

## 9. The Jobs: Living with Losses

**Biblical material:** Job 1:1-2:10

### Quotes

- When a man arrives at great prosperity God did it: and when he falls into disaster he did it himself. *Mark Twain*
- Noble souls, through dust and heat, rise from disaster and defeat the stronger. *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*
- Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live. *Norman Cousins*
- What looks like a loss may be the very event which is subsequently responsible for helping produce the major achievement of your life. *Srully Blotnick*

### Questions

Why is the experience of the Job's important to consider? While we know what was going on behind the scenes, they did not—so how do we react to their comments? What do we learn about the relationship of this Old Testament couple? In the context of the story, what of the charge that God is “using” people to prove his point in the great controversy.

### Discussion/ Comment

The only thing most people think of in connection with Job's wife is her advice to her husband to “Curse God and die.” This sounds harsh, and maybe it was said that way. Or perhaps Mrs. Job was suffering too, and this was her conclusion—that God had let them down. It's a very human response, especially after the loss of all your children, and then to watch you husband in such agony.

So even though this is a very ancient story, it still speaks to the challenges of our painful humanity. It has lessons we all need to learn about the whole context of the great controversy and the issues over God's character.

That's not to say that we should identify with all of the Job's conclusions. At times he is speaking out of his agony. Also he ascribes to God some of the credit for what Satan has done. For example, Job tells his wife, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” Job 2:10 NIV. He also tells her she is talking like a foolish woman—not that she was, you understand, but just talking like one...

Of course, we have very little information to make any determination on how the Job's marriage was working. From a prosperous family, circumstances change overnight and they lose everything. Perhaps we should be more charitable to Mrs. Job, who sees her husband trying to hold onto the shreds of his former life while experiencing unimaginable suffering. That is at the heart of her outburst, “Are you still holding on to your integrity?” Giving Job permission to speak from the depths of his pain, rather than hold back. She was certainly overwrought, and could see no sense in holding onto conventional faith.

Except that she confirmed the basis for Satan's accusations—that it could be said that the served God for the material benefits. As soon as they were gone, what use was God? Another popular belief that has continued over the ages... Job's unhelpful comforters have their counterparts today, along with those who preach the health-wealth gospel.

Job's defense of God, unaware of his position as divinely-appointed spokesperson for humanity on God's side, spans our experience. He argues with God. He argues with his so-called friends. He regrets the day of his birth. He allows his feelings to speak. He does not pull the punches when questioning what is happening to him, representative of all humankind.

"And in all this Job did not sin." In other words, God does not consider even our arguing with him as wrong. In fact, he even invites it. For to accept that this word is the way a loving God would want it to be is in itself contemptible, a denial of God as he is. At the end of Job's experience, God does have to remind him that he is not all-knowing, and that some of his words have not really been in accordance with God's wisdom. But in contrast with the others, who want to ascribe to God the "punishment," God himself declares that "Job has said of me what is right."

We all feel for the personal and material loss. In our time, we may more strongly question the loss of Job's children, and their "replacement" at the end (they weren't the same!) But the point is made: this life is not everything, not even the most important life. All we have here is temporary and transient; nothing lasts. Not even the best of our relationships, our loves, have any kind of permanence in this life.

The good news of Job, even his family situation, his marriage, is that only as God is part of it will it have any real existence, any future. Whatever our promises to love each other forever, to pledge undying love, to desire an eternity of relationship—all is futile without the assurance that God will transform our passing lives into an eternal life with him. In divinely-inspired perspective, Job declares, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" Job 19:25-27 NIV.

### **Ellen White Comments**

Very early in the history of the world is given the life-record of one over whom this controversy of Satan's was waged. Of Job, the patriarch of Uz, the testimony of the Searcher of hearts was, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil."

Against this man, Satan brought scornful charge: "Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?"

The Lord said unto Satan, "All that he hath is in thy power." "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life."

Thus permitted, Satan swept away all that Job possessed,—flocks and herds, men-servants and maidens, sons and daughters; and he "smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."

Still another element of bitterness was added to his cup. His friends, seeing in adversity but the retribution of sin, pressed on his bruised and burdened spirit their accusations of wrongdoing. . . . {SD 95}

Satan is always trying to press the soul into distrust of God, and therefore we must educate the mind to trust him. Talk faith and hope when Satan says, as did the wife of Job, "Curse God, and die." If you trust God, you will see more reason to trust him. As you talk of his goodness, you will see more of his love to talk about. Thus the mind may be trained to live in the brightness of the Sun of righteousness, and not in the shadow which Satan casts athwart our path. Hope in God, who is the health of our countenance, and our God. {RH, September 1, 1891}

