

# “What In The World Is Going On?”

Job 1:1 – 2:10 Job Series [#1]

Pastor Lyle L. Wahl

September 23, 2007

Theme: **A Righteous Person Lives By Faith In All Circumstances.**

## Introduction

Disasters come in all shapes and sizes, and all too frequently. There are natural disasters. In recent years here in North America we remember hurricane Katrina in 2005 all too well. About 2,000 people died; the financial cost was over \$81 B., and is still counting. Then there was the Indian Ocean earthquake of 2004. About 230,000 people died.

There are many other kinds of disasters. Wars: WWII was the deadliest with 50-60 million killed. Disease: It is estimated that 159,900 new cases of cancer and 72,700 deaths from it will occur in Canada this year.

And so, we ask, “*What in the world is going on?*”

This morning we begin a series of messages in Old Testament book of Job. It is a long book of 42 chapters, which we are going to cover in a short time between now and the beginning of Advent.

We heard the setting of the book in the Scripture reading earlier. Job was a righteous, successful and wealthy man. He suffered greatly, and not because of anything he or his family had done. After the scene is set, there are 35 long chapters of dialogue and debate between Job and his friends, before God speaks.

In the weeks ahead we will examine some of the key dynamics, questions, issues and truth of God in them for us. I must start with a warning: do not expect nice, neat answers for all your questions about suffering. The *central question* may be “*Why do the righteous suffer?*”, but the *central answers* are about God’s sovereignty and how righteous people live and learn in suffering.

“*What In The World Is Going On?*” Rather than just *telling* us, this first section *shows* us in Job that “*A righteous person lives by faith in all circumstances.*”

## Meet Job.

*“There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.” (1:1)*

Job was a man from Uz. There is no certainty on the meaning of his name or even what language it came from. Neither can the land of Uz be located with certainty. There are Biblical references linking Uz to Edom, to the south of Israel, and also to Aram in the north.

When did Job live, when did all of this take place? Contrary to what some suggest, Job and these events were actual. The Bible indicates this as he is listed with Noah and Daniel in Ezekiel 14. And, in the New Testament, James cites him as an example for being patient,

in chapter 5 of his letter. The book itself indicates that Job lived in the times of people such as Abraham, or even earlier; e.g., 42:16 tells us that after all these events, Job lived an additional 140 years [perhaps a total life span of about 200 year?]. Abraham lived 175 years and was born sometime around 2165 B.C. Also, Job, we see here in chapter 1, was the priest of his family and that fits this period. There is no reference to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or the nation of Israel. And, his wealth was measured in livestock, which was the norm for that period, rather than in gold and silver.

Job was a righteous man.

he “*was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.*” (1:1)

The first pair of words, “blameless and upright” describe his character. *Blameless* means “pure” or “complete.” It speaks of integrity, being sound, not flawed. It does mean that Job never sinned. *Upright* literally means “straight,” and so, “righteous.”

We see this character in the second pair of words. “*Fearing God,*” means coming to God with awe and reverence, and displaying this in loving obedience. When it says that Job “*turn[ed] away from evil,*” it means he turned away from temptations, compromise; turned from any and all kinds of evil. We will see Job’s description of his integrity later, in chap 31.

Then, Job also was a good father who cared for his children. And, after he suffered the loss of his property and children, we are told,

“Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.” (1:22)

Then, after the loss of his health and support of his wife we read,

“*In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*” (2:10b)

On top of all this, listen to God’s testimony about Job,

“*The LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered 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.’*” (1:8)

And, at the second meeting God repeats this, with emphasis,

“*The LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered 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 to ruin him without cause.’*” (2:3)

Yes, Job was “*A Righteous man.*” And it is this fact which heightens our interest, and deepens our questions about his suffering.

He also was a man God blessed.

“*Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very*

*many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.” (2:2-3)*

God blessed him with a good-sized and happy family.

He apparently was a very wealthy city dweller who controlled vast stretches of land (judging from his 500 pairs of yoked oxen, which were used to cultivate land; as well as the grazing land required for his 7,000 sheep). He had a staggering amount of wealth in the animals (the measurement of wealth of that time). He apparently had a thriving caravan trading business (judging from the 3,000 camels he owned). And, of course, to operate all this, he had “very many servants.”

This is Job of Uz. Materially, he was the Carlos Helú, Bill Gates or Warren Buffett of his day. Spiritually, he was *righteous*.

“A righteous person lives by faith in all circumstances. And we begin to see that now as “Act 1” opens.

### **Act 1.**

In the first scene 1 Satan challenges God. Note the setting,

*“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.” (6)*

It is often assumed this day when the “sons of God,” or angels presented themselves to God was a regular time of reporting to God, but we are not told the purpose nor the place of this gathering. We *do know* that Satan was there. The text actually says, “*the Satan,*” or, literally “*the Accuser.*” This description stresses his *character*, what he is like; and also his *actions*, what he does. Revelation 12:10 tells us he is “*the accuser of our brethren ... who accuses them before our God day and night.*”

Here Satan, the Accuser, challenges God. God opens the conversation, by asking Satan “from where do you come?” “What have you been up to?” Now, of course, God knew where Satan had been and what he had been up to. He is engaging him. Satan replied, “I’ve just been roaming here and there on earth, doing a little of this and that, the same old stuff.” His answer was general and evasive. There was no way he wanted to discuss his activities.

But God gets specific, “In all of your roaming around, doing this and that, have you considered My servant Job? There’s no one like Him—he is righteous, following and serving Me faithfully!” Now, Satan is both clever and brash. He fires back, “Does Job serve you for nothing?” In other words, “Job is doing this just for what he can get from You—and look at all the good stuff You’ve given him! Look at how You protect Him! Take all that away and he “will surely curse You to Your face!”

God says, “I know Job. But go ahead. Do what you want. He will still serve Me. But, you can’t harm him personally.” God is sovereign—Satan can never step a millimeter over the line God draws. God allows Satan to challenge Him, and to test the integrity of Job’s right-

eousness and faith.

Think about a New Testament example of this. When Jesus and His disciples ate that last Passover meal together, Jesus said to Peter, “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)

Scene 2 involves Satan bringing calamity on Job. Calamity allowed by God. Conceived and delivered by Satan. The calamity consists of 4 simultaneous attacks on Job. The Sabeans swept in and stole his 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys, killing all Job’s servants except the one who reported it. Before that report was finished, another servant staggered in with the news that lightning had struck, and Job’s 7,000 sheep and their keepers were gone. On the heels of that came the report that the Chaldeans stole his 3,000 camels and killed the servants with them.

Job might have thought, “I’ve lost everything! ... But ... I still have my family. Thank God for my family!” Just then, the worst news of all came. A great wind like a F5 tornado struck the house where his children were celebrating, killing all of them.

Immediately, Job went from being at the top of the *Forbes Billionaires list* to being broke. From having a happy and large family to mourning and being childless. And remember, God, all His angels and all of Satan’s forces knew why this happened, as we do ... *but Job did not*. He knew nothing about Satan being given permission to “sift [him] like wheat.”

That brings us to scene 3, where we see Job’s response in faith. He mourned with typical, customary actions of a man in deep grief at that time—he tore his robe, and shaved his head. But *with that, immediately with that*, “he fell to the ground and” ... *did what?? ... “worshiped.”* He said, “I came into this world with nothing, and that is how I will leave it.” “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away.” He doesn’t know why all of this happened, but he knows and trusts God.

Don’t rush by his closing statement, let it soak in. He also said, “Blessed be the name of the LORD.” In grief and agony beyond belief, He praised and worshiped God.

At the end of “Act 1”, Satan’s lies that God was bribing Job and that Job was a mercenary were exposed; and, Job is living the truth that “a righteous man lives by faith in all circumstances.”

## **Act 2.**

Scene 1 opens with Satan challenging God again. Some time later when the angels “present[ed] themselves before the LORD,” Satan also came. We don’t know how much later this was—a few days, weeks, or months. Again God asks Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan gave the same general, evasive answer, “roaming around here and there on the earth.” God also asked Him the same *second* question, “Have you considered My servant Job,” citing Job’s integrity. This time he goes on to add Job’s integrity in the disaster of losing all his children and possessions. He is saying, “See, Satan, you were wrong about My

servant Job.” And in this there is also the message, “Satan, you are wrong about Me. I don’t bribe people to serve Me.” And, on top of that, He declared that Satan’s whole case which led to Job’s ruin was *without cause*—without merit or validity; it was groundless.

Satan didn’t stipulate to, or admit any of this judgment of God. Remember, he is clever & brash. He went on the offensive. He said, “That wasn’t a real test! You limited me by not allowing me to touch Job!” He then cited two proverbs. The first, “Skin for skin” is obscure. It might come from an old trading phrase and could be translated, “skin *up to* skin,” e.g., referring to *trading up*. It seems to have the idea that anyone will trade anything he has for something better. The second parable is more clear, “all that a man has he will give for his life.” Or, “A man will do anything, give up anything to save *his own skin*.”

Look at 2:5,

*“However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.”*

As he did in the first meeting, Satan challenges God to test Job, this time allowing him to touch Job himself. He claims that if God touches Job with pain and suffering, Job will abandon and openly curse God. He asserts this test will prove that God *does* bribe people, that His bribery *doesn’t* really work, and that Job *is*, after all, a mercenary.

God knows Job and Satan perfectly. We might ask here, “Isn’t this enough? Hasn’t Job suffered enough, or even too much already? Hasn’t God already proven His pure love and Job’s righteousness?” But God says,

*“...Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”* (2:6)

Scene 2 finds Satan brings calamity on Job again.

*“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.”* (2:7)

This time Satan doesn’t use a four-fold, broad shotgun pattern blast, but a single, narrow rifle shot. He can’t take Job’s life, but he can make it totally miserable and humiliating. We can’t say what this condition was, although many have studied and speculated on a wide range of possibilities. Job had boils or inflamed sores over his whole body, which oozed, became infested with worms and itched constantly. The foul smell of his body and breath was repulsive, and kept everyone at arm’s length, including his family. He lost his appetite, and became skin and bones. He became agitated and fearful, never getting a break from the pain, never able to get enough rest.

In all this misery, we can understand his cry that opens chapter 3,

*“Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.”* (3:1)

Scene 3 finds Job continuing to respond in faith.

*“In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”* (2:10)

I don't know why Job's wife said to him, "*Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!*" (2:9) . Perhaps she couldn't stand seeing him in such pain any longer. Or, perhaps she was going through her own crisis of faith, and was angry at God. I do know she echoed Satan's words,

*"But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."* (1:11)

*"However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face."* (2:5)

Both verbs in her statement are imperatives, and they are linked structurally so that the second is a consequence of the first. "Curse God, and *as a result*, die." Die either by giving up on life, or by God striking him for thinking and saying this.

But, as sick, miserable, humiliated and perplexed as Job was, he would not do that, nor tolerate the idea.

*"You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"* (2:10a)

His rebuke to her has some gentleness as he said, "*You speak as one of the foolish women speaks.*" But it is firm.

And then, his great confession of faith, "*Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?*" Robert Alden drives the point home well as he writes, "This is a hard lesson for some believers to learn, especially if they feel they have been promised health and wealth or have misunderstood that God's wonderful plan for their lives involves only pleasantness and not trouble. Believers on this side of the cross have many more examples from both the Bible and church history of God's people who have suffered. Job was much more in the dark. Yet out of that darkness his strong belief in the sovereignty of God shown forth all the more brilliantly."

*"What in the world is going on?"* Job, the righteous man is living out the truth God told us 1400 or more years later through the prophet Habakkuk, "the righteous will live by his faith." (2:4) Yes, "a righteous person lives by faith in all circumstances."

Let's wrap this up with noting, briefly, three important truths that we need to remember.

### **Truths To Note And Remember.**

First, God is sovereign. He *is* God. He is infinitely unique, above and beyond all else in character and power. We do *not* live in a chaotic or free-falling world. We do *not* live in a dualistic universe, with God and Satan equal and battling it out. Satan and his forces are evil and deadly, but they only have the room God allows as He works all things out, good and evil, for His own glory.

In His sovereignty, God knows everything from eternity to eternity. God was not

surprised by anything in these events. He knew Job completely. He knew Satan completely. He knew the outcome before Satan issued the challenge. This truth can be difficult to accept, especially when *you* are in the crucible, as Job was. In those times, there are two options: as Frances Anderson put it, we either “lower [our] view of God,” or we “raise our faith...”

It is likely that Job never got to know the background to his great calamity while he was here on earth. But he always believed, clung to, trusted in, and lived for God, who is *sovereign*.

Secondly, Satan is brash, persistent, clever and ruthless in his attacks against God and His people. He is our Adversary, our Accuser. He is the Liar, the Deceiver, and the Destroyer. We may wish this were not the case, but it is. His aim is to defeat and destroy you any way he can, any way that God will allow. We’ve all had difficult times in our lives, and it is reality —not “*gloom and doom*”—that tells us we will have more. As we concluded the series in Ephesians over the last few weeks, we saw that God gives us the weapons to stand firm against *all* of Satan’s attacks.

As I have said before, any gospel which holds out a life in this world of ease, wealth, health, a life above the spiritual battle, is a false Gospel. Most of Ephesians 6 would not be in the Bible if that false gospel were true. Examples of men like Job, the *heroes of faith* in Hebrews 11, and Jesus Himself teach us about the ongoing battle.

The old saying is true, “*to be forewarned is to be forearmed.*” The Latin version was “*praemonitus, primunitus,*” or, “*forewarned is forearmed.*” So, as Peter writes about responding to suffering, “Beloved, *do not be surprised* at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.” (1 Peter 4:12-13)

One final truth to take with us from this section is that circumstances that devastate, puzzle and shake God’s righteous people will not deter living by faith. Job was devastated, puzzled and shaken ... but he was *righteous*, he lived rightly, and kept on living by faith.

Every believer stands righteous before God in Christ. Every believer is then called to “*Cross the Bridge*” to live righteously. “*The righteous will live by his faith.*” “A righteous person lives by faith in all circumstances.” Whatever immovable objects, irresistible forces, incomprehensible struggles you are facing today, choose to look to God, to cling to Him, to *trust* Him, and take the next step, however small or large it may be, by *faith*.

*Peace does not come by giving in, but by standing firm.*

## **Conclusion.**

“What in the world is going on *in your life?*” Whatever it is, bring it and yourself to God in these next moments of personal reflection and response. Thank Him that He is sovereign—that this world and your life are not out of control, even though they may seem

to be. Thank Him for His promise to never leave or forsake you, to always keep and protect you for Himself, regardless of any and all disasters. And, like Job and every other child of God, even though you don't have all the answers you want, make the choice to stand firm in the righteousness of Christ and to take one step at a time, to take every step by faith.

© 2007, Lyle L. Wahl

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.