passing one test of faith does not automatically exempt from all future tests. In all likelihood such will become even more intense and personal.

<sup>1</sup>Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

### [Read v.1-2]

**Observation:** It is important to note that although the NASB renders the proper name "Satan", the actually underlying Hebrew contains the definite article "the", meaning "the adversary". In other words, it is the devil's role which is being emphasized here rather than his proper name. Throughout later books of the Old Testament, such as in 1 Chronicles 21:1, "Satan" as a proper noun is used repeatedly. The Hebrew root word from which "Satan" is based means "to bear a grudge toward someone" or "harbor animosity". This is not an intellectual or academic adversary, but an enemy, which the root word as a noun is often translated when referring to an earthly enemy instead of the fallen adversary.

**Q: So if we understand that it is "the adversary" who once again appears before God, what can we therefore expect from him?**

A: He will continue to act in the character of an accuser or opponent. It is not in his nature to be swayed or influenced by the truth, but to constantly work as a protagonist.

<sup>1</sup>Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. — Zechariah 3:1

**Q: What might be understood about the way Satan works by the fact that both v.2 here and v.1:7 in the first meeting are identical?**

A: There is a consistency in Satan's working; he is persistent in seeking his own way. He keeps coming back even when unsuccessful.

**Application:** Satan is a persistent antagonist working out of animosity, not an adversary for the truth.

<sup>3</sup>The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause."

<sup>4</sup>Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. <sup>5</sup>However, put forth

### [Read v.3-6]

**Q: In comparison to God's first description of Job in 1:8, what is an additional qualification provided?**

A: "And he still holds his integrity" (v.3) indicates that nothing in Job's character has changed in spite of what has been inflicted upon him. In God's view, Job is the same spiritually after as he was before.

**Q: How is the source of Job's trial clearly identified?**

A: Satan "incited" this action which rendered the result "to ruin him without cause". (v.3)

Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.”  
<sup>6</sup>So the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”

**Application:** Whereas punishment or discipline are deserved as a result of our own actions, divine trials may not require any wrong doing on our part because they are not the consequence of sin, but a test of faith.

**Observation:** Although the NASB translators chose to state in English that Satan’s goal was “to ruin” Job, the underlying Hebrew word is elsewhere literally translated as “swallow”, as when used to describe the judgment of Korah and company in Numbers 16:30. It is describing a total devouring involving not just the physical, but the spiritual.

**Q: Does Satan actually answer the question which God put to Satan?**

A: No, he rather reacts against it, not wanting to concede anything from the first failure. Satan is making an attempt to show that nothing is over yet as far as he’s concerned.

**Q: What does “Skin for skin” mean?**

A: It is obviously an ancient proverb of some kind, the meaning of which has no reliable general consensus among translators or expositors. But because of the accompanying text, we know it is describing Satan’s aim is to get the previous restriction lifted.

**Q: How does Satan’s persistence reveal to us that he is obviously not on the same level as God, that he does not have powers even approaching those of Yahweh?**

A: Beside the fact that Satan must appear as just another in the ranks of all the angelic beings, if Satan possessed God’s abilities, he would be omniscient and know the outcome in advance, and therefore see what God sees, that Job will not fail this test.

**Point:** Satan is a limited being who, unlike God, cannot see the end from the beginning, and continually tries to alter the outcome. He may be a created being who is currently more powerful than other many other created beings, but he still resides among the ranks of the created nonetheless.

**Q: What does Satan initially propose as to how the next action against Job will come about?**

A: Notice that Satan initially attempts to get God to “put forth Your hand” and “touch his bone and flesh” (v.5) The fact that Satan attempts this again—in the first encounter he initially suggested, “touch all that he has” (v.1:11), reveals Satan is a creature with an unchangeable nature predisposed to his sinful disposition who no longer has the ability to change. He does not see the ignorance of attempting again what has already failed.

**Q: Why is it significant that God does not take the bait and places the responsibility for taking action against Job back upon Satan personally?**

A: God is not the author of such trials, but Satan alone.

**Q: Although Job’s trials in either case do not originate with God, what action does God take on Job’s behalf in each case?**

A: God places a limit on what Satan can do.

**Q: But what is Satan’s ultimate goal where Job is concerned?**

A: Satan again predicts, “he will curse You to Your face”. (v.5)

**Point:** Satan does not simply want to invoke a crisis of faith, but to bring about irreparable damage to one's personal relationship with God, the true meaning of "ruin" as literally meaning to be swallowed up. Whereas believers are repeatedly encouraged throughout Scripture to bless the Lord in every circumstance, Satan desires to completely reverse it so that believers turn against and curse Him.

**Application:** The first test involved emotional pain, the second physical.

<sup>7</sup>Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. <sup>8</sup>And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.

<sup>9</sup>Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"

<sup>10</sup>But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

### **[Read v.7-10]**

**Q: What appears to be different this time when it comes to the timing of Satan's actions?**

A: Whereas the first time he took the time to synchronize the things which would take place with a meeting of Job's children and the actions of earthly forces against him, the text in this case seems to indicate that Satan wasted no time going directly from the presence of the Lord into the presence of Job to inflict this physical hardship.

**Q: Is there any significance to singling this out as "boils" as opposed to any other disease?**

A: Although the actual Hebrew word could be translated for a variety of skin-related diseases, the greater context is meant to convey a situation where there is great, recurring physical pain.

**Q: What is the greater meaning of "sitting among the ashes"?**

A: It represents Job's continued condition of mourning.

**Q: But what will ashes ultimately come to represent where Job is personally concerned?**

A: It is featured in his last recorded statement in the book of Job as also referring to personal repentance.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore I retract,  
And I repent in dust and ashes." — Job 42:6

**Point:** Although Job will be repeatedly maligned by his so-called "friends" for stubbornly refusing to repent of sin, the fact that Job has taken up this position may indicate that he is willing to repent just as soon as he is made aware of the nature of his transgression.

**Q: What mitigating factors should we take into account where Job's wife is concerned?**

A: Although she may not be experiencing the physical pain inflicted on Job, like him she has not only lost all material possessions, but all her children as well. And now she might be dealing with what appears to be the inevitable loss of her husband.

**Q: But what is present in her statement to suggest that she is at the least being influenced by Satan?**

A: She characterizes the situation in the same manner God expressed it to Satan in their meeting. God says that Job "holds fast his integrity" (v.3) and she turns it around to question him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity?" (v.9)

**Point:** Job will maintain his position of not having compromised his integrity even very late into the debate cycle to come.

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<sup>5</sup>*Far be it from me that I should declare you right;  
Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.*  
<sup>6</sup>*I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go.  
My heart does not reproach any of my days. — Job 27:5–6*

**Q: How serious is the wife's imperative, "Curse God and die" in the greater scheme of things?**

A: In the future when the written Law is given through Moses, the penalty for cursing God is the death penalty. The earthly sentence reflects the eternal sentence for this sin.

<sup>15</sup>*You shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If anyone curses his God, then he will bear his sin. <sup>16</sup>Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death. — Leviticus 24:15–16*

**Q: How should we characterize Job's response to his wife?**

A: It is provided in the form a rhetorical question, something which is supposed to be obvious to everyone.

**Q: What is the greatest feature of Job's faith to date?**

A: "In all this Job did not sin with his lips". (v.10)

<sup>17</sup>*For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, — 2 Corinthians 4:17*

**Q: How is v.10 actually addressing what took place between God and Satan at the opening of this chapter?**

A: Job has proven God right and Satan wrong. Job has not cursed God as Satan predicted.

**Application:** Satan employs earthly agents to attack spiritually as well, often individuals who are normally considered our closest ally. They will be aligned with the principle spiritual issue Satan is bringing to bear through earthly circumstances.

<sup>11</sup>Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him. <sup>12</sup>When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. <sup>13</sup>Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.

**[Read v.11-13]**

**Q: How do we know something about the character and origin of Job's three main friends from their names?**

1. "Eliphaz" means "My God is (fine) gold". A "Temanite" means "On the Right Hand" or "South" (ancient Middle Eastern people initially faced East instead of North like us in modern times) and was from a region we would call Southern Edom. His future responses to Job are largely based on his own spiritual encounter with God.
2. "Bildad" means "Son of Contention" or "Confusing (by mingling) Love". A "Shuhite" means "Wealthy" or "Prosperity" and is thought to have been located west of Chaldea bordering on Arabia. His future responses to Job are built on "wise sayings", what we might call a "Traditionalist".
3. "Zophar" means "Chirping" or "Insolence". A "Naamathite" means "Pleasant" or "Agreeable" and is thought to have been located in Northern Arabia. His future responses to Job show him to be someone who is quite sure he knows more about God than anyone else.

[Note: The study bookmark “Comparison of Characters” is free to be downloaded from the website and distributed to the group so this can be referred to throughout the book of Job.]

**Q: What were these men’s original intention?**

A: To visit Job personally in order to “sympathize with him and comfort him”. (v.11) This will be important to keep in mind when studying their future treatment of Job.

**Q: What actions did these men take upon seeing Job?**

1. “...they raised their voices and wept...” (v.12)
2. “...each of them tore his robe...” (v.12)
3. “...they threw dust over their heads...” (v.12)

In other words, they sympathetically engaged in the same way as Job as if they themselves had experienced that which Job experienced in a very passionate expression of grief.

**Q: What might be significant about their mourning “for seven days and seven nights”?**

A: In Scripture this has been recorded as both a period of mourning for the dead (Gen. 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13) and encountering a situation which completely overwhelms (Eze. 3:15).

**Q: What indicates that their silence was probably the appropriate response?**

A: “...for they saw that his pain was very great”. (v.13)

**Point:** Those in great physical pain are most comforted by the treatment and relief of that pain, and usually have little tolerance for intellectualizing the situation.

**Application:** There is no earthly assumption of a greater spiritual issue. Job’s friends begin right with empathy, support and silence.

## Overall Application

- How does the account of Job compare with modern-day teachings that good physical health is a sign of one’s right spiritual standing with God?
- Is there a situation where another’s physical calamity must be treated as a spiritual problem?
- How might we sometimes be acting more in the character of Job’s wife than his friends at this point?
- When we experience physical illness, is our first concern still our own spiritual condition? Or do we forego considering the spiritual to focus only on divine relief of the circumstances?
- How well do we recognize the sovereignty of God over all things?