

Studies in Job #1

What the book of Job teaches us about Satan

Intro: In our Bible reading this week we have been reading the book of Job. It has for a long time been extolled as a literary masterpiece and a deep theological treatise on the suffering of the righteous; but the book of Job gives us insight into many subjects and I want to talk with you about some of them in a few lessons.

What the book of Job teaches about Satan. Job gives us insight into the working of Satan. Though Satan is mentioned only briefly in the first two chapters, what we learn there can be very helpful in understanding Satan's role in suffering.

Satan is a real spirit being

Job and his friends do not seem to have a well-developed "Satanology". In fact, no where in the book do they attribute any evil in anyone's life to Satan.

However in the book we are given a behind the scenes look at the spiritual realm and learn that there was and is a real evil spirit called Satan. Our word comes from the Hebrew word "satan" meaning "adversary". It is used in the OT with the definite article "the adversary". By NT times "Satan" had become a proper name for this wicked spirit being.

Satan's name reminds us of his desire to oppose and destroy the work of God. In fact, one may imagine that every person won from God encourages his hope of overthrowing his own destiny. His fury toward man draws out of his opposition to God.

Satan slanders men to God in seeking opportunity to test them.

Satan accused Job of serving God for material benefit

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 surely curse Thee to Thy face." (Job 1:9-11)

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." (Job 2:4-5)

Can we infer from Job that Satan continues this accusatory role? Consider these additional texts:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. (Zech. 3:1)

The NT designation of Satan calls attention to this. Among Satan's other designations is "diabolos", usually translated "the devil". It means a slanderer or accuser.

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 brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. (Rev. 12:10)

It is interesting that 1 Peter may very well allude to Satan's response to God in Job in his description of Satan:

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

In keeping with this picture...

God allows Satan to test His people with suffering of various kinds (both physical and mental).

Satan tested Job with suffering from various sources:

Satan used evil men—Job 1:13-15, 17

Satan used weather phenomena (lightning and a whirlwind)—Job. 1:16, 19

Satan used disease—Job. 2:7

Nothing that Satan brought on Job was physically impossible to occur within the framework of providence as we know it. Yet, it is clear that Satan was wielding a power in the natural order in extraordinary dispensations. He is a being of great power!

We need not explain every bad thing that happens to us as having come directly from Satan; but I see no reason why similar unusual or unexplained occurrences of evil upon the righteous cannot be from Satan now as then. In the NT:

He was using disease through the agency of demons—Lk. 13:16

In 2 Cor. 12 Paul called his "thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor. 12:7)

In Revelation is the mastermind behind the persecutions of the church through Jerusalem, paganism, and Roman Empire.

Satan must work within divinely prescribed limitations.

Satan is limited by his own nature.

Satan can move from place to place quickly as a spirit being (Job 1:7;2:2); He has no corporeal essence (like a red body with a forked tail). These means he can move quickly around the earth. Yet, he cannot be everywhere simultaneously. He is not omnipresent.

Satan is not omniscient. He cannot, like God, know all that we are thinking or what we will do. He was clearly wrong in his accusation that Job would "curse God to His face".

God put limitations on Satan's power

Then the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord. (Job 1:12)

So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life." (Job 2:6)

Though Job experienced grievous trials, Satan could not go beyond what God had permitted.

It is interesting that similar language is used in connection with the testing of Peter before the Lord's crucifixion:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32)

Paul also seems to teach that Satan has limits beyond which he may not go:

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

We can be encouraged by this, that God knows our limitations and puts Satan under limitations as well. What would he do if he had free reign in our lives?

Satan can be defeated in suffering by the power of faith.

The trial of suffering is not in the pain of the event, but in our response to the event. Will we become angry at God and turn away from Him or will we continue to trust Him and rely upon His help?

When our faith is tested we must use the weapons we have at our disposal.

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10-11)

in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. (Ephesians 6:16)

God has given us two weapons of faith for spiritual warfare

The word of God provides the truth we need to sustain faith. His word contains the information and motivation we need to overcome the pain.

For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:5)

Prayer provides the strength and help we need to overcome suffering. Paul stressed to the Romans that the Holy Spirit not only provided testimony that they were God's children, he also helped them in times of suffering.

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all

things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:26-28)

No matter what Satan may hurl at us or no matter what we may experience in the ongoing effects of God's providence we can overcome him through the power of our faith and the provision of God.

Conclusion: What we know about Satan's activity in Job's life should cause us to see that he is capable of perpetrating the most horrendous evils against believers. And it should cause us to hate him with all our being and be determined not to let him win in our lives no matter what he pulls from his bag of tricks.