

Job Chapter 2

Verses 1-8: A second test results in the loss of Job's health. The identification of the disease signified by "sore boils" is not clear, though its description is very vivid. In any case the boils covered his entire body, were visible to others, and were very painful. Job is now so impoverished that he can only scrape himself with a "potsherd" or piece of broken pottery.

Verses 1-6: This is a nearly identical replay of the scene (in 1:6-12), except that this test would be focused directly on Job. Satan's phrase "skin for skin" falsely accused Job of sacrificing his children, his animals, and his servants in order to preserve his own life.

Job 2:1 "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD."

The scene changes again to the heavenly court, where the angels came before the Lord and Satan was also present, having been again searching the earth for victims to assault (see notes on 1:6-8).

The presenting of themselves before the LORD indicates that they were to come, and give an account to the LORD about the things they had been doing. We discussed in the last lesson that the sons of God here, meant the angels. Again, we see that Satan was mentioned separately. He was really an archangel. Satan, Michael, and Gabriel seemed to each rule over 1/3 of the angels in heaven.

Job 2:2 "And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

Satan actively works for the downfall of Christians, "going to and fro ... up and down" across the earth (1 Peter 5:8).

The following Scripture shows that Satan never changes. He is still seeking whom he may destroy.

1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

Notice that Satan is under control of the LORD. He is accountable to the LORD for all that he does.

Job 2:3 "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that [there is] none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause."

“Still he holdeth fast his integrity”: God affirmed that Job had won round one.

“Without cause”: God uses the same expression the adversary used (in Job 1): “for nothing” (1:9), and “without cause” (2:3). The message behind God’s turn of words is that the adversary is the guilty party in this case, not Job who had suffered all the disaster without any personal cause. He had done nothing to incur the pain and loss, though it was massive. The issue was purely a matter of conflict between God and Satan. This is a crucial statement, because when Job’s friends tried to explain why all the disasters had befallen him, they always put the blame on Job. Grasping this assessment from God, that Job had not been punished for something, but suffered for nothing related to him personally, is a crucial key to the story. Sometimes suffering is caused by divine purposes unknowable to us.

Satan had said that Job did not serve God “for nothing” (1:9), and now God uses the same Hebrew word to defend Job, saying he was still blameless even though Satan “movedst” God against Job “without cause”. This play on words highlights Job’s unwavering character and unconditional trust in God, apart from any material blessings from God.

The one thing we must remember in this verse, was the statement from the LORD that the attack on Job was without cause. This was not a punishment from God for evil that Job had done. Job stayed faithful to God under the worst of circumstances. Satan had told God that Job would curse Him to His face, if God took the hedge of protection away. Satan lost the battle. Job did no such thing. He worshipped God even more than before the trouble began. I would say that Job really was a perfect and an upright man in all of his actions. The worst of problems had come, and he stood steadfast in his belief.

Verses 4-5: “Skin for skin”: Satan contended that what he had done to Job so far was just touching the skin, scratching the surface. Job endured the loss of all that he had, even the lives of his children, but would not endure the loss of his own well-being. If God allowed Satan to make the disaster a personal matter of his own physical body, the Adversary contended, job’s faith would fail.

Job 2:4 "And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."

This is a more extreme form of the insinuation of (Job 1:9). He means Job takes care to have his quid pro quo; and if the worst come to the worst, a man will give up everything to save his life. If, therefore, Job can save his life at the price of subservience to God, he will willingly pay that price rather than die; but his service is worth no more than that selfish object implies.

We can see in this, just how brutal Satan can be if he is turned loose to have his way. He was saying that Job was left in no danger of losing his own life, so he had not been tested to the extreme.

Job 2:5 "But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face."

"But touch his bone and his flesh": That is, smite him, not slightly, but to the quick, to the bones and marrow, so that he may feel pain and anguish indeed.

"And he will curse thee to thy face": Will openly and daringly blaspheme thy perfections, and reproach the dispensations of thy providence, and so will let go his integrity. Satan knew, and we find by experience, that nothing has a greater tendency to ruffle the mind, and put its passions into disorder, than acute pain and distemper of body.

Many a person in our day, has faced the pain of cancer in his body. Some of the people, indeed, do turn from God during these stressful times. Others draw closer than they have ever been to God, who is their only help. Satan is vicious, he will do anything he can to destroy a person's life.

Job 2:6 "And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he [is] in thine hand; but save his life."

"Save his life": The Lord sovereignly limited the Adversary, although health seemed preferable. Job believed that to be the case (7:15), as did his wife (2:9).

This is the ultimate test. The LORD had confidence that Job would handle this properly. Notice again, Satan could go no further than God allowed him to go. Job would not die of this illness.

Verses 7-8: These "boils" ("burning sores"), were the same affliction that plagued the Egyptians (in Exodus chapter 9). Job's disease was not merely painful but life-threatening (2 Kings 20:7, Isa. 38:21). A "potsherd" was a broken piece of pottery. His sitting among the "ashes" was a way of publicly demonstrating his intense state of grief (Jonah 3:6; Esther 4:3).

Job 2:7 "So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."

"Satan ... smote Job": This appears to be an exceptional case with no other exact parallel in Scripture. In the gospels, demons caused physical problems when they dwelled within people (compare 13:11, 16), but that is not the case here. God's permissive will operated for purposes Job can't know; God was hidden from him along with the reasons for his suffering.

"Sore boils": Although the nature of Job's affliction cannot be diagnosed exactly, it produced extreme physical trauma (2:13; 3:24; 7:5, 14; 13:28; 16:8; 19:17; 30:17, 30; 33:21). One cannot fully understand Job's conversations throughout the book without considering the extraordinary physical distress he endured in a day without medicine or pain relief. His boils would have been similar to those of the Egyptians (Exodus 9:8-11) and Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:7).

Satan probably rushed out to see what damage he could do to Job, before he got over the grief of losing his children. It is almost as if he went immediately from the presence of the LORD to afflict Job. This was not just ordinary boils, this was something much more serious and was very painful as well. It appears, Satan covered Job from head to toe with them.

Job 2:8 "And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes."

“Potsherd ... ashes”: Suffering terribly Job took himself to where the lepers go: the ash heap outside the city, where he scraped at his sores with a piece of broken pottery, perhaps breaking them open to release the infection.

Job sat in the ashes as a way of mourning. A "potsherd" is a piece of pottery made from clay. This type of sore was probably draining fluid, and Job was scraping the fluid from his body.

Verses 9-10: Job’s wife suggested that Job do what Satan had predicted: “curse God.” After all she had been through, it is no wonder she was ready to give up all hope. But Job recognized that both “good” and “evil” come from God’s hand, though one by His active will and the other by His permissive will. God can permit evil things to happen for good ends (Gen. 50:19-20). “In all this did not Job sin” is proof enough that Satan was wrong and was sorely defeated. Satan does not appear again in the book.

Job 2:9 "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die."

“Thine integrity”: Through all this, Job’s faith remained strong in the confusion, so that his wife could not accuse him of insincerity as Satan had. Her argument in effect was “let go of your piety and curse God; then He will end your life for blaspheming,” (i.e. death under these conditions would be preferable to living). She added temptation to affliction because she advised him to sin.

Job’s wife unknowingly urged her husband to do exactly what Satan wanted him to do: “curse God and die.” Although on the surface this appears to be an accusation, her words may be a declaration that actual death would be better than ceaseless misery.

Job's wife had not said anything when the other attacks from Satan came, but now she realized this was definitely an attack on Job personally. She suggested that Job do the very thing that Satan said he would do. Many times, Satan uses our family to make matters worse and not better in this type of circumstance. She was no help at all.

Job 2:10 "But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

“Foolish”: Not meaning silly or ridiculous, but acting as one who rejects God or God’s revealed will. The word is used of the unwise in the Psalms (14:1; 53:1), and in Proverbs (30:22). She is not seen nor heard of again in this book, except indirectly (in 42:13-15).

“Receive”: Job lived out and explained the text of (Deut. 29:29). His words and deeds demonstrated his confidence in God and vindicated God’s confidence in him.

In another testament to his integrity, Job again responded as he did to the first trial (1:21-22), resisting the temptation to speak ill of God within his grief or to grow impatient and give up. His reply to his wife indicated he had a better understanding of God than she did.

Even in this terrible pain and suffering, Job still stayed faithful to God. He not only did not take his wife's advice, but scolded her for saying such a thing. Job it seems, had great respect for his wife over the other women. He knew this was not her usual actions. She just found it extremely hard to see him suffer like this. He warned her not to be like the foolish women.

Verses 11-13: Some time must have elapsed before the three friends arrived since it would have taken time for them to communicate and then make the trip. “Eliphaz” seems to have been the eldest and most prominent. He was from Teman, a well-known Edomite city where wise men lived (Jer. 49:20; Obad. Chapters 8 and 9). “Bildad the Shuhite” lived in the same general area inhabited by the descendants of Shuah, one of Abraham’s sons by Keturah (Gen. 25:1-2).

“Zophar” also lived nearby in the area of Naamath. Little is known about any of these men.

Though these three friends have been considered the most unsympathetic comforters in history, a few compliments may be paid to them: They did come to visit Job, they wept with him, they sat with him in silence for seven days and nights, and they at least told him what they thought to his face and not behind his back. Their extended silence clearly teaches that there are times of grief so great that it is better not to speak than to say the wrong thing, as their subsequent conversation revealed. Here is one of the most moving scenes in the whole story, as Job’s friends came to comfort and commiserate with him in his pain, they expressed all the traditional gestures of grief.

“Eliphaz ... Bildad ... and Zophar” were three sages who shared Job’s faith in God and whose initial intentions, to come “together” and “mourn with him” were the right ones. The intensity of their mourning, from the moment they saw Job and during “seven days” of silence, was appropriate for the devastation he had experienced (Gen. 50:10; Rom. 12:15).

Job 2:11 "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him."

“Temanite”: Most likely Teman was a city of Edom (Gen. 36:4, 11; Jer. 49:7, 20; Ezek. 25:13; Amos 1:12; Obad. 8 and 9).

“Shuhite”: The Shuhites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:2, 6).

“Naamathite”: A resident of an unknown location probably in Edom or Arabia, although some have suggested Naamah on the Edomite border (Joshua 15:41).

True friends come to the aid of a friend in need. A good friend will pray with you, when there is trouble. A good friend will know the kind of person you are, and will not attack you like the rest of the world. These three men that came to Job, were friends of long standing. It appears, they were used to all getting together, and each helping the other decide what to do about problems. Distance is not a problem with true friends. All three of Job’s friends came a long way to be with him. Because they were wise men, he honored their opinion. They came to comfort him and to mourn with him. "Eliphaz" means struggle against. "Bildad" means son of contention. "Zophar" means chatterer. It appears, these three friends came from different lands and met at Job's dwelling.

Job 2:12 "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven."

"When they lifted up their eyes afar off ": Namely, at some convenient distance from him; whom they found sitting upon the ground, probably in the open air.

"And knew him not": His countenance being so dreadfully changed and disfigured by the sores.

"They lifted up their voice and wept": Through their sympathy with him, and great grief for his heavy affliction.

"And they rent every one his mantle": As it was usual for people to do in great and sudden calamities.

"And sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven": Either on the upper part of their heads toward heaven, or threw it up into the air, so that it fell upon their heads, and showed the confusion they were in. All which things were marks of great grief and affliction, and were the usual ways of expressing sorrow in those days.

The boils covered his body so completely, that they did not even recognize Job when they saw him. Job was seated in a bed of ashes outside of his home. The friends could see him sitting there, but could not recognize his body covered in sores. When they saw him and knew it was Job, their grief overcame them. They tore their clothes, and threw ashes on their heads in extreme grief for the fate of their friend.

Job 2:13 "So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that [his] grief was very great."

“His grief was very great”: The expression actually meant that his disease produced pain that was still increasing. The agony was so great, his friends were speechless for a week.

Sometimes, a person's grief is so great that it is better not to speak to them. At those times, there is comfort in the presence of good friends. The seven days is questioned by many scholars, but I believe the time to be literal. The friends could have been fed, while they sat there. They could have wrapped up in their outer garments, and slept there with Job. It is possible that they fasted for this time, but probably they didn't, since it was not mentioned.

Job Chapter 2 Questions

1. What did the presenting of themselves before the LORD indicate?
2. Who were the sons of God in verse 1?
3. Who was listed separately that stood before the LORD?
4. What did the LORD ask Satan?
5. Who is Satan accountable to?
6. What was the main statement we must remember in verse 3?
7. What had Job done, after the worst of attacks that Satan put on him?
8. Satan said all that a man hath will he give for _____ .
9. What did Satan tell God to do to Job, that Satan was sure would cause him to curse God?
10. What restriction did God put on what Satan could do to Job?
11. What was his next attack on Job?
12. Where did Job sit, while he was afflicted?
13. What is a "potsherd"?
14. What suggestion did his wife give him?
15. How did Job answer her?
16. Who were Job's three friends?
17. Why did they come to see Job?
18. What does "Eliphaz" mean?
19. What does "Bildad" mean?
20. What does "Zophar" mean?

21. Where did they find Job?
22. Why did they not recognize him?
23. How long did they stay with Job?
24. What did they say to him?