

Job is an upright man. He is prosperous and thankful to God for all he has. Satan believes that if Job faces hardship and his fortunes reverse, he will readily curse God. The Lord recognizes the piety of Job and trusts that he will always stand by God no matter what. “There is no one on earth like him, blameless and upright, fearing God and avoiding evil” (1:9).

So, the devil sets out to torment Job and he is faced with one disaster after another. In the first trial servants die, livestock are carried away, and a terrible wind smashes the house of his children while they are in it. Job remains steadfast in his faith. “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD!” (1:21).

In the second trial, Job is afflicted with a painful illness and the innocent man suffers greatly. His wife challenges him to curse God for this suffering. Job remains faithful. “We accept good things from God; should we not accept evil?” (2:10).

Aware of his troubles, three friends come to console Job. Job loses his composure under the severe strain he is under and complains. “Job’s friends insist that his plight can only be a punishment for personal wrongdoing and an invitation from God to repent. Job rejects their inadequate explanation and challenges God to respond” (Intro to Job).

Even though he has complained, Job still holds fast to his faith in God. He appeals to God for an explanation for his suffering. From a storm cloud, the Lord answers Job by speaking of the wonders of creation and asking Job many questions: “Where were you when I founded the earth?” (38:4) Job has not received a direct answer to his question, but he is content with the Lord’s response. Job is apologetic: “I disown what I have said and repent in dust and ashes” (42:6). The Lord responds with great generosity: “The LORD ... restored the prosperity of Job, after he had prayed for his friends; the LORD even gave to Job twice as much as he had before.” (42:10).

The Book of Job deals with the problem of the suffering of the innocent. It is not meant to be an historical account. One may argue that it is a hypothetical story in which we substitute our own woes for those of Job. “The Book of Job does not definitively answer the problem of the suffering of the innocent, but challenges readers to come to their own understanding” (Intro).

Life is often fraught with struggle and strife. The innocent do suffer and often time this is through no fault of their own. Over 34 million have been tainted by the corona virus and the deaths number 1 million and counting. So, what are we to make of the story of Job in the midst of the pandemic?

- Gold is tested in fire and impurities are melted away. Suffering can bring us closer to God as we recognize there is no one else to turn to. And seeing our lives more clearly, we may see the errors of the past and ask God for forgiveness as Job did when the Lord came to him in the storm.
- Like Job in the midst of terrible suffering, we may grumble and complain to God and question, ‘why me?’ I am reminded of many people who in their suffering pray for it to be all over. The Lord understands. He suffered the crucifixion and death so he knows firsthand how painful the end of life is. From the cross he reaches out to us with mercy and compassion.
- Job’s friends came to his aid. Perhaps they did not know what to say and may have even angered and upset Job, but they tried to be there for him. When we visit the sick, they may lash out with unkind words but we should take that with a grain of salt and recognize that suffering that is shared lightens the load for the one who carries that great burden.

- Those who have died might liken themselves to Job at the end of the story. The treasures that await us in heaven are more than we can imagine. With death we leave any worldly wealth behind. With eternal life in heaven, God shares his divinity with us.

After all of his struggles, Job winds up with twice as much as he had before and then lives 140 years longer. With eternal life, 140 years will seem like a mere drop in the bucket.