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## God's Tests

By David Servant

# SEVENTEEN

## Job's Test

Some Christians prefer to ignore or avoid the book of Job because it challenges or perhaps contradicts their theology. We must be humble enough to admit, however, that when our theology contradicts the Bible, it isn't the Bible that needs to be changed—it's our theology. Surely God doesn't want us to ignore *any* book of the Bible, much less one that contains 42 chapters.

Job experienced one of the most severe trials that any person has ever faced. His was a MIT—a Maturing/Testing Intended Trial. Job's friends, however, considered his trials to be DITs—Disciplinary Intended Trials. In their minds, all suffering is a manifestation of God's judgment upon sin, so they assumed Job must have sinned grievously to deserve such severe suffering. Job himself was baffled as to why he was being afflicted. We, however, have a supreme advantage over Job and his faultfinding friends because we have the book of Job to read. There we find the reason why bad things happened to a good man:

Now there was a day when the sons of God [angels?] came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered [literally, 'set your heart to'] My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will curse Thee to Thy face." Then the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord (Job 1:6-12).

So we know why Job was afflicted. Satan accused Job of serving God only because of the blessings he received. Supposedly, according to Satan, if God didn't bless Job so much, Job would stop serving Him, and he'd curse God to His face. As a result, Job was tested, and God permitted Satan to take away practically every blessing Job had ever received. Satan (through various means) killed Job's livestock, his children, and most of his servants. He lost everything except his wife and his health. What a test! Our hearts go out to Job when we read his story.

When Job learned of his horrible tragedies, did he curse God? No, amazingly, he fell to the ground and worshiped the Lord, saying, "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Job passed his test with flying colors. Who among us would have done as well?

Obviously Job had no idea that Satan was the one who actually did the taking away, but at least he recognized the sovereign hand of God. His trials could never have happened without God's permission, as we have been reading from the Scriptures.

### **Job's Second Trial**

Some amount of time passed, and again Satan appeared before God:

And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered [literally 'set your heart to'] My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him *without cause*." And Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse Thee to Thy face." So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (Job 2:3-7, emphasis added).

Still Job didn't react as Satan predicted. Even when his wife encouraged him to curse God, Job said, "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not adversity?" (Job 2:10). Job passed his second test. He never cursed God.

I think that it is important to take note that when Satan accused Job of only serving God because of what God did for him, the Lord did not reply, "So what if that is why Job serves Me? It doesn't matter to Me!" Obviously, God does not want us to serve Him solely because of the blessings we receive. We should obey God because He is God, regardless of any promised rewards. Perhaps we should ask ourselves how we would react if we were tested to the degree that Job was. How many people have become angry at God as a result of lesser trials?

### **Was Job to Blame for His Trials?**

Some well-meaning folks who want to exonerate God in this story try to place the blame on Job for all his troubles. If we can find some flaw in Job, then we can let God "off the hook." We need to be careful, however, when we start looking for flaws in a man about whom God Himself said, "There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8). In God's eyes, Job was #1 on the planet!

Some have suggested that Job “opened the door to Satan” through his fear. Because Job once said, “For what I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me” (Job 3:25), they lay the blame on his “negative confession.” If Job hadn’t have been afraid, they claim, he never would have lost his children, servants, health, and livestock.

If Job opened the door to Satan through his fear, however, we must wonder what the point is of the first two chapters of the book of Job. Why did Satan have to appear before God and obtain His permission before he afflicted Job?

And if Job was full of fear (and not faith), why would God brag about him as the one person on the earth who stood out among all the rest? Especially when we know that “without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6)? Job was a man of much greater faith than the average person, as demonstrated by the fact that he worshiped God after being afflicted. How many of us would have lost all faith in God if we had been in Job’s place?

If Job’s fear was the reason for his affliction, did he become *more* fearful after his first test and, therefore, open the door wider to lose his health?

If Job opened the door through fear, why did God or Satan never mention that fact?

If Job opened the door through fear, why didn’t the loving God tell him so he could resist Satan and not be afflicted? Or why didn’t God mention to Job that he opened the door through fear during the final chapters when He spoke directly to Job? Foremost, why did God say to Satan, “You incited Me against him, to ruin him *without cause*.” (Job 2:3, emphasis added)?

I might also mention that Job said in 30:26: “When I expected good, then evil came; when I waited for light, then darkness came.” By taking another scripture out of context, we could just as easily (and wrongly) prove that Job opened the door to Satan by expecting good things and by making a “positive confession!”

### **A Happy Ending**

Job persevered during his months (see Job 7:3; 29:2) of being tested. He spent some of that time debating with a few of his friends who had nicely packaged God into their own theological box. Although they relentlessly tried to convince Job that his suffering was punishment from God because of his sin (a DIT), Job steadfastly maintained his innocence.

Understandably, Job also spent some of his time in prayer, and there were a few times when he questioned God as to what he had done to deserve the treatment he had received. He concluded that God hated him and was treating him unfairly, punishing a righteous man. For that, in the end, Job was rebuked by the Lord Himself:

Then the Lord said to Job, “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it... Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me. Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?” (Job 40:2, 7-8).

Job never cursed God, and to that degree he passed his test. Job could have done better, but who can criticize him except God?

True to God’s character, Job was blessed at the end of his test:

And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning, and he had 14,000 sheep, and 6,000 camels, and 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys.

And he had seven sons and three daughters.... And after this Job lived 140 years, and he saw his sons, and his grandsons, four generations (Job 42:12-13, 16).

God's blessings made Job even wealthier than he had been before his testing, enabling him to do even more good than he did previously. Job had proved himself, and it became obvious that he did not serve God only because of the prosperity that came with obedience.

### **Are God and Satan Arguing About Us?**

When we find ourselves in the middle of a MIT, (Maturing/Testing Trial), is it because God and Satan have had an argument about us? I don't think so, but then I don't really know. (Some scriptures do indicate that Satan may still have access to God's throne. See Zech. 3:1-2; Luke 22:31-32.)

Satan is referred to as "the accuser of the brethren" in Revelation 12:10. In fact, the scripture there says, "The accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night." Still, that doesn't prove that every MIT is a result of an argument between God and Satan. To me, this is one of "the secret things that belongs to the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29). We just don't know everything we would like to know. Job's story, however, does illustrate the same truth that we have seen in other scriptures: *God may allow Satan to afflict us in order to mature or test us.*

Most importantly, let us not lose sight of the fact that Job's test came to an end, and it ended very happily. Job regained his health and everything he'd lost. If you are "suffering like Job," you should be preparing for an end of your sufferings.

### **What Can Suffering Do For You?**

Job became a better man because of his suffering, both materially and spiritually. According to the Bible, suffering can result in blessing. We've already learned that, by passing tests, we can prove ourselves trustworthy to handle more blessings and responsibilities. That's one positive result of persevering under trial. Beyond that, Paul wrote:

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, *proven character* (Rom. 5:3, emphasis added).

By persevering in tribulation, we prove our true character.  
James similarly wrote:

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that *the testing of your faith produces endurance.* And let endurance have its perfect result, *that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing* (Jas. 1:2-4, emphasis added).

When we endure during the times our faith is tested, the end result is that we are perfected and completed. That is why we should count it all joy when we face difficulties. They are a part of God's divine plan to make us more like Jesus. God is dedicated to our spiritual growth, and whether we care to admit it or not, Christ-like character is forged in the fires of afflictions, tests, and trials. So keep rejoicing!