

I Choose to Bless: Suffering, Sovereignty, and a man named Job "Suffering's Ultimate Ends"

Job 42:7-17

Mark Vroegop

7 After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. 8 Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

10 And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold.

12 And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. 13 He had also seven sons and three daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. 15 And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. 16 And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. 17 And Job died, an old man, and full of days (Job 42:7-17).

Hope is hot and hard to come by these days. People want hope; but hope is hard to find. President Obama's presidential campaign was built upon two key words: change and hope. His best-selling book, written in 2006, was entitled the Audacity of Hope. People are trying to find hope it is hard to find. We are inundated every day with more bad news – more job losses, more financial scandals, deep drops in the Dow, and more foreclosures. Hope is popular, but missing these days.

However, this presents a unique opportunity for followers of Jesus. Do you know why? Because our hope, in the midst of any difficulty, is that "for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). Believers in Jesus know that "in all these things (tribulations, distress, persecution, famine, etc.) we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8:37). The follower of Jesus who

knows that he or she has been raised with Christ, sets his or her mind on things above – where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Col 3:1). Followers of Jesus know that God is in control, and they also know that life is vapor compared with our eternal home in glory.

We've got to think like that right now. This is so important that I'm going to back up the start of our series in Matthew until after Easter, and I'm going to take one Sunday to talk about how we reveal Christ in a recession. Suffering of any kind is an opportunity to declare to the world what we have: HOPE!

Today is the last message on the book of Job, and my aim for this series has been to help all of us to see that the answer to the "who?" question is far more satisfying (and hopeful) than the "why?" question.

Job has passed the test. He has proven unknowingly that the Giver is truly lovelier than his gifts. Job 42:7-17 brings our study to a close as we see the story about Job end.

Hope: Resolution and Restoration

Before we get into the text, let me set the framework for why this book ends the way that it does and how that connects to hope. I want you to think back on a time that you were going through a difficult time, and I want you to ask yourself – "In the midst of suffering, what were you longing or looking for?" Or maybe I could ask it this way: "What did you hope would happen one day in the future?" My guess is that you were looking for a least two things: resolution and restoration.

By resolution I mean that you were longing for the mystery behind your suffering to be answered or the injustice behind your hardship to be made right. In other words, you wanted God to solve it, to resolve it. Part of the pain of suffering is the dissonance that is created, and you long for the time when it will all become clear. You desire resolution.

By restoration I mean that you long for the pain of your suffering to stop or the hole that suffering created to be filled. In other words you want God to fix it, to repair it. A real part of suffering is a feeling of loss – that aching sense that something has been removed from your life. You desire restoration.

Here is where Job helps us. The book has taught us that the "who?" question is our only hope in this lifetime. We must cling to the very heart of God when we are hurting. But the hope for believer in Jesus is that ultimately resolution and restoration happen. We must trust who God is now, believing that one day he will solve it and fix it.

And I think we get a small taste of that in Job 42. Job doesn't know what you and I know about the rest of the story of the Bible. What we find in these last ten verses is a small picture of the ultimate ends of suffering.

Resolution and Restoration for Job

These closing verses show us how God solves and fixes the outstanding issues in Job's life that had been caused by the calamity.

Resolution: God will solve this

What specifically does God need to solve here? He needs to address the outstanding issue as to who was right – Job or the three friends? God answers very clearly, and solves the question once and for all. Notice what we learn:

- **God is angry with the three friends.** He speaks directly to Eliphaz (v 7) as the leader of the three men.
- **God tells them they were wrong.** Verse 7 is a clear vindication of Job: "...you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."
- **They must offer sacrifices.** Their incorrect statements about God have set them in opposition to God. Costly sacrifices are required (e.g., seven bulls and seven rams)
- **Job will serve as their mediator.** How humbling this must have been! They are instructed (v 8) to take their sacrifices to Job, and God will accept his prayer on their behalf.
- **Their words have been folly.** God promises to be gracious to them, but he states clearly that their counsel to Job was actually leading Job toward wickedness.

Verse eight ends with this restatement: "You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." So we have heard that statement twice. It is very important because it unequivocally settles the issue as to who is right and who is wrong. God has the last word; he makes the final ruling. He solves everything. Job is right. The three friends are wrong.

Verse nine brings the role of the three friends to close. "So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer" (Job 42:9).

This is something that only God could do – settle, once and for all, who is at fault. It is God's place to solve the problem of who is right and who is wrong.

Restoration: God will fix this

After solving the problem of who was right, God fixes everything that the calamity had created. He restores Job's life, including his family, his wealth, and his health. "The Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends" (v 10).

Verse 11 is an important part of the story for two reasons. First, it shows that God used the generosity of family and friends to meet Job's needs and to help him start over. God restored Job's wealth, but he did it in part by blessing the gifts of others. His friends and family held some kind of shower for Job. This is important to note because it reminds us, especially in a difficult financial season, that God works through the generosity of his people. He's the one who gives the increase, but he uses the graciousness of others as a part of his plan.

Second, verse 11 again reminds us that God was the one who was ultimately behind everything that happened. God gives, and he takes away. "And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil (disaster) that the Lord had brought upon him." The writer wants to be sure that at the very end of the book we have this squarely in our minds. God is sovereign over everything – including the bad things that happen.

What did the restoration of Job look like?

- He received twice as much as he had before (v 10)
- His latter days of were more blessed than the beginning (v 12)
- His livestock was doubled (v 12)
- He was blessed with seven more sons and three more daughters

We are given some additional specific details.

- His daughters are highlighted. We learn their names—Jemimah, Keziah, Keren-hapuch. We learn that they were the most beautiful women in all the land (v 15), and that Job included them in allotment of his inheritance. The writer wants us to see Job as very proud father, uniquely blessed, and generous.
- We learn about the longevity of Job's life. He lived another 140 years, and he lived to see four generations (v 16)

The last verse of the book describes Job in way reserved only for the noblest among God's servants (see Gen 25:8, 35:29, 1 Chron. 29:28, 2 Chron. 24:15).¹ "And Job died, an old man, and full of days" (42:17).

¹ John Hartley. The Book of Job. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 544.

And so the book ends with God fixing everything. He graciously restores everything that Job had lost in the previous calamity. God made it all better, blessing him even more than what he could have imagined.

So that is how Job ends. The “who?” question is shown again to be more satisfying than the “why?” God could be trusted to make everything right. He resolved the problem of justice – who was right and who was wrong. And he restored what was lost, graciously blessing Job in more ways than he could have dreamed. The ultimate ends of suffering – resolution and restoration have come. Job was no fool to hope in God.

Hope for Followers of Jesus

Honestly, there is a part of me that doesn't like the ending of Job because I know far too many stories that didn't turn out that way. The ending of “they lived happily ever after” makes for good Hallmark movies, but it is a bit far removed from real life.

However the more I thought about the ending of Job, the more I realized that it is really telling us what God is like more than anything else. It is designed to show us that in the end, hoping in God to solve or fix things is not a foolish choice at all. In other words there hope in the midst of suffering because we know that one day God will solve and fix everything.

A follower of Jesus lives differently in this lifetime and views suffering through a different lens because of this hope. Follow this argument in 1 Peter 1:3-8, and notice 1) the primacy of hope, 2) the connection to a heavenly inheritance, and 3) the resulting joy.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3-7).

The power of this text is the connection between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our hope in the midst of suffering. Jesus' conquering of the grave secures the future of those who put their faith in him. An empty tomb promises a future resurrection and an eternal relationship with our God. And since this is the future, we have hope! We know that one day God is going to resolve and restore everything!

The book of Revelation is filled with this teaching. Let me briefly show you.

Resolution: God will solve this

The Bible promises that one day God will bring total and final justice to the world.

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:11-16).

It promises that one day Satan's time will be up. No more tempting, accusing, or destroying.

10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev 20:10).

And the Bible also promises that God will bring to resolution our pain on earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away"(Rev 21:1-4).

Do you see why this is so important? Much of suffering happens because of things that are unfair. Some of you have suffered because of the sinfulness of others. Others have borne the silent pain of an unresolved justice issue. And the beauty of this promise is that one day God is going to bring everything into the light. Ultimately, the end of suffering comes as God brings final resolution to the mess that sin created.

Restoration: God will fix this

God does even more! He makes everything new, restoring heaven and earth to the way that it was supposed to be.

5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son (Rev 21:5-7.)

Further, God establishes an eternal existence free from sin and harm.

22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev 21:22-27).

Our new home will be characterized by glorious and eternal worship.

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (Rev 22:1-5).

Do you understand this? It means that followers of Jesus do not put their hope in this world. They live with a spiritual eye fixed on the eternal home detailed for us in Revelation. They live with a sure hope that one day God is going to fix everything.

There is no pain, hardship, suffering, or difficulty that is ultimately wasted or pointless. God promises that one day he is going to fix everything, but not yet. And so we live in the gap between our present pain and the ultimate restoration.

The ending of Job reminds us that the ultimate ends in suffering are resolution (God will solve this) and restoration (God will fix this). And until that day we have to rest in who God is and what he has promised. We have to look to our future and have Jesus-centered hope.

Benediction:

2 Thess 2:16-17

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

© College Park Church

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce this material in any format provided that you do not alter the content in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Mark Vroegop. © College Park Church - Indianapolis, Indiana. www.yourchurch.com