

KEY

Archer = A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Gleason Archer). Chicago: Moody Press, 2007.

Ash = Job: The Wisdom of the Cross (Christopher Ash). Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

BBC = The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament. Edited by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Carson, D.A. Carson, How Long O Lord? 2d edition. Baker Academic, 2006.

Frame = John Frame, Systematic Theology, P&R Publishing, 2013.

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Harrison = Introduction to the Old Testament (R.K. Harrison). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.

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Kaiser = Walter C. Kaiser in The Majesty of God in the Midst of Innocent Suffering.

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Talbert = *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job* (Layton Talbert). Bob Jones University Press, 2007.

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Walton = Old Testament Today. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

SERMON OUTLINE:

I. What the Book of Job Teaches Us About God and Good

A. About God

1. God is Breathtakingly Great
2. God is Supremely Sovereign

B. About Good

1. God is Good and the Standard for Goodness
2. Tolkien's Concept of Eucatastrophe

II. What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Satan and Evil

A. About Satan

1. He is real — and he has an army of demons who work at his bidding
2. Satan Lost his Wager

B. About Evil

III. What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Ourselves

A. Satan is Real

B. Our Suffering is Real

C. Your Perseverance Will be Tested

D. Learning the Lesson of Humility

E. Your Worship Will be Proven

IV. What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Jesus Christ

A. Learning About God is to Learn about Jesus Christ

B. Jesus is the Mediator Job Sought

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about): NA

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it's talking about): NA

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): NA

CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON: NA

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: Afterward: Wrapping Up the Gift of Job

AFTERWARD

I. What the Book of Job Teaches Us About God and Good

A. About God

What is the book of Job about? “Suffering” is too simplistic as is “the story of a man named Job”. It’s about God and why a true believer serves Him.

1 God is Breathtakingly Great

Cf. infinite space and God’s two speeches.

2. God is the Sovereign

God is always the One in control of all your circumstances. He Himself claims this role and responsibility for Himself from the outset of the book (2:3). You may experience serious or extended illness, financial devastation, or the loss of loved ones. You may even have been victimized by the sins of others. Heap on top of all that the accusations of acquaintances, the misunderstanding of friends, the desertion of family, and, worst of all, the unresponsive silence of God. Job suffered all of these.

The message of Job is that you are never abandoned to the hand of man or the clutches of Satan. You are in the hand that holds the scepter of the world (Eph. 1:11). He alone grants permission for whatever He does not directly send. What Job understood instinctively and theoretically in the short term (1:21; 2:10) he had to relearn and submit to personally for the long haul (42:1-6). But when God sends what even the Bible calls "evil" ("bad" things in a non-moral sense) or permits us to suffer as the victims of others' evil deeds, doesn't that raise questions about another attribute? Job understood and acknowledged God's sovereignty. But how do we know He is really good? [Talbert 241-42]

B. About Good

1. God is Good and the Standard for Goodness

Greatness and goodness brought together (Moses song to Israel):

Deuteronomy 31:30–32:4 30 Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete: 1 “Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; And let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 2 “Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As the droplets on the fresh grass And as the showers on the herb. 3 “For I proclaim the name of the LORD; Ascribe greatness to our God! 4 “The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.

But what about when bad things happen? When evil seems to win? When God feels absent? This is where Job failed (cf. 19:2-6). The problem of being guided by our senses rather than our sense.

We may not always see the signs of God's goodness in our immediate circumstances, but what we see is not all there is. Trials are, after all, tests of our faith not our sight. . . . And what we experience in this life is not the end of the story. [Talbert, 244]

C. God is Good

I read an account by the OT scholar John Walton [IVPBC] which reminded me of something from my past. When I was a small child my dad caught me sitting on the patio smashing ants with his hammer. He scolded me. The ants weren't doing anything wrong and they weren't threatening us in any way. My destruction of these creatures of God was indiscriminate and capricious. We can sometimes think of God in that way. He indiscriminately and capriciously sits in heaven smashing people He created with no thought of why He does so. Have you ever felt that way? Do you now?

Walton concludes his story:

We should not adopt any of the following elaborations of "I am God and you are not:"

- I am God, mind your own business.
- I am God, I can do whatever I want.
- I am God, you are worthless.

In light of the book of Job, the only acceptable elaboration would be: "I am God, I care deeply, and I want you to trust me even when you don't understand." By affirming such a view of God, we do not dismiss suffering as meaningless but try to understand it in the larger context of God's wisdom and the world in which we live. [John H. Walton, 443–444]

Axiom that God is good.

II. What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Satan and Evil

A. Satan

* There is a battle for our souls (Job wasn't just on the battlefield, he was t/battleground)

Jesus did not pray that his disciples would be spared the sifting and that Satan would be forbidden his demand [Luke 22:31-32]. Rather he expected the demand would be granted, as it had been for Job. And he prays that in this painful sifting Simon's faith may not fail. We ought to expect this. Every morning we ought to wake up and say to ourselves, "There is a vicious, dark spiritual battle being waged over me today." Satan is very busy; wherever on earth there is a believer walking with God in loving fear, God says, "Look

there's a believer," and Satan says, "May I attack him/her? I want to prove this is a real believer." And sometimes the Lord grants that terrible permission." [Ash, 427-28]

Satan Lost the Wager. Job never cursed God, as Satan had predicted and his wife had urged (1:11; 2:5, 9). Job endured the test (cf. 42:1-6). No need for the afflictions to continue.

B. Evil

Satan's motive was for evil; God's for good.

Evil personified in Leviathan and Behemoth.

Tolkien had a concept called "eucatastrophe" . . . God created everything and it was "very good." However, sin Out of sin and evil came One who would deliver (cf. Gen. 3:15). Job . . .

What good came out of Job's catastrophe? In the language of Job's confession, God had purposed what He pleased, and performed what He purposed. Job was changed. What he valued more than wealth or health or life itself, his relationship to his God, was exponentially deepened; his understanding of the Lord soared and what he now knew about God was intensely personalized. His friends' abhorrent theology, still with us today, was debunked. Satan was not merely defeated but humiliated. Human faith was validated, human worship dignified. The angels were instructed and edified. God was magnified, made large in the eyes of all creation. And the story was preserved for the enlightenment and encouragement of countless generations of readers. [Layton Talbert, 238]

My eucatastrophe. . . .

Theology professor Robert Lewis Dabney wrote a classic biography of Stonewall Jackson, a vibrant and unashamed Christian under whose Confederate command Dabney served for a time. In 'The Life and Campaign Lieutenant General Thomas J. Stonewall Jackson' Dabney recounts a chaplains' visit after Jackson was severely wounded by friendly fire.

As he entered and saw the stump where the left arm had lately been, he exclaimed in distress, "Oh, General! what a calamity!" Jackson first thanked him, with his usual courtesy for his sympathy, and then proceeded, with marked deliberation and emphasis, as though delivering his Christian testimony touching God's dealing with him . . . : "You see me severely wounded, but not depressed; not unhappy. I believe that it has been done according to God's holy will, and I acquiesce entirely in it. You may think it strange; but you never saw me more perfectly contented than I am today; for I am sure that my Heavenly Father designs this affliction for my good. I am Perfectly satisfied that either in this life or in that which is to come, I shall discover that what is now regarded as a great calamity is a blessing. And if it appears a great calamity (as it surely will be a great inconvenience to be deprived of my arm), it will result in a great blessing. I can wait until God, in his own time, shall make known to me the object he has in thus afflicting me. But

why should I not rather rejoice in it as a blessing, and not look at it as a calamity at all? If it were in my power to replace my arm, I would not dare to do it unless I could know it was the will of my Heavenly Father.”

Coming under fire from a brief Northern offensive, the soldiers who first attempted to remove the wounded Jackson from the field dropped the litter carrying him. Jackson later recounted that he assumed at that at that moment he would die upon the field of battle:

It has been a precious experience to me, that I was brought face to face with death, and found all was well. I then learned an important lesson, that one who has been the subject of converting grace and is the child of God can, in the midst of the severest sufferings, fix the thoughts upon God and heavenly things, and derive great comfort and peace; but that one who had never made his peace with God would be unable to control his mind, under such sufferings, so as to understand properly the way of salvation, and repent and believe on Christ. I felt that if I had neglected the salvation of my soul before, it would have been too late then.”

On Sunday morning, May 10, 1863, Mrs. Jackson woke her weakened husband. No kin to Job’s wife, Mrs. Jackson told him, "Do you know the Doctors say you must very soon be in heaven? Do you not feel willing to acquiesce in God's allotment, if he wills you to go today?"

Twice, with difficulty but distinctly, he replied, “I prefer it.”

“Well, before this day closes, you will be with the blessed Savior in his glory.”

“I will be an infinite gainer if translated.”

Not long after, Jackson “seemed attempting to speak; and at length said audibly: “Let us pass over the river, and rest under the shade of the trees.” These were the last words he uttered.” [cited in Talbert, 238-41]

Evil can be good to have existed and yet be evil. The greatest eucatastrophe in that regard: JC remained t/innocent, spotless lamb of God who faced calamity out of which came the greatest good. Acts 4:27-28.

III. What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Ourselves

A. Suffering

RP and Wisdom Literature

The Bible’s affirmation of the RP is covenantal and proverbial. In covenantal terms, it operates collectively, not individually, and therefore is philosophically unproblematic when an individual faces a crisis. Wisdom literature presents the RP as proverbial truth, which by its genre constitutes a generalization about how things tend to be rather than a guarantee of universal reality. [John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV*

Application Commentary: Job, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 438]

Why does God bring blessing to the righteous and judgment on the wicked inconsistently? Even if he did so only rarely, wouldn't such action require "overriding" the natural system of cause and effect in order to impose his will? If God overrides the system sometimes, why not all the time? How does he choose when to do so? We easily find ourselves at square one, questioning God's policies.

Our understanding of these issues will benefit if we can set aside our default conception of the post-Enlightenment Kantian divide between supernatural and natural, in which the natural world operates by an inexorable chain of cause and effect, and any supernatural element is a disruption. Instead, we must think in ancient categories of order and disorder, which were introduced in our investigation of Behemoth and Leviathan (p. 413).

Suffering is part of the disorder that continues to exist in the cosmos. It has been left there by God's design, according to his purposes. God can send suffering as punishment, but suffering is also an automatic result of disorder. Human beings, made in God's image, can alleviate a measure of suffering as they follow their mandate to "subdue and rule."

[John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 438]

RP appears within the context of wisdom literature and should be read as theological proverb; it cannot accurately or profitably be viewed as offering a promise or guarantee. [Walton]

Suffering is unavoidable and unpredictable. Walk by faith, not sight. Blessings vs. tests that suck t/wind from our sails and t/strength from our knees. Swindoll: "A vertical perspective will keep us from horizontal panic."

Sometimes a thunderbolt will shoot from a clear sky; and sometimes in the life of a peaceful family, without warning of gathered storm, something terrible will fall. And from that moment everything seems changed. That family is no more exactly what it was before. Better it ought to be, damaged it may be.

The result depends on the family itself and its response to the invading storm of trouble. Forever after, its spiritual weather is altered. But for the family who believes in God, such rending and frightful catastrophes never come but where they are turned around for good in that family's life and in other lives they touch. [George MacDonald, cited by Swindoll, 357]

B. Perseverance

Perseverance of the saints.

C. Worship

Who or what do you worship — and Why?

Job never knew...

This statement appropriately leads to a question we each should answer: Do we serve God for nothing? If our righteous or kind behavior is motivated primarily by a desire to ingratiate ourselves with God and/or others, to win approval, or to conform to expectations, we are missing the mark. Honest self-evaluation can be difficult, because these false motivations are often buried deeply in our psyche. To correct this tendency, we do not need to eliminate our desire for approval or our inclination to conform, but we do need to nurture right ways of thinking. . . . Righteousness and kindness certainly please God, and his pleasure is sound motivation. The key is to avoid expecting something in return; his approval should be enough. These are high ideals indeed, and they do not come naturally. We can work on them for our entire lives and still feel we have made little progress and failed frequently. Nevertheless, pure motivation should become the object of our prayers. [John H. Walton, 439–440]

D. Trust

Doing right *trusting* in God's approval and the ultimate reward of grace, eternal life.

Trusting God when life doesn't make sense.

* Patience is a hard gift

* God is there—even when He seems not.

* "Job's sufferings demonstrate that we run out of questions when we come to realize who God really is." [Walter C. Kaiser, Job, 249] — tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:2–5) Cf. 5:11 and the context of X's return.

Reward of Grace 1 Cor. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:11; 1 Pet. 1:3-5.

E. Humility

Our tidy theological systems are not always as airtight as we think. Cf. chapter 26:6-14 / 42.2. Cf. Roman 11:33; John 21:25; Deut. 29:29a.

Our cornucopia of commentaries, translations, and theologies may lure us into believing that we can systematize God, explain all His past actions, pigeonhole His present doings, and predict His future plans in minute detail. To be sure, the Scriptures embody an essential core of unequivocal truth. Nevertheless, even when we speak truth that his corroborated by clear revelation, we must confess with Job (42:3) that we are speaking about things bigger than we understand, truths beyond our capacity to fully comprehend. We do not know as much as we may think we know, and only an infinitesimal fraction of

what there is to know. We would be foolish to suppose that we have at our disposal all the facts about an infinite and eternal God. [Talbert, 257]

Supposing that we possess all the truth we need to propound theories with confidence and authority, we become Eliphazes, Bildads, and Zophars. We share even in the folly of Job whom God rebuked for obscuring His counsel by words without knowledge . . .” [Talbert, 264]

Human knowledge has bounds beyond which it cannot pass. Universal knowledge is from God alone. If this be so in the things which are seen and temporal, I may rest assured that it is even more so in matters spiritual and eternal. Why then have I been torturing my brain with speculations as to destiny and will, fixed fate, and human responsibility. . . . Why am I so curious to know the reason of my Lord’s providences, the motive of His actions, the design of his visitations? . . . Let me not strive to understand the infinite, but spend my strength in love. What I cannot gain by intellect I can possess by affection, and let that suffice me. [Spurgeon, cited in Talbert, 260-61]

Our objective is faith and perseverance, not relief. Our determination is to refrain from reducing God to a manageable size by confining him to a philosophical box of our own design. And our commitment is to respond with humility rather than to defame his character or dismiss him. [John H. Walton, 443]

Illustration from a book I do not recommend, William Paul Young’s 2007 novel, *The Shack* (NYT #1). Toward the middle of the book there is a lengthy discussion between God and the main character about numerous theological topics, including, suffering. In this fictional work, God says the following (which I take consistent with Job):

You try to make sense of the world in which you live based on a very small and incomplete picture of reality. It is like looking at a parade through the tiny knothole of hurt, pain, self-centeredness, and power and believing you are on your own and insignificant. All of these thoughts contain powerful lies. You see pain and death as ultimate evils and God as the ultimate betrayer, or perhaps, at best, as fundamentally untrustworthy. You dictate the terms and judge my actions and find me guilty.

The real underlying flaw in your life, MacKenzie, is that you don’t think I am good. If you knew I was good and that everything—the means, the ends, and all the processes of individual lives—is all covered by my goodness, then while you might not always understand what I am doing, you would trust me. But you don’t.

This conversation is drawn to a powerful conclusion:

MacKenzie, you cannot produce trust, just as you cannot “do” humility. It either is or is not. Trust is the fruit of a relationship in which you know you are loved. Because you do not know that I love you, you cannot trust me. [William Paul Young, *The Shack* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Windblown Media, 2007. p. 128)]

“Job’s sufferings and God’s willingness to work through Job’s lack of understanding shows that God is willing to teach us in our moments of greatest need, and despite our thick-headedness. He is teaching us to see a larger, grander view of who He is and how much He loves us. He wants His creation to have a viable, breathing, growing relationship with Him the Almighty!” [Walter C. Kaiser, Job, 249]

Patricia St. John “The Alchemist”
God seeks no second site on which to build,
But o, the old foundation stone by stone,
Cementing sad experience with grace,
Fashions a stronger temple for His own.

IV. What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Jesus Christ

Perichoresis? Umpire. Christophany. Brings us full circle. Suffering.

And therefore Job is passionately and profoundly about Jesus, whom Job foreshadows both in his blamelessness and in his perseverance through undeserved suffering. As the blameless believer par excellence, Jesus fulfills Job. As a priestly figure who offers sacrifices for his children at the start and his friends at the end, Job foreshadows Jesus the great High Priest. The monstrous ferocity of the beast Leviathan reaches its vicious depths in the life and death of Jesus, who in his passion endures deeper depths and a more solemn and awesome darkness even than Job. The drama, the pain and the perplexity of Job reach their climax at the cross of Jesus Christ. In the darkness and God-forsakenness of those terrible hours of lonely agony, the sufferings of Job are transcended and fulfilled. And as the blameless believer accused and despised by men, but finally vindicated by God in the resurrection, Jesus fulfills the drama and longings of Job for justification. [Ash, 436]

So we take up Christ’s cross and walk in the footsteps of Job and the millions of saints who suffered. Union with Christ—He shares in those sufferings even as we fill them up.

The sufferings of this present time are not worthy . . .Romans 8:18.