

Job 1:6-12

When Times Get Tough...

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ⁸ And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" ⁹ Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." ¹² And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. – Job 1:6-12 ESV

Having established Job's spiritual credentials and material status, the author suddenly transfers the scene from Earth to heaven, where a divine council is taking place between the Lord (Jehovah) and the "sons of God." This abrupt change in locations provides the reader with a stark reminder of the spiritual and supernatural scope of this entire story. In every man's life, there is always far more going on behind the scenes than meets the eye. As Job lives out his seemingly blessed but rather pedestrian life on Earth, there are events taking place in the heavenly realm to which he is completely oblivious. As Job offers his morning offerings to the Lord on behalf of his children, he has no idea that he is the topic of a discussion taking place in heaven.

The text states that "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord" (Job 1:6 ESV). The phrase "sons of God" has been much debated over the centuries, but is generally believed to be a reference to angels.

The "sons of God" in the OT is generally taken to refer to angels. They are not actually "sons" of *Elohim*; the idiom is a poetic way of describing their nature and relationship to God. The phrase indicates their supernatural nature, and their submission to God as the sovereign Lord. – NET Bible Study Notes

The fact that God has periodic meetings with His angels is not surprising, but what should catch our attention is the description of Satan being among them. His name in Hebrew is *śāṭān*, and it means "adversary" or "one who stands against." Our concept of Satan usually associates him with the fallen angels who were cast out of heaven for their rebellion against God. The Book of Ezekiel provides what is believed to be a reference to Satan's former beauty and vaunted position as one of God's divinely created beings.

*"You were the signet of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."* – Ezekiel 28:12 ESV

Yet, this “anointed guardian cherub” (Ezekiel 28:14 ESV) grew discontented with his divinely ordained status as an angel and chose to lead a rebellion against God. Ezekiel goes on to describe what happened.

*You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created,
till unrighteousness was found in you.
In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God... – Ezekiel 28:15-16 ESV*

The prophet Isaiah provides further insight into the downfall of this pride-filled “son of God.”

*“How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground,
you who laid the nations low!
You said in your heart,
‘I will ascend to heaven;
above the stars of God
I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
in the far reaches of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.’” – Isaiah 14:12-14 ESV*

As a result of his attempted coup, Satan and all those who joined him in his failed rebellion were cast out of heaven.

*“Your heart was proud because of your beauty;
you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground...” – Ezekiel 28:17 ESV*

But this doesn’t mean that Satan no longer had access to God. This passage in Job would indicate that Satan continues to have the freedom to enter into God’s presence. The Book of Revelation reveals that Satan’s permanent fall will not take place until the end times. The “accuser of the brethren” will not face his full and final punishment for his earlier crime until Jesus Christ returns in His glory.

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in

heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God." – Revelation 12:7-10 ESV

So, the arrival of Satan in the throne room of God should not surprise us. How else would the accuser of the brethren level his charges against God's people? And, as Job 1:6-12 reveals, Satan used his access to the Almighty to accuse the seemingly faithful Job of duplicity and disingenuousness. According to Satan, Job was only in it for what he could get out of it. As long as God blessed him, Job was a happy camper. So Satan proposed a test of Job's allegiance to God.

"Job has good reason to fear God. You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!" – Job 1:9-11 NLT

Satan can't fathom any other reason to explain Job's faithfulness to God. As far as he can tell, Job is nothing more than an opportunist who will quickly turn his back on God as soon as things take a turn for the worse.

But God knows the truth about Job. He can see into His servant's heart and discern the true nature of Job's obedience. So, God agrees to allow Satan to test the faithfulness of Job but He places limits on how far Satan can go.

"Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don't harm him physically." – Job 1:12 NLT

This part of the story makes us uncomfortable. The idea that invisible, supernatural beings might be discussing our faithfulness and debating our allegiance is more than a bit disconcerting. While we go about our daily lives, could there be divine discussions taking place where our future well-being is at stake? But the real point of this story is not that God is having arbitrary conversations with angels regarding the faithfulness of His human followers, but that there is a spiritual battle taking place in the unseen realms. The apostle Paul reminds us, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12 ESV).

Satan is real, and his hatred for mankind is great. He especially loathes all those who worship God and remain faithful to Him regardless of the circumstances of life. He cannot imagine how anyone would serve God in the face of difficulty. He has no concept of allegiance or faithfulness. He sees men as nothing more than groveling servants hoping for a handout from the Almighty but always ready to turn their backs on their Provider as soon as the pipeline of blessings dries up.

“Cynicism is the essence of the satanic. The Satan believes nothing to be genuinely good – neither Job in his disinterested piety nor God in His disinterested generosity.” – Lloyd Anderson, *The Hidden Beauty of Hebrew Genealogies*

Job was about to be tested. His season of unbridled success and problem-free existence was about to come to a screeching halt. And like Job, we've all faced seasons of pain and unexpected suffering in our lives. We've all experienced a time when we have had to encounter extreme disappointment or devastating loss. And in those times of trouble, we are always tempted to question God regarding His love, power, faithfulness, or at times, even His existence. So the story of Job is one with which we can relate. Here is a man who had it all: Wealth, material possessions, a lovely family, and a vibrant relationship with his God. Then tragedy strikes. How would he fare? What would he do? They say that when times get tough, the tough get going. But will that be true of Job? Only time will tell.

Job 1:13-22

It Is Well with My Soul

¹³ Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁶ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁷ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁸ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

²⁰ Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong. – Job 1:13-22 ESV

We've all had seasons of pain in our lives. We've all experienced a time when we have had to face extreme disappointment, unexplained suffering, or devastating loss. And in those times of trouble, we're always tempted to question God regarding His love, power, faithfulness, or at times, even His existence.

So, the story of Job is one with which we can relate. Here is a man who had it all: Wealth, material possessions, a lovely family, and a vibrant relationship with his God. Then tragedy strikes. Not once, but four times. In a series of catastrophic events, Job loses everything. All of his livestock are stolen or destroyed. In a matter of hours, his net worth drops like a rock. He is financially ruined. On top of that, he receives news that every one of his children has been killed in a freak accident. All ten of them.

Job's world had been rocked, and his life would never be the same. Everything he knew about his God was about to be challenged. Understandably, Job sunk into a deep depression. In time, he would even curse the day he was born.

At last Job spoke, and he cursed the day of his birth. He said: "Cursed be the day of my birth, and cursed be the night when I was conceived. Let that day be turned to darkness. Let it be lost even to God on high, and let it be shrouded in darkness. Yes, let the

darkness and utter gloom claim it for its own. Let a black cloud overshadow it, and let the darkness terrify it." – Job 3:1-5 NLT

But what was Job's immediate response in the aftermath of his tragic losses? How did he react after hearing that his entire fortune had been decimated by foreign marauders and his children had been killed in a freak accident?

The text simply states that Job "arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped" (Job 1:20 ESV). He mourned and he worshiped. He grieved and he gave glory and honor to Jehovah.

The Hebrew word for "worshiped" is *שָׁחָה* (*šāḥâ*) and it can literally be translated as "bowed down" or "to prostrate oneself." Despite all that had happened, Job didn't shake his fist in the face of God, demanding answers and casting blame; he simply worshiped.

In the midst of all his pain and darkness, Job might be tempted to curse the day of his birth, but NOT HIS GOD. No, Job did not turn his back on God; instead, he bowed before Him in humble adoration. At the loss of all his possessions and his children, Job exclaimed, "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be stripped of everything when I die. The LORD gave me everything I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!" (Job 1:21 NLT).

He was able to praise God, even though his world had been devastated. And, amazingly, Job didn't write off his loss to fate, bad luck, misfortune, karma, and some form of kismet. He admitted his belief that his sovereign God was behind it all. He wasn't blaming God; he was simply declaring his unwavering belief in God's ultimate control over all things. His wealth and his children had been gifts from God. He had not deserved or earned them. And Job understood that it was the height of hypocrisy to accept the good things that God gives but then curse Him when those things were taken away. In the very next chapter, after suffering an additional unexpected and inexplicable tragedy, he states, "Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?" (Job 2:10 NLT).

Through it all, Job held on to his integrity and His God. He understood something about the character of Jehovah God. He knew that God was good. He knew that God must have a purpose behind all that had happened. It didn't make it any less painful or any easier to accept. In fact, Job would spend the next days wrestling with his concept of God. He would be challenged by his well-meaning friends. Job's suffering was going to reveal a lot about himself and a lot about his God.

This faithful saint would find himself wrestling with his concepts regarding God's sovereignty and His love. He would have to come to grips with whether God could be trusted. And in time, as his pain and suffering escalated, Job would go from resting in God to blaming Him. The day would come when he would even accuse God of wronging him (Job 19:6-7). But God never

blasts him for his doubt or punishes him for his hasty words. Instead, He comforts Job and, as we will see, eventually restores him.

All throughout this story, we see a picture of a faithful, loving God who is active behind the scenes. He is aware of our suffering and has a plan for them. He is not caught off guard or found asleep at His post. He is fully aware and He cares. Suffering is a part of life lived in a fallen world. Will we allow it to change our perception about God, or learn to see Him in the midst of it?

"We take the good days from God – why not also the bad days?" – Job 2:10 MSG

At this point in the story, as Job tries to come to grips with the immensity of his losses, he holds on to his belief in the sovereignty of God. He clings to his confidence in God's goodness and seeks to view his tragic circumstances through the lens of God's sovereignty and love. Job didn't like what had happened. He was not rejoicing in his losses or thanking God for the deaths of his children. He was simply expressing his trust in the goodness of God.

But for those of us reading this story, it is difficult to see the goodness of God when we know that this entire sequence of tragic events is little more than a test of Job's faithfulness. God had bragged about Job's integrity and spiritual vitality.

"Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil." – Job 1:8 NLT

But Satan had argued that Job's display of moral fortitude was nothing more than payment for services rendered. According to Satan, Job's faithfulness was tied to the degree of God's goodness. As long as God kept Job healthy, wealthy, and wise, Job would continue to worship. But Satan argued that if God suddenly turned off the top of His goodness, Job would turn his back on God.

"You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!" – Job 1:9-10 NLT

And God agreed to put Satan's hypothesis to the test.

"All right, you may test him," the Lord said to Satan. "Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don't harm him physically." – Job 1:12 NLT

But why would God allow Satan to touch one of His servants? How could this be the will of a loving, gracious God? It seems out of character and incongruent with our understanding of God.

And yet, we know that there is a spiritual battle waging behind the scenes that pits the sovereign God of the universe against Satan, the prince of this world.

Ever since the fall, Satan has been attempting to thwart the redemptive will of God. He has been waging a relentless war against humanity, those made in God's image, in a vain attempt to steal their allegiance and displace God's authority over their lives. Even the apostle Peter warned his first-century readers that this battle was still going on in their day.

...humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are. – 1 Peter 5:6-9 NLT

Job was experiencing the very real presence of a spiritual battle that had been taking place since the beginning of time. The presence of Satan in the story of Job's life should not surprise or disappoint us. No human being is immune from the attacks of the enemy. His hatred for humanity is immeasurable and only surpassed by his hatred for God. He views Jehovah as a manipulative and oppressive overlord whose followers worship Him out of fear and only for the hope of reward. Satan can't imagine worship that isn't bought and paid for.

When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, one of his ploys was to offer payment for services rendered.

...the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." – Matthew 4:8-9 ESV

Hungry, tired, and seemingly alone in the wilderness, Jesus responded to Satan's offer of wealth for worship by stating, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve'" (Matthew 4:10 ESV).

That was the last of Satan's temptations of Jesus. He went for broke and lost. He offered Jesus his kingdom and Jesus turned him down. And what we must realize is that this test of Jesus' faithfulness was the will of God. That very same chapter in Matthew opens with these words: "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matthew 4:1 ESV).

It was part of God's plan that His Son be tested, and it was part of God's plan that Job be tested. But these tests were not intended to reveal anything to God. He was well aware of the outcome in both cases. God did not doubt His Son's faithfulness and He did not doubt the faithfulness of Job. It was Satan who had doubts. It was the enemy who could not fathom faith even in the

face of suffering. Satan had a lot to turn about the goodness of God and the effect it can have on God's people. True worship is not a form of payment for services rendered. It is a willing response to the goodness of God that shows up in times of tragedy as well as blessing.

God's people are not fairweather friends, but faithful followers who strive to trust and obey even when God's presence seems unapparent and His power seems insufficient. When the trials and temptations of life come, may we sing the praises of our great and good God.

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul*

*It is well
With my soul
It is well, it is well with my soul*

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come
Let this blest assurance control
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate
And hath shed His own blood for my soul*

*It is well
With my soul
It is well, it is well with my soul*

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Job 2:1-10

Trust in the Midst of Trials

¹Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. ²And the Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ³And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." ⁴Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." ⁶And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life."

⁷So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

⁹Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." ¹⁰But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. – Job 2:1-10 ESV

Satan was not satisfied. Despite Job's surprising response to the last round of devastating calamities, Satan refused to believe that Job would not eventually break. This man had lost everything but had maintained his hope and faith in Yahweh.

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." – Job 1:21 ESV

So, on the next occasion that Satan found himself in the presence of God Almighty, he once again questioned the sincerity of Job's professed allegiance and vehemently objected to God's glowing assessment of His suffering servant.

"Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil. And he has maintained his integrity, even though you urged me to harm him without cause." – Job 2:3 NLT

Satan simply wrote off Job's display of "integrity" as nothing more than a case of self-preservation. As far as Satan could see, Job was content because he had remained physically unscathed. He had lost his fortune and his family but he was still alive and well. From Satan's pride-filled perspective, it appeared as if Job was giving God praise because he was glad to be

alive. But if God would remove the protective clauses from His previous command, Satan knew he could get Job to cave.

“Skin for skin! A man will give up everything he has to save his life. But reach out and take away his health, and he will surely curse you to your face!” – Job 2:4-5 NLT

In the earlier test that Satan proposed, God had prohibited any direct assault on Job’s physical well-being.

“Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don’t harm him physically.” – Job 1:12 NLT

This led Satan to conjecture that the real key to destroying Job’s faithfulness to God would be a frontal assault on his personal comfort. The rather enigmatic phrase, “skin for skin” has been much debated over the centuries and we will have no way of knowing exactly what it means. But from the context, it would appear that Satan is demanding that God give him permission to get under Job’s skin – literally.

While Job had lost a lot in the first test, he still had his health. He and his wife could have more children and, in time, he could rebuild his lost fortune. But Satan believed that Job would crumple like a cheap suit if the gloves came off and the pain became physical rather than emotional in nature.

For Satan, the goal remained the same. He was out to get Job to curse God.

*“...stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and **he will curse you to your face.**” – Job 1:11 ESV*

*“...stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and **he will curse you to your face.**” – Job 2:5 ESV*

Satan was convinced that he knew the secret to Job’s faithfulness and would be able to expose the self-centered nature of Job’s apparent “blamelessness.” But God knew better. He knew Job well and was not afraid to see His servant face another test of his integrity. Yet, once again, God added a prohibition.

“Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.” – Job 2:6 ESV

Satan, though powerful, was prevented from doing outside the prescribed will of God. He could test Job but would be unable to kill Job. Whatever physical attack Satan conjured up in his mind could not lead to Job’s death. He could make Job wish for death but he was prohibited from taking Job’s life.

Satan wasted no time. The text states that he “struck Job with terrible boils from head to foot” (Job 2:7 NLT). No timeline is given but Job’s period of mourning after the loss of his ten children was followed by a sudden bout with a crippling skin disease. Job is described as sitting among the ashes, where he “scraped his skin with a piece of broken pottery” (Job 2:8 NLT). This once prominent patron of his community is pictured sitting in the midst of the town dump where the refuse was burned. His diseased condition has left him a social pariah with no friends or family members willing to provide him with comfort or care. In fact, even his wife encourages him to throw in the towel and end it all.

“Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die.” – Job 2:9 NLT

She was essentially telling Job to give up the charade. From her vantage point, she viewed Job’s stubborn attempt to keep a stiff upper lip as a waste of time. She believed Job to be under a curse from God and the sooner her husband admitted it, the sooner his suffering would stop.

Yet, even when he found himself covered with sores from head to foot, Job responded, "Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?" (Job 2:10 NLT). Through it all, Job held on to his integrity and His God. He understood something about the character of Yahweh. He knew that God was good and that there was a purpose behind all that had happened. It didn't make it any less painful or any easier to accept, but it provided Job with a sense of peace and a semblance of sanity in the midst of all the suffering.

But that did not mean that Job was out of the woods. All the events that had taken place would provide him with ample opportunity to wrestle with his concept of God, and he would receive unsolicited help from his well-meaning friends. Job's suffering was going to reveal a lot about himself and a lot about his God. He would wrestle with concepts regarding God's sovereignty and His love. He would have to come to grips with whether God could be trusted.

As his suffering continues, Job will go from resting in God to blaming God. He will even accuse God of wronging him (Job 19:6-7). But God never blasts him for his doubt or punishes him for his hasty words. Instead, He comforts Job and eventually restores him.

All throughout this story, we see a picture of a faithful, loving God who is active behind the scenes. He is aware of our suffering and has a plan for them. He is not caught off guard or found asleep at His post. He is fully aware and He cares. Suffering is a part of life lived in a fallen world. Will we allow it to change our perception about God, or learn to see Him in the midst of it? "We take the good days from God--why not also the bad days?" (Job 2:10 MSG).

Shall I take from Your hand Your blessings
 Yet not welcome any pain
 Shall I thank You for days of sunshine
 Yet grumble in days of rain
 Shall I love You in times of plenty
 Then leave You in days of drought

Shall I trust when I reap a harvest
But when winter winds blow, then doubt

Oh let Your will be done in me
In Your love I will abide
Oh I long for nothing else as long
As You are glorified

Are You good only when I prosper
And true only when I'm filled
Are You King only when I'm carefree
And God only when I'm well
You are good when I'm poor and needy
You are true when I'm parched and dry
You still reign in the deepest valley
You're still God in the darkest night

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