

## “The LORD Made Him Prosperous Again”

*Texts: Job 42:7-17; 1 Peter 1:3-9*

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The Book of Job is known for its happy ending. As we come to the final chapter of this great book, Job’s trial by ordeal blessedly comes to an end. Job’s good name, his great wealth and his loving family are restored to him. Job has successfully endured an intense and very difficult period of suffering without cursing God, nor blaming God for his troubles. Satan has been proven wrong and his attack upon the foundation of the gospel (the righteous ways of God) has utterly failed. Although Job is a justified sinner, he is YHWH’s blameless and upright servant after all. Job is not the self-centered opportunist who obeyed God only so that he would prosper, as Satan had falsely charged. Once everything Job had was taken away, Job still refused to curse God to his face, as Satan predicted. And so having successfully graduated from the school of suffering and then personally instructed by YHWH himself in the nature of true wisdom, Job’s ordeal finally comes to an end. The Lord restores to Job all of the things he has lost, and then some. God is indeed faithful to his covenant promise, his ways are proven righteous and just, and in his word alone is true wisdom to be found.

As we come to the end of the Book of Job, there is much for us to consider. We will concentrate on the final chapter (the epilogue) to the Book of Job (Job 42:7-17), in which we read of how God fulfills his promise to his servant Job, by restoring to him all of things he had lost during his trial by ordeal. Next time, we will tie up a number of the theological loose ends raised throughout the story of Job, including the difficult subject of the suffering of the righteous. As we have seen throughout our series on Job, the key point of application is simply this, “how are we to relate the story of Job in our own particular situations, should the Lord chose to bring suffering into our lives?” This requires a fair bit of explanation, something we will tackle next week, for in many ways, the Book of Job creates a number of theological loose ends, which we will attempt to tie together next time.

As we saw last time, it was an act of sheer grace when God spoke to Job from the midst of the great storm. Job was sick with a fever, suffering from sores all over his body, and thinking he was about to die, Job nearly crosses the line when he demanded that YHWH issue a written indictment against him and then treat him like a prince. It is simply amazing that God did not come to Job in judgment and confront him with a list of his sins. God did not answer any of Job’s specific questions about why all of this had come to pass, nor did God deal with Job as Job demanded. And yet after the Lord appeared to Job from the midst of the storm and spoke to him about the nature of true wisdom—which could be seen in all that God had made—Job knows that everything will be okay. Job is completely reassured. He knows that his Creator and Redeemer is not angry with him, even though Job had complained of being abandoned and throughout the course of the dialogue with his friends, Job repeatedly wondered out loud whether God was being just with him. No, the appearance of God to Job is an act of grace and blessedly brings Job’s ordeal to an end.

After losing all of his possessions and his children, we witnessed poor Job go from a humble affirmation of faith as recorded in Job 1:20-21: “*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,*” to the heartfelt lament of Job 3: “*May the day of my birth perish!*” Then we listened in as Job was on the receiving end

of sincere but cruel counsel from his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar accused Job of having sinned, because they completely misunderstood the principle of divine retribution. In their minds, a simple syllogism explains Job's troubles. God must punish all sin (true). Job is suffering horribly (true). Therefore, Job must have sinned (false). Since it is self-evident that the righteous suffer and that the wicked prosper, Job was easily able to silence his three friends whose faulty understanding of God's justice prevented them from seeing the obvious. Yes, God must punish all sins, but not necessarily in this life. Despite the loss of everything including his good name, and despite his horrible physical condition, (his fever and his open sores) Job refused to curse God.

And yet the increasingly heated and intense dialogue between Job and his friends brought about a dramatic change in Job. While well within his rights to defend his honor against the cruel and false charges of his three friends that he had committed a whole list of secret sins, Job slowly but surely lost perspective on his own situation—which is the difficulty that all sufferers face as sickness, fever and lack of strength rob them of their endurance and their clarity of thought. It was not long before Job feared that God had abandoned him or was treating him unjustly. The efforts of his friends to “comfort” him, only served to make everything worse. But knowing that he had done nothing to bring about the covenant curses—as his friends had falsely charged—Job became increasingly demanding as he sought to be vindicated of this falsehood. In fact, by the time we come to Job's final speech in chapters 29-31, he is demanding that God answer him on Job's own terms and that he be treated like a prince. Job nearly crosses the line.

But before Job goes too far, a certain Elihu, a young man who has been listening to the debate from the beginning, now jumps into the fray. While reminding Job's three friends of how completely they have failed in their attempts to deal with Job's situation, more importantly Elihu's speech points out to Job that he has gone way too far in seeking to justify himself, rather than God. Therefore, Elihu's speech serves as the means by which the way is prepared for the Lord to come and speak to Job from the midst of the whirlwind. It is Elihu, speaking as a prophet, who reminds Job and his friends that true wisdom does not necessarily come from advanced age, personal experience, or even observation, but must be revealed to us by God. This is exactly what happens beginning in Job 38.

When the Lord speaks to Job as recorded in chapters 38-41, it is Job who is twice challenged to brace himself like a man. This is an athletic image drawn from the ancient world in which the goal is to best one's opponent by removing their belt or else subduing them with it. Not surprisingly, it is Job who is quickly subdued and who loses the contest with his Creator/Redeemer over the nature of true wisdom. Speaking as the interpreter of his own work of creation, YHWH reminds Job that his wisdom is openly displayed in the heavens, on the earth, and in the creatures who populate both. It is God who hangs the stars in space. It is God who separates the day from the night. It is God who controls the seas and directs the storms. It is God who sends forth lightning and snow and rain.

And where was Job when God did all of these things? Job was nowhere to be seen. Job, is but a mere man, bound by both time and space. Therefore, when God directs Job to consider the creatures of the earth, the eagle, the horse, the ox, the behemoth (hippo) and leviathan (the crocodile), Job is confronted with the fact that he is no match for any of them, yet the Lord directs their every move and controls their every activity. Thus in Job 40:8-9, YHWH asks Job, “*Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his?*” How can Job demand anything from God? Why would Job seek to justify himself rather than God? Job's suffering does not give him the right to question God's justice.

When Job is finally confronted with the greatness of God, two things change dramatically. On the one hand, Job is immediately and completely humbled. Job has gone from demanding to be treated like a prince to repenting in dust and ashes. Notice, too, that Job is not consumed by God's holiness. Nor does God belittle Job, or mock him. But God does put Job in his place. Indeed, no one can be said to possess true wisdom unless they understand the distinction between the creature and the Creator! Once God speaks to Job from the midst of the storm, the Creator-creature distinction is something which Job of all men now fully understands! When God speaks, Job must listen. Here is the wisdom Job has been seeking all along. For unlike Job, God is neither bound by time or space, nor are his ways subject to human approval. The Scripture says that our God does whatever pleases him (Psalm 115:3). Therefore, his ways are always holy, righteous and good, even if we do not understand or even like them.

Yet, on the other hand, the very fact that God condescended to speak to Job, immediately puts Job's suffering into its proper perspective. Clearly, Job is not being punished because of some particular sin he has committed. But at no time does God ever reveal to Job the reason why he is suffering. At no point does YHWH answer Job's list of questions and demands. God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. No one can fathom him. But when Job is directed to the holiness and justice of God as seen in the glories of the natural order, Job realizes that such questions are futile and that God has been with him in the midst of his ordeal. God has not in any sense abandoned him. In fact, it was sinful of Job to even think such a thing. And this despite the fact that God never once answers any of Job's specific questions nor gives Job any explanation whatsoever as to why he is suffering. In fact, once God speaks to Job, none of that even matters. For having gained true wisdom, Job knows that God is good and that all his ways are just. Who is he to question God?

As we come to the end of Job's ordeal, we need to notice Job's reaction to God's appearance. Job is painfully aware of his great sinfulness. As we read in Job 42:1-6: "*Then Job replied to the LORD: 'I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. 'You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.'*" No longer will Job seek to justify himself, rather than God. Only God can vindicate his ways since God alone is without sin. At the end of the day, there is nothing left for Job to say. All Job can do once he realizes the greatness of his sins is to despise himself and repent.

In the specific terms of the trial by ordeal—in which Satan had contended that once stripped of all of his wealth, his family and his health, Job would curse God to his face—Job has done nothing wrong to bring about his suffering and the loss of all of his possessions. But Job has become increasingly defiant as he seeks his own vindication before his friends. But who is Job to question YHWH? Who is Job to demand anything from God, especially when God in his grace, has condescended to speak to Job, reminding Job that he has never left his side? And all of this occurs, we must remember, before Job had actually been restored. Surely, this is intended to remind us that Job is a justified sinner who believes in the God of the promise, and who as a fruit of his faith, is the blameless and upright servant of the Lord, about whom it can be truly said that there is no one else like him on the earth. Most importantly, it means Job has now prevailed in the trial by ordeal. Job's ordeal is now over!

Thus, when Job repents of his sins the dialogue is now complete, and it is in the epilogue (Job 42:7-9) that we finally learn the outcome of the story. And it is a happy ending indeed.

In Job 42:7-9, Job receives that vindication he has been seeking all along. God will restore his good name among his friends and by implication, to the citizens of Uz.

As we read the amazing account of Job's vindication and restoration, we need to notice the fact that this process takes place in the reverse order from which these things were originally lost.<sup>1</sup> The first (and probably most important) thing restored to Job is his good name and his reputation among his friends. It is only after Job's good name and reputation is regained, that his family and wealth are restored to him as well. In fact, we almost want to cheer when we read the words of verse 7, "*After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.'*" Not only does this mean that Job has spoken correctly about God—in the sense of not blaming God for his trial—it also means that Job's friends are finally confronted with their cruel and thoughtless behavior toward their suffering friend. But despite their folly—they never once entertained the thought that they might be wrong about God's justice and therefore, needed to repent—God is gracious to them as well as to Job.<sup>2</sup> They too will be forgiven.

When Job confesses his sins and performs this humble act of repentance, it appears as though he is finally doing what his friends told him to do all along—confess his sins so that God can restore him. But Job is not repenting of sins which he did not commit—things which his friends has accused him of doing. Rather, Job is repenting of those sins that he did commit once the ordeal began, namely those sins associated with trying to justify himself rather than God. At the end of the story, the verdict is clear—Job's three friends had spoken incorrectly and accused Job of things he did not do. They too need to repent in order to be restored.

God's gracious remedy to this matter is now spelled out in verses 8-9. "*So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.'*" *So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.'*" Job is now to serve as mediator on behalf of his three friends, by making a burnt offering sufficient to cover the guilt of all their sins. By acting as mediator for his friends, God will effect reconciliation. Job will not only be able to forgive his friends for what they have done, but he is vindicated in their eyes as well so that the friendship can be restored. When Job is chosen to be the one to pray for them another principle of redemptive history is brought out into the open. As we read elsewhere, the prayer of a righteous man turns aside God's anger toward the wicked (Proverbs 15:29). A clear example of this is found in Genesis 18:16 ff, when Abraham prays for the deliverance of Sodom.<sup>3</sup>

Since Job is that one chosen to offer the sacrifice on their behalf, he is not only vindicated in the eyes of his friends, but YHWH pointedly calls Job "my servant." This is covenantal language and confirms that Job's victory over Satan in the trial by ordeal is finalized.<sup>4</sup> Through the burnt offerings, YHWH is

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<sup>1</sup> Kline, "Job," p. 489.

<sup>2</sup> Andersen, Job, p. 293.

<sup>3</sup> Andersen, Job, p. 293.

<sup>4</sup> Kline, "Job," p. 489.

reconciled to sinners, sinners are reconciled to YHWH, and the four sinners (Job and his three friends) are now reconciled to each other. This means that the foundation of the gospel is still intact—God is both just and righteous in all his dealings with his creatures—despite all of the plotting and scheming by Satan to undermine this principle through his attack upon God’s righteous servant, Job. Job has been vindicated by God. God has vindicated himself. And Satan is shown to be a liar, who hates all righteous servants of the Lord.

**W**hile Job did not serve God so that he might prosper materially as Satan had charged, nevertheless, God’s creation is good, and the blessing promised to God’s people that the meek might inherit the earth comes to full flower in the life of Job.<sup>5</sup>

As the story comes to the final chapter, Job is still clothed in dirt and ashes. He is still sick and has nothing left of his great wealth and happiness. But all of that is about to change. While we have learned throughout the Book of Job that there is no direct connection whatsoever between someone’s piety and their corresponding prosperity, nevertheless, God rewards Job for his faithfulness. God does this not because Job deserves anything from the hand of God—Job is and remains a justified sinner—but because God is gracious to his servant and because God always keeps his word.

The final turning point in the story now comes in verse 10, when we read that “*after Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.*” It is only when Job assumes his mediatorial office on behalf of his friends, that restoration finally comes. More importantly, we are pointed ahead in redemptive history to the coming messianic age and God’s promise that his people will receive a double blessing.<sup>6</sup> In Isaiah 61:7 we read the following messianic prophecy. “*Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.*” At this early point in redemptive history, the material blessings given to Job are but a type and shadow of heavenly blessings which are so much greater, that we have difficulty even conceiving of them. We can understand what it means to own great tracts of land, large herds of cattle, much gold and silver. But this side of the dawn of the age to come we cannot begin to comprehend the heavenly blessings which await God’s people in heaven. Material blessings in this life are intended to illustrate spiritual blessings which we cannot see.

While Job receives a double portion, pointing us ahead to the spiritual blessings of the messianic age, we must be clear that the material blessings given him are not an end in themselves. This is what Satan mistakenly thought. These material blessings should point us ahead to something far greater. This is the principle set forth in 1 Peter 1:3-9, our New Testament lesson this morning when we read: “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade (unlike Job’s possessions which were taken from him and then replaced)—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*” Notice that our ultimate inheritance is heavenly and yet to be revealed. In the meantime, we must wait and struggle. But we will receive our inheritance without fail.

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<sup>5</sup> Kline, “Job,” p. 489.

<sup>6</sup> Both Kline and Andersen agree that it is not Job’s repentance which begins the restoration, but the assumption of his role as mediator.

Why? Because God has promised as much!

Peter goes on to remind us, *“in this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”* In this, Job serves as a wonderful example to us. *“These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”* Job’s restoration is important because it serves as both his public vindication and as a powerful reminder that God keeps his promises. But Job’s restoration cannot match the heavenly inheritance all of God’s people will receive—an inheritance, the very thought of which, Peter declares, fills us with inexpressible and glorious joy. The restoration of Job’s great wealth, points Job (as well as all of us who read his story) ahead to our heavenly inheritance.

**B**ut Job’s restoration is important in its own right and is described for us in verses 11-17.

As the story comes to an end, we read, *“all his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought upon him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.”* No doubt, the restoration of Job’s relationships with extended family and life-long friends is the sure sign that Job has been vindicated and that his good name has been restored to him. His reputation now, is as least as great as it was before his ordeal began. But no restoration would be complete without Job receiving the consolation and comfort from all his friends. The gifts which are given to Job probably indicate a recognition of the honor due to him, once people learned that his ordeal did not stem from some secret sin. And while nothing is said of Job’s healing, we do read that his friends and families now comforted him, indicating that a time of healing and convalescence began in earnest.

The double portion promised to God’s people can be seen beginning in verse 12. *“The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys.”* This, of course, stands in contrast to the seven thousand sheep, the three thousand camels and the five hundred oxen and donkeys that Job had before this horrible trial by ordeal suddenly came upon him. It is safe to assume that Job sees his wealth with a new and even greater appreciation.

The same glorious restoration held true for Job’s family. *“And he also had seven sons and three daughters. The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job’s daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.”* That Job’s daughters are named here while his sons are not, may be a result of the fact that Job’s daughters share in the inheritance of their brothers—a remarkable thing given the attitude toward women throughout the ancient world.<sup>7</sup> This not only implies that Job’s family life was at least as happy afterwards as it was before his children were taken from him, but Job also has renewed hope that his deceased children are members of the covenant and will be raised with him at the end of the age.<sup>8</sup> Job has already boldly confessed his belief in a bodily resurrection at the

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<sup>7</sup> Andersen, *Job*, p. 294.

<sup>8</sup> Kline, “Job,” pp. 489-490.

end of the age and in the fact that the Redeemer himself would stand upon the earth (Job 19.25-27).

The fact that Job lived such a long and full life after having suffered so much is clearly a sign that he probably lived during the age of the patriarchs, when long life was characteristic of men of faith.<sup>9</sup> And so God pours out his gifts on Job as gestures of God's amazing grace, not as a reward for certain virtues manifest in the life of Job.<sup>10</sup> All of this is done out in the open so that his vindication and reconciliation to God are not hidden.

The Book of Job ends with these wonderful words, "*After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so he died, old and full of years.*" And the best response we can give to this declaration comes from Job himself—"blessed be the name of the Lord." For Job is now in the presence of the Lord, awaiting the day of resurrection, so that with his own eyes he will see his redeemer face to face. Amen!

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<sup>9</sup> Kline, "Job," pp. 489-490.

<sup>10</sup> Andersen, *Job*, p. 294.