

## Round Two

September 24, 2017

Job 2:1-10

How much more does God think I can take? There, that is the issue, that is the question before us. As we continue our study of the book of Job, we come to only the second chapter and yet the very bottom. This is round two, or act two, the worst of the worst. Job here suffers from all in round one, compounded by the new in round two, and this time it is personal!

Job 2 is where we reach our limit as well. As unfair as round one was (losing everything he had and all his children), here he loses his health, he physically, medically suffers. He not only suffers a medical problem, it covers him from head to toe. It is complete, total. And we scratch our heads and say, "I don't get it! Enough is enough! This is way, way, way beyond unfair and cruel. This is sadistic!" If this is God, He must be sick and twisted. Right?

This is like those who live through a direct hit from a hurricane. You endure all the rain, wind, and destruction on the front side. Then as the eye of the storm passes by you get the sense of calm. But just when you think the worst is over, the wind shifts to the opposite direction on the back side and you are not only hit again, but from the opposite direction, destroying everything left standing the first time. This day, I imagine the people of Puerto Rico going mad, unable to fathom what has just happened to them, unable to think straight at all. They've been hit by two "storms of the century," in two weeks, from both directions. How can there be a Sovereign God!

Once more, welcome to the book of Job. Yes, today is the bottom, the worst of the test. And the good news is that Job again passes the test. Yahweh wins the 2<sup>nd</sup> bet too. But I doubt that Job feels that he has won anything. Everything in his world is gone.

So, bear with me as we read today's text. Again, see it as a movie or play being played out in front of us. This whole book is designed to draw us in. And personally, I think it does so extraordinarily well. READ Job 2:1-10.

Main point: As hard as he tries, Satan just cannot shake the man of God.

As we just read the text, I trust how similar you can see that it is to the first scene...and yet worse! If satan did his job well in round one, he did it masterfully in round two. (2 parts)

I. The true test of one's character is, "What does he do when his life is on the line?"

I know this makes us squirm, but it is true. Here in scene three in the heavenly board room, Job once again is the focus. And the new angle of the enemy is to assert that all of those things Job lost in the first test were not attached to him. They were at arm's length. But, if you strike him to the point of death, he will surely give up his integrity when you attack his life. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> test.

v.I- On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him.

The wording is almost identical to the first time. The angels are all there, including satan. In other words, the heavenly scene happened again (almost like it is a regular occurrence). There is no sense of how much time has elapsed since the first time, but the flow of the text would indicate that the situation from test #1 has not changed. In other words, it is not as though everything has been restored, and now a new test is laid out. No, everything is still gone, Job's adult children are still dead. Job has nothing. He is probably still in a torn robe with a shaven head. The second doesn't repeat the first, but builds on the first, compounds the first.

2 And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

Once more the dialogue parrots the previous dialogue. The LORD initiates, satan responds with the same line, he has been roaming the earth seeking those whom he might destroy.

3 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.”

Once more, the LORD puts forth Job as His shining example of a man after God’s own heart. The description is identical for the third time now, first from the narrator, and the last two from the LORD Himself. Job is a blameless, upright man of God.

Pause for a second. If these words disturbed us the last time they were spoken, what about now? Why would the LORD initiate a second conversation, a second test, a further test? Why would He say these words???? The text doesn’t tell us. Here, as throughout, the text frustrates us with the lack of explanation. This is horrible, terrible, and it is initiated by God! He puts forward Job...again! How much does the LORD think Job can take? At least this much. In fact, He is confident of it, sure of it, willing to wager His reputation on it. We may not like it, but it is the truth. This is what happened.

But then the LORD adds commentary from Act I, “He still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.” What does this mean? It is clear that Job passed the first test, but what does He mean with the second part, “though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.” I take this as stating facts correctly. The LORD was in control, but it WAS satan who incited God. And it WAS to ruin him. And it WAS without reason. All of those things are true. Satan thought he had both God and Job in a box. The test itself meant that Job lost everything. And the result would be either the complete ruin of the man of God or the death of the man of God if he cursed God. Seemingly, satan won either way.

Once more, I see here disturbing but good theology. The LORD does not destroy His own. But satan can goad Him into putting His own to the test. This does not mean the LORD has some ego problems, but that His glory is THE supreme issue of all. He will show that He is worthy of worship, that His

people WILL worship Him regardless of blessings. And He is willing to demonstrate to His enemy that his enemy has lost and this experiment called mankind on earth WILL be victorious. He is willing to put that question to the test. The enemy must be reminded that he is defeated, that he cannot overpower the LORD.

Now, this answer does not satisfy us, but it is the truth. It is good theology. It is something that is lived out on a daily basis. Every day, it is demonstrated that satan does not have the final word, he does not and will not win, his victories are only temporary and controlled. But the fact that there are demonstrations of this truth does not make God the bad guy. He is not at fault. And that is the point here.

4 “Skin for skin!” Satan replied. “A man will give all he has for his own life.

Here we go again! Satan quotes a cryptic proverb whose meaning is unclear. I take it to mean that you have to get to the personal level if you are going to really test a man’s integrity. He will give up many things, but he will not give up his skin, his life for his integrity. Perhaps you could put it this way, “Every man has his breaking point.” Job hasn’t reached his yet. All of those afflictions were at arm’s length. But if you just let me at HIM, you will see how quickly he turns on You. In other words, what is truly precious to a man is his own life.

Again, can you see where this is headed? Can you think of anyone else put to the test to see whether He would give up His own life for the cause? Was He faithful, obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross? And did He give Himself up for only good people? No, He demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And His death was worse than all of this. His obedience was at a time when EVERYTHING was on the line. Can you see where this text is pointing?

5 But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

There is the challenge. If you afflict Job personally, hit him where it really hurts, he will turn on you. Again, can you see that satan has set this up to win both ways? Either way, Job is ruined. If Job wins, he will lose everything. And if

he fails, he will fall under judgment. If he curses God, he will fall under the judgment of God and God will do the very thing that satan is not allowed to do...kill him!

6 The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.”

Okay, I lied to you. These words are more disturbing than any other words in Scripture. Two weeks ago, I told you those were the most disturbing, but here, repeated a second time, they are even worse. I find it quite disturbing that right after faulting satan for inciting Him the first time, He allows satan to incite Him again. THAT my friends is disturbing.

And yet, I see here important truth, good theology. There is nothing more important than the glory, the reputation of God. Whether the LORD deserves to be worshipped no matter what happens is THE most important issue there is. And so, whether the man of God’s choosing is able to withstand the full force of satan’s attack, multiple times, ever closer each time to the core of his being, this is a crucial issue. Yahweh went along with the second wager for the same reasons as the first: the issue was of utmost importance, and He knew He would win. The victory was His. Job would pass the test!

“Very well, satan. Try your hand against Job. Know that you are going to lose. You can inflict him . . .to the point of death. You can’t take his life or we would not know the outcome of the test. You cannot kill him, but you can take him to the brink. But I am willing to wager my whole reputation that the Man of God will worship me no matter what you do to him.”

II. As expected, Yahweh was right! vv. 7-10

Job was hit with everything, even foolishly tempting talk from his wife. And still, he did not sin. Job passed the test. Yahweh won the wager!

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

The issue now is personal, physical pain. Basically, satan tortured Job. And notice just as before, it was complete, from head to toe, leaving him unable to walk, unable to scratch, unable to relieve himself from the pain.

8 Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

I love this detail. I actually had a professor use this verse to show the many uses of pottery: a scraping tool for painful sores. Effective? I cannot imagine that it would be, and that is the point. How bad would it be if the best you could do is try to alleviate the pain by scraping the sore with a rough object? Would this help? Not at all. This was not soothing aloe or ice packs, or gauze bandages. This was scraping with a broken piece of pottery, like amputating your own arm with a hacksaw. Have I been adequately descriptive? Scratching yet?

9 His wife said to him, “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!”

This is the only place in the book where Job’s wife shows up. This book is not about her. And here, she is simply speaking for the enemy to tempt Job to give up the fight. Just give up! Curse Him and it will all be over. She knows that maintaining integrity before God has been Job’s primary concern, for himself and even his children. Job’s life message has been, “Whatever you do, don’t curse God! If you do, you will fall under His judgment and you will die.” That is the sense here, to give up that quest. I don’t take it that she is actually advocating that Job commit suicide. He didn’t have to kill himself. All he had to do was curse God and it would all be over. God would finish him off. The pain would stop, but so would his life.

Now, that is all we hear from her, but can you see how harsh her message is? In one sense, she cannot watch and see her husband continue to suffer. But her message is, “Job, give it up! The longer this goes, the worse it gets!” Or, “when the horse is dead, Job, it’s time to dismount!” This God is not deserving of your worship. Any God who does this to you is not worthy of worship. O yes, satan has done his job well! The temptation to curse God is strong. The

case one could make against God is complete. Again, we await Job's response. The spotlight turns to Job.

10 He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

This would be the equivalent of "Get behind me, satan!" Job recognizes the comments for what they were, foolishness. Notice his reasoning. He acknowledges Yahweh as Creator, as the Giver of good things. If we accept some, we have to accept them all, even if they are troubles. What a perspective! O for more men of God like Job! If we like sovereignty when things are going well, must we not also acknowledge His sovereignty when things are not going well. If He is sovereign, He is sovereign. His worthiness for worship does not change simply because troubles have come. What a perspective!

Again, like Job's wife, we would all understand if Job were to have reached his breaking point, were he to turn on God. But that is the whole point here. We would all understand, but God is betting that he won't. And He is wagering His reputation that he won't.

Isn't that wild that He has such confidence in people like us? Any of us would like at people like us and say, "Don't count on it!" But not God. He invites satan to put our faith to the test. It happens. Thankfully it does not often reach the extent of Job, but it happens. The scene presented here sounds very odd, but very routine. That is how I read this.

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. Isn't that powerful? Once more, it is virtually identical to the last test. The wording is a bit different, but the substance is not. Job passed the test. I picture the crowd roaring at this point, with horns and bells and confetti and parades and monuments and parties.

There, the drama is over. Next week we will skip over to chapter 42 and see how Yahweh returns blessings to Job. Right? No? Oh, there are 39 plus chapters in between. And what we have in between is the substance of the book. The substance of the book is what takes place between the passing of the test and the restoration of blessing to Job. How do you live when you know that God is

preserving your life, but the pain of your circumstance seems unbearable? I don't know about you, but I can't wait to see what the substance of this book is all about.

Until then, if we believe this passage is the Word of God, then what should be different about our lives?

1) We will not adopt the world view that says a certain measure of good and a certain measure of bad happens to all of us. God and God alone knows how much we can handle.

2) We will accept both the good and bad from Sovereign God.

3) We will allow the confidence that God has in us to shape our view of ourselves.

4) We will not allow calamity, or circumstance, or temptation to destroy our relationship with God.

5) We will stand in awe for what Jesus suffered for us.