

Job's Physical Affliction

Satan strikes again, this time afflicting Job's body with painful sores. Even Job's wife urges him to curse God, but Job remains faithful.

Job 2:1-13

CHARACTERS: God, Satan, Job, Job's wife, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar

THEMES: Suffering, Perseverance, Physical pain, Faithfulness, Friendship

ON ANOTHER DAY, the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The heavenly council convened again, and again God initiated the conversation.

'Where have you come from?' the Lord asked Satan.

'From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it,' came the same restless answer.

Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.'

God's words are remarkable. Job had maintained his integrity. The test had been passed. But Satan was not finished. 'Skin for skin!' he replied. 'A man will give all he has for his own life. But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.'

Satan's argument shifted. Perhaps Job could endure loss of possessions and even children, but personal physical suffering—that would break him. The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.'

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. The description suggests something like leprosy—open, oozing sores covering his entire body. Job sat among the ashes, reduced to scraping his skin with a piece of broken pottery to ease the itching and pain.

Then his wife said to him, 'Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!'

We should not judge her too harshly. She had lost all ten children too. She had watched her husband's destruction. Perhaps she saw death as mercy—better to curse God, be struck down, and end the suffering. But Job replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?' In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

News of Job's calamity reached his three friends: Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him—his appearance was so disfigured by disease.

They began to weep aloud, tore their robes, and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

That week of silence was the most comfort they would offer. Once they began to speak, they would become not comforters but accusers. But for now, in their shock and grief, they simply sat with their friend in his ashes. Sometimes presence is the only comfort possible.

Job had passed the second test. Though his body was wracked with pain, though his wife urged him to curse God and die, though he sat in ashes scraping his sores—he did not sin with his lips. His integrity held. But the hardest part was yet to come: not the physical suffering, but the

spiritual and emotional torture of false accusations and unanswered questions.

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