

Job: True to his faith

Meet Job

Once, long--oh so very long ago, there lived a man whom the Bible names as Job. Like Abraham, Job lived in the area of the Tigris River, probably close to Ur of the Chaldees, from which God also called His friend Abram to begin His race of chosen people. We find that Job was not only quite wealthy, but was really a very good man, loving God and righteousness, and he always wanted very much to do those things that pleased Him. Job was the proud father of seven fine sons and three lovely daughters. Just to show how very careful he was about pleasing God, he offered sacrifices to God just in case one of his children might have offended Him without thinking.

Now one day Satan came before God (as he will, if he is allowed to do so). God asked him what he had been doing (as if like He didn't already know!)

A wily character

Satan, of course, (by the same token) answered. He said, "Oh, I've just been walking around hoping to find someone that I can give real problems to.

God answered, quite proudly, "Have you given thought to the loyalty shown to me by my servant Job? His heart is really with me, you know. He considers my wishes in everything he does."

"Yes, but look how you take care of and protect his every move! Boy, just let *me* deal with him for a while--*then* he won't be so pure and obedient. Then you'll just see how he feels about his God!

"No, Satan, he will remain true to me even if you destroy all he has. "He paused thoughtfully. "You may bring disaster on his possessions, but see that you do not bother

his body." So Satan left God's presence to hastily get to his work of making life shockingly wretched for Job.

The test begins

Everything seemed normal the next day, but cunningly Satan had planned several devastating events to be found out at once, giving Job not even time to consider each. Very soon that day a messenger came, panting, to this wealthy landowner. "Oh, sir! Your herdsmen have all been slain and the animals run off! I am the only one left, and hurried to let you know the awful news." While that messenger yet spake, another came rushing in and announced, "Your sheep and the herdsmen have all met calamity--they were all struck by lightning, sir! Only I remain alive!"

Job didn't even have the chance to react before even another servant ran in and exclaimed, "Sir! A band of robbers have come and stolen all of the camels and have killed all those who were taking care of them!" He was so tired and stressed that he could scarcely tell his news intelligibly.

Immediately another trusted servant appeared at the threshold. His mouth was open with his news, and he was gasping with his hurry and exhaustion. "Job! Job!" he cried. "All your sons and daughters are dead! It was a horrible accident!" Everybody near was listening now, and hands covered mouths. "Everybody was celebrating Joses' birthday at Jeremiah's house. There came a strong whirlwind that blew the whole house down! Everyone was inside, and died at once. We couldn't do a thing! I'm the only one left to tell you."

In all this, poor Job was so overwhelmed and sorrowful that he tore his outer garment and shaved his head. But even then Satan did not accomplish his goal, to cause Job to curse God. . . the man instead looked up through the cloud of grief

that must have been over him, and in his faith, said, "I had nothing when I came into this world, and I will have nothing when I go. . . but I *have* learned that God is perfect in his justice and love toward us. He will always be my overriding joy in spite of what has happened."

Here we go again!

Well, it wasn't long before Satan was before God again.. God made reference to His observation of Job's steadfastness.

"Why, sure, claimed Satan. "He hasn't said anything bad about you *yet*--but you haven't even so much as touched his body. A man will give *anything* for his own skin. Don't be a chicken! Touch his body with affliction, and *then* you'll see."

"All right, he's in your power." His fierce glance to one side caused Satan to cower. "But spare his life, Evil One!"

By the next morning, Job was *covered* with the most horrid boils he had ever seen. And they itched--and were very sore, too. But Job was so sorry about his plight that he just went outside and sat in a heap of ashes and dust to show repentance if he had done anything amiss to cost his children their lives. Job picked up a piece of broken pottery and began to scratch his misery-ridden body. This of course didn't help his pain, but in that day, perhaps they thought it might. At any rate, Mrs. Job came outside to add to his misery.

The last straw

"Husband," she fussed, "*now* what do you say about your stupid religion? What a fix you've gotten us into! You look a sight! My mother *said* it would be this way!" She raved on. "A god who doesn't care anymore about you than this--to kill your children, cover you with boils, make you a pauper--

Job, we are *both* paupers!" she began to wail. "How could you still be at all interested in Him? Job, curse God--and die. This misery is unbearable."

"Wife", Job retorted, "you sound like a crazy person! Are we only to receive good from Him, and never evil?" Mrs. Job became quiet. The Evil One had done his worst, but through it all, Job did not complain bitterly against God, and Satan just could *not* believe it.

Three of Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, came to comfort him when they heard the news of all his misfortune. When they saw Job, it was even difficult to recognize him, so great had been his distress and easily apparent physical ailments. They cried and sprinkled dirt on their heads, as was the custom in that land and period in history. For a very long time the three newcomers said nothing, because Job was obviously so distraught with sorrow.

Then Job finally broke the silence, "Oh, I wish I'd never been born! Why has God let all this come upon me?"

Friends?

Eliphaz, confident in his advice, said, "Job, now tell me true--you're *bound* to have done something to deserve this bad fortune! God doesn't do things like this just for the fun of it. Now, if you just come clean, God will repent of the evil He's started against you, and everything will get back to normal."

Job answered his old friend, "All right, tell me where I've gone wrong--I am guiltless. I thought you were a friend..." He seemed to search for words. "You are as helpful as a dry spring in hot weather!" And then, looking up toward the heavens, he cried out in anguish, "God, why are you doing this?"

Then, unable to remain silent, Bildad spoke, "Job, God doesn't punish the righteous. . ." He paused, twisting his

face in the bright sunlight, and added, "If you have done only good, He will rise up to your defense! God only gives good things that make us happy. And He knows everything we do!"

With misery showing in his eyes, Job agreed with his friend about God's knowledge.

Innocent!

"But I am innocent of wrongdoing! If I could only come close and ask Him personally! If we only had an arbitrator to go between us," Job exclaimed.

Zophar, seemingly the most patient of the three, now stepped up wisely (at least it seemed so) and advised Job to state his wrongdoing, since it was obvious Job was hiding something. Then his problems would be over, he indicated.

The grief-stricken Job now became *really* angry. "Wisdom will die with you three! You're telling me things *anybody* knows! With friends like you, who needs enemies? You don't know what you're talking about!" he went on.

Eliphaz cajoled, "Now, now, Job. Don't take your anger out against God, or defy his correction. We do all make our mistakes."

Not near a repentance for something (he did not think) necessary, Job answered the three, "If you'd have been in need of comfort, I would at least have given it. But not you. . . oh, no!". . . A long pause--and his anger was gone, quick as it had come. "This comes from God", he remarked. "But why? Still I know that my redeemer lives, and shall eventually be here on earth. In my body I shall some day see Him. I am sure of that. But God--I still don't understand why I am so punished. I have been so careful to live righteously before you."

Sense at last

Then a younger man, Elihu, spoke. "I have waited, simply because I'm younger than the others. My observation is this: Job says he doesn't know just cause why God should punish him...but why should he even ask and believe God to be wrong? After all, does God have to justify himself to Job?"

The voice of God came from a storm: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation, Job? Where were you when the morning stars sang together?" After continuing in this way enough time to really embarrass Job, this one realized how big God was, and how tiny he was (in importance). He confesses that he has presumed upon the Creator, and he needs instead to see his need.

The Bible says that Job again was blessed by God, and acquired more possessions in the last part of his life than he had lost before. He had children, and lived to see grandchildren to the fourth generation. The Bible says Job died when he was "old and full of years".