

The Book of Job

Chapter 2

2:1-10 Job's Second Test

We might think that the four terrible losses in Chapter 1 were four *separate* tests, but in reality they were only *one* test. These losses affected those things which were *close* to Job, but didn't harm Job *himself*, his body. The second test does that.

2:1-3 These verses repeat the scene in 1:6-8, with the addition of the LORD commending Job because he remained faithful in spite of "*being ruined without any reason.*" Again, we see the great faith and faithfulness of Job—he lost almost everything he had, including his ten children, in one day and he still worshipped and praised his God (1:21). How often do we let much *smaller* problems cause us to doubt God's love for us?

2:4-5 "*Skin for skin!*" There's no universally agreed-on explanation for this expression, but the one most commonly found is that a person will give up *part* of his skin to save his *whole* skin, i.e. to save his life. The example is given of a person holding up his arm to block a blow to his head. His arm is injured but his life is spared. Satan's point is that Job was willing to endure the loss of all his goods and even his children so long as his own life was spared.

2:6-8 The LORD gives Satan the permission to afflict Job's body, but not to the point of death. Job, of course, isn't aware of any of this. All Job will know is that he's horribly diseased, disfigured, and in pain. He doesn't know why. He can only assume that his death is near.

We don't know the exact nature of Job's affliction. Speculation has centered on elephantiasis, leprosy, or leukemia of the skin. His condition is characterized by:

- Boils (2:7)
- Itching (2:8)
- Drastic change of appearance (2:12)
- Worms and running sores (7:5)
- Gnawing pain (30:17)
- Blackened skin and fever (30:30)

The indication is that this horrible condition continued for months (7:3; 29:2). And you think you've got it bad?

He then went out and “*sat among the ashes.*” Sitting on the ash heap or dung hill was a common physical expression of sorrow in the ancient Middle East. See:

Psalm 113:7 “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the dung hill.”



Maerten van Heemskerck
The Triumph of Job, 1559

Jonah 3:6 “The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.”

Esther 4:3 “And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there

was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.”

Today, we just say that “We’re ‘down in the dumps’” without actually *going* there.

Satan doesn’t appear again in the entire book. He’s done what he wanted to do, and evidently believed that that was enough to cause Job to turn away from God.

2:9 “*Curse God and die.*” Satan appears to be using Job’s wife to tempt Job, as Eve was used to tempt Adam. To a degree, she endorsed Satan’s accusation that God isn’t worthy of service when things are bad.

The commentaries note that it’s interesting that Satan caused Job’s *children* to die, but left Job’s *wife* alive. Perhaps Satan thought she would be more of a burden to Job alive than dead. Thank God for our *loving* wives! However, why should we “cut her some slack” regarding her attitude?

Although the Book of Job was likely written before this, the laws given to the Israelites in the Book of Leviticus certainly reflect the common view that a person who curses God is deserving of death, if not from God himself then from God’s people. See:

Lev. 24:16 “Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.”

2:10 “*You are talking like a foolish woman.*” In Hebrew, the word translated here as “foolish” can also refer to a person who is ungodly or even insane. That’s an indication of how bizarre her statement was.

Job then speaks wise words which reflect the theme of the entire book, “*Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?*” This theme is reflected in a number of hymns. We’ll look at just two:

LSB #719 I Leave All Things to God’s Direction

- 1 I leave all things to God’s direction;
He loves me both in joy and woe.
His will is good, sure His affection;
His tender love is true, I know.
My fortress and my rock is He:
What pleases God, that pleases me.
- 2 God knows what must be done to save me;
His love for me will never cease.
Upon His hands He did engrave me
With purest gold of loving grace.
His will supreme must ever be:
What pleases God, that pleases me.
- 3 My God desires the soul’s salvation;
My soul He, too, desires to save.
Therefore with Christian resignation
All earthly troubles I will brave.
His will be done eternally:
What pleases God, that pleases me.
- 4 My God has all things in His keeping;
He is the ever faithful friend.
He gives me laughter after weeping,
And all His ways in blessings end.
His love endures eternally:
What pleases God, that pleases me.

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LSB #756 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me

- 1 Why should cross and trial grieve me?
Christ is near, With His cheer;
Never will He leave me.
Who can rob me of the heaven
That God’s Son, For me won
When His life was given?
- 2 When life’s troubles rise to meet me,
Though their weight, May be great,
They will not defeat me.
God, my loving Savior, sends them;
He who knows, All my woes
Knows how best to end them.
- 3 God gives me my days of gladness,
And I will, Trust Him still
When He sends me sadness.
God is good; His love attends me
Day by day, Come what may,
Guides me and defends me.
- 4 From God’s joy can nothing sever,
For I am, His dear lamb,
He, my Shepherd ever.
I am His because He gave me
His own blood, For my good,
By His death to save me.
- 5 Now in Christ, death cannot slay me,
Though it might, Day and night,
Trouble and dismay me.
Christ has made my death a portal
From the strife, Of this life
To His joy immortal!

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“In all this Job did not sin in what he said.” An ancient Jewish commentary (Targum) on Job makes it appear that Job sinned in what he *thought* about God but not in what he actually *said* about God. While that can’t be proven or disproven, what makes it likely that Job sinned here in neither his words nor his thoughts?

We often hear the statement, “The most important thing is our health.” What’s wrong with that statement?

2:11-13 Job’s Three Friends

Eliphaz the Temanite

Perhaps the oldest, certainly the most prominent of the three. His name is of Edomite origin.

- a. One of Esau’s sons was named Eliphaz (Gen. 36:15).
- b. From Teman, a city of Edom, known for its wise men (Jer. 49:7; Obad. 8:9).

Bildad the Shuhite

May have been a descendent of Shuah, son of Abraham and Keturah, who lived in the “east” (Gen. 25:2,6).

Zophar the Naamathite

May have been from Naamah, a city “toward the border of Edom in the South” (Joshua 15:21,41).

“They sat on the ground with him seven days and seven nights.” The period of seven days and nights was a standard length of time for mourning:

- The Israelites mourned for Jacob seven days (Gen. 50:10).
- The men of Jabesh mourned for Saul seven days (1 Sam. 31:13; 1 Chron. 10:12).
- Ezekiel sat on the ground with the captives at Chebar and mourned with and for them seven days (Ezek. 3:15).
- The apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus says, “Seven days do men mourn for him that is dead.” (Ecclesiasticus 22:12).

So calamitous was the state of Job that they considered him as a dead man, and went through the prescribed period of mourning for him.

Did the three of them literally sit with Job twenty-four hours a day for seven days? No, but most likely they made sure that at least one of them was always with Job during that time.