

Meditation #1
Job 1:8
Prof. Herman Hanko

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 (turneth his back on) evil?

Job was a contemporary of Abraham and lived in the same general area, Ur of the Chaldees. We do not know whether they knew each other, but were both descendants of the faithful few whose ancestors had been at Babel when God confused the peoples' speech.

It was the old dispensation, and Christ had not yet ascended so Satan could still come into heaven. (Rev. 12:7-9, Jude 9) On this occasion, Satan came purposely to challenge God's dealings with Job.

We must be careful to find some great truths of Scripture in this passage. The first one is that God is sovereign over all he made, even Satan and the devils. God knew why Satan had come into heaven and God himself brought up the subject of Job's holy walk.

Second, Satan appears here as "the accuser of our brethren" as he is called in Revelation 12:10. He slanders God's people. They serve God, Satan says, only because it pays: they are given riches.

Third, Satan did not believe that Job was upright because God had made him holy; Satan said Job did what was right because it paid dividends.

Fourth, when Job is described as "*perfect and upright, one that fears God and turns away from evil,*" Scripture does not mean to say that Job was holy and without sin. What is spoken here of Job is also something that other saints frequently confessed concerning themselves. Hezekiah had a perfect heart (2 Kings 20:3) and so did the Psalmist in Psalm 119:168.

The solution hinges on the distinction David made in Psalm 19:12-14 between secret sins he does not know and presumptuous sins. Secret sins are mostly our failures to love and serve God with our whole being. Presumptuous sins are those deeds we know to be wrong, but we do them anyway: anger, hatred, adultery, stealing... David prays to be kept from them, and by God's sustaining and conquering grace, we do succeed during periods in our lives.

And so this text has much to teach us about affliction and suffering. In some of our sufferings, the devil himself brings them on us, as he did with Job. Nevertheless, God controls the devil and either keeps him from harming us, or permits him to bring on us affliction.

God always has a good purpose in sending us affliction, for he uses affliction to sanctify us and prepare us for glory. God never sends afflictions which are too great for us to bear, but always sustains us by his grace.

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Meditation #2
Job 2:9
Prof. Herman Hanko

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

Job suffered as few people suffer. He lost all his earthly possessions; his family was killed, with the exception of his wife; and he was plagued with boils that made his life almost unbearably difficult.

His wife, his God-given help, would have been expected to comfort him and ease his pain. But she didn't do that. Instead, she showed her own despair at the loss of all the earthly goods the family possessed, as well as the loss of her family.

She joined those who had come to comfort Job. But these three friends were "miserable comforters" and did nothing but make his misery worse. They charged him with terrible sins for which he was being punished. His wife took the side of Job's tormentors.

One can almost hear the despair in the voice of Job's wife. She herself admitted that Job was a man of "integrity." And when all these calamities came to Job, she added to them. By asking if he still retained his integrity, she meant to say, *"It was of no earthly use that you served the Lord; it has brought you (and me) only misery. Why not just end it all and curse God?"*

So we are often tempted, though by no means as severely as Job. We too are inclined to sink into the pit of blaming God when afflictions or trials are our lot. We ask, *"Why me? Why should I suffer this affliction?"*

Yet Job did not do what his wife suggested, although it surely added to his misery. One can learn this from the following verse. Job recognized the fact, as we also must do, that we do not deserve good from God's hand, and we ought not to rebel when afflictions come to us.

James, in his epistle, explains Job's trust in God even in great suffering as due to Job's patience (James 5:11). Patience is explained in that verse from James as enduring. We endure under God's hand when we patiently bear what he is pleased to send us. And it means, according to the same verse, that we know that God, who has pity on us in our trials and is very merciful, will give us grace to bear our sufferings with patience, for our God will give us spiritual glory and riches in the end (Col. 3:3-4).

This passage with its following verse is one of the great lessons we are to learn and is therefore, of abiding value.

Memory Verse: James 5:11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Meditation #3
Job 7:1
Prof. Herman Hanko

Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?

The translation is somewhat questionable in this passage. Most translations use the words “hard labour” instead of “an appointed time.” Further, for the word “hireling,” it is probably better to substitute “slave.” Job is saying then, man’s life in this world is one of hard labour and is like a slave who receives no wages.

Job is speaking out of his misery with which the Lord had afflicted him, and the rest of the chapter is a moving description of his suffering. The words are a plaintive echo of God’s words of curse on the creation because man as head of the creation sinned against God: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:17-19).

As beautiful as some places of this creation can be, the creation remains under the curse. And labour in it is vanity, as Solomon points out in his writing of Ecclesiastes. It is well for God’s people to remember that. All our labour here on earth is, in itself, useless and can bring nothing of value or lasting blessedness. One need only read such passages as Psalm 37 to verify that this is the teaching of Scripture.

What then is the worth of working and earning money here in this earthly creation?

It has no value or significance at all apart from God. We are pilgrims and strangers on the earth and have here no abiding city. All we possess is going to be burned in God’s final conflagration that he sends upon the earth (2 Pet. 3:10-12).

Yet, this creation is God’s world and it has its good purpose for the believer. It is given to the believer because he needs various things in this present creation to stay alive and to support the causes of Christ’s kingdom as manifested in this world: covenant families, churches to gather the elect through the preaching, Christian schools, and assistance to the poor. These things belong to heaven and have value for eternity.

Let us then remember that these reasons are the only ones that have lasting value (Matt. 6:24-34). Job had to learn this; so do we. The rest is vanity.

Memory Verse: Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Meditation #4
Job 12:9
Prof. Herman Hanko

Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?

These words of Job sum up all that he has said to his three friends recorded for us in verses seven to the end of this chapter. In a majestic and sobering way Job reminds his three friends of the sovereignty of God in his creation. God creates all things, upholds all things and brings to pass all that happens.

Most of the world including the church world, denies that fundamental truth of Scripture. In their sentimental and unbiblical view of God, they piously prate about a god who would not do bad things, who loves everyone and wants the best for everyone, and who is helpless when saving men, for he is dependent on man's free will and acceptance of God's gracious offer.

But Job says all this about God's sovereignty to assure his "comforters" that this is not his problem, but exactly the reason for his problem. At the beginning of the attacks of Satan, Job had confessed in Job 1:21b: "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

When God in his speech to Job at the very end of Job's ordeal, given to us in chapters 38-41, God reiterated what Job had already confessed, God's absolute right to do what he was pleased to do. The reason was not to correct Job's view of God's sovereignty. The reason for God's speech went deeper than that. Job's problem, was not God's sovereignty, but rather Job could not understand *why* God sent such terrible suffering upon his people.

God's answer in his speech to Job was: "*I am God. I do as I please. You, a mere speck of dust, have no right to make me give an account of my actions to you.*"

But here in this passage Job makes it clear that he believes in God's sovereignty and clings to that great truth by faith.

That is exactly where the comfort of every believer begins when God sends great trials and afflictions upon him. He starts with a confession of God's greatness and glory. He shrinks under God's mighty hand and looks to the heavens where God dwells to find peace and comfort. Knowing that God sends these trials upon him, he turns in quiet child-like faith to his Father in heaven and trusts that God's way is always good – whether he understands the reason for his trials or not.

Memory Verse: *Job 1:21b The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*

Meditation #5
Job 19:2
Prof. Herman Hanko

How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?

Job had suffered terribly under the heavy hand of God through Satan who had mocked Job's righteousness as being self-serving. Satan had complained that Job served God so faithfully because it "paid"; he had become an extremely wealthy man. God had taken away everything that he possessed, including his children. Only his wife remained; she was utterly without any comfort, but told her husband to curse God and die.

One would have thought that the three friends of Job, Bildad, Eliphaz and Zophar, would bring him words of comfort and encouragement, but they only made his sufferings worse by charging him, sometimes in cruel and thoughtless words, with some horrendous sin that brought on him the judgment of God. One would have thought that this would have crushed him in utter despair. Would we not do the same?

So often when God's heavy hand is upon us, we immediately think that we are guilty of some terrible sin that angered God and provoked him to punish us. But Job, by a wonder of divine grace, maintained his faith in the righteousness of Christ as his possession. He knew that his Redeemer (or, Vindicator) would raise him from the dead and publicly justify him.

Job's problem was: Why? Why does God do this? This too is often our response to suffering, trouble and affliction. Why does God do this to me?

But Job's three friends would not believe that Job's answers were adequate, and their voices became more strident and accusing. Job could scarcely bear it.

Almost in desperation, he tells them that their words were vexing his soul and even breaking him in pieces. By the expression, "break in pieces," Job did not, of course, mean that his body was being broken in pieces; He meant that under the duress of his frantic necessity of trusting in God his faith was being tried such as God tries the faith of few of his people.

Their accusations are so disturbing, so cruel, so destructive that his soul is torn apart and his thoughts are severely tempted to accuse God of injustice.

It is almost impossible for us, with weak and frail faith, to bear Job's anguish. I do not say that Job's anguished "How long?" is a type of our Saviour, but I can hear in it the chilling and terrible words of our Saviour on the cross: Why. . . why hast thou forsaken me?"

Our only hope is Job's glorious words: "Though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him." (Job 13:15) Let us bow in worship before our God who uses all afflictions to prepare us for the perfection of heaven.

Memory Verse: *Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.*

Meditation #6
Job 22:2
Prof. Herman Hanko

Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?

Eliphaz the Temanite makes the position clear, which these three men took to explain Job's sufferings. They all, with agreement among themselves, claimed that Job had brought these sufferings on himself by ascribing holiness to himself which was mere boasting.

Eliphaz was very cruel in his description of Job (vv. 3-9). He charged Job with claiming holiness when in fact, Job had committed terrible sins. He mocked Job by asking Job whether Job thought he had put God under obligation to him when Job's iniquities were infinite.

What terrible things to say to a man who is suffering agonies under God's mighty hand.

But the three "friends" either did not understand Job's position or deliberately perverted it. Job made his position clear in Job 19:25-27: He pleaded not that he was holy and without sin, but he insisted that he was righteous in his Redeemer who someday would vindicate him.

The text speaks of the taunt of Job's friends. Eliphaz said in effect, "So you think you do a lot for God; are you of the opinion that you are profitable to God? that you enrich God? that you add to God's happiness? And do you do this like a man who, if he is wise, can be profitable to himself? Is that your position, Job?"

This taunt is really true of men who deny the sovereignty of God's work of salvation. They claim that they can make their salvation complete by accepting that which God cannot sovereignly give. God is dependent on man's choice and on man's willingness to be saved. He thinks that he is profitable to God!

How terrible this idea is when one stops to think about it. Puny sinful man is profitable to the Almighty? The Creator and Sustainer of all creation? Can a spider enrich a mighty king? Can an ant be of help to a general commanding thousands of troops? Can a man dead in trespasses enrich the most high God? What nonsense! What pride!

But Job was not guilty of this. He rested his case with the Almighty Redeemer. So does everyone who loves God. He knows he is saved by grace – unmerited favor. He never can and will profit God by contributing to God's work.

We sing: "When I survey the wondrous cross/ on which the Prince of glory died;/ my richest gain I count but loss/ and pour contempt on all my pride.

Memory Verse: *Psalm 115:1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.*

Meditation #7
Job 28:20
Prof. Herman Hanko

Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?

The verse written above is of crucial importance in our day of untold technological advance in medicine, electronics, technology, and every frontier of human knowledge.

The question of Job is more relevant now than it was when Job in his misery asked it. Man knows more of the secrets of God's universe than he ever did; but the question, "*Is man wise?*" That question must receive a resounding *no*. He is a fool.

Wisdom is the spiritual ability to use the knowledge one acquires for the best possible purpose. That purpose Job answers in Job 28:28: "...Behold the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

Where can one find wisdom in all this creation?

The fear of the Lord is wisdom! The fear of the Lord is to be so afraid of breaking God's commandments that he walks in obedience to him who created it all for his glory.

Where can one find that in this world? Can he find it in the hovels of the poor, or in the palaces of the rich? Can he find it in the colleges and universities of a nation? Can he find it in factories where high-tech instruments of amazing abilities are used? In hospital? Missile factories? Can he find it among the intellectually elite? Or the uneducated bum?

No. All appeal to the stupid theory of evolution to explain all things. All labour and are willing to make great sacrifices to earn six or seven digit incomes. Even we? Do the most stable and successful governments point people in the way of wisdom?

What do we find? Guns to kill others. Bombs to destroy cities, TV to promote pornography and false ideologies. Handphones to communicate nonsense and evil. Whence then cometh wisdom?

God is the God of all wisdom. Wisdom comes from God as a gift of grace. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5a)!

Wisdom is to use all God's creation for his glory. Wisdom brings us to heaven. The one not wise goes to hell. Is it unwise to forsake God and use what one has to deny God – and go to hell. Wisdom leads to heaven and everlasting blessedness.

And finally, wisdom is Christ himself who is the wisdom of God in the magnificent work God does in Christ. To have Christ is to be wise, and Christ is ours in the way of faith.

Listen to Job, the wealthiest man in the world, reduced by God to a quivering worm. He found wisdom: "I know that my redeemer liveth...!" (Job 19:25).

Memory Verse: *James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

Meditation #8
Job 38:2
Prof. Herman Hanko

Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

The words of this text from the book of Job are the introduction of a rather long discourse by the Lord himself. Job's three "friends" had their say, but had unjustly accused Job of great sin for which he was suffering.

Job too, although repudiating the accusations of his three friends, also had his trouble in explaining what God had done to him. He almost insisted that God explain to him the reason why God's hand was heavy on him.

Yet as Luther said, in the end no mention is made of a sacrifice for his sins from Job, while Job was commanded to make sacrifices for the sins of his so-called friends. The reason for this, Luther explained, was that Job confessed God's sovereignty throughout, but the "friends" denied it.

The questions in this verse, asked by God, are intended for all four of the main characters who were trying to explain something they knew nothing of. With a multitude of words, they only obscure the true understanding of God's dealings with Job.

God, as it were, dismisses Job's accusers with a wave of his hand as if they knew nothing about what they were talking of. They were sinning; sacrifices had to be made for them.

Yet we often make the same mistake by thinking that God is punishing us for some particular sin or sins. But, while it is true that all afflictions come to us because of our sins in Adam, it is not true that each affliction is always for a particular sin (John 9:1-3).

Yet God is speaking here directly to Job.

Job was also wrong when he pleaded with God to explain the reason for his affliction.

The substance of God's answer is this: "Job, who do you think you are, that you, a speck of dirt, may question the most high God for an explanation of what he does? Do you think you can put God into a witness chair to give an account to a mere man for what he does? Were you present when I created the worlds with all its wonders? Who do you think you are? *I am God!*

Job admitted this and confessed it using God's very words (Job 42:1-6).

In our afflictions, we too must learn to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

Memory Verse: 1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Meditation #9
Job 40:4
Prof. Herman Hanko

Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

The debate between Job's three friends and Job over the reason for Job's sore affliction had come to its end. Elihu had entered the debate with his own counsel, which was very close to what God himself said. Out of a whirlwind, God answered Job – with an answer that was quite unexpected. God reminded Job with emphasis that Job could not understand the ways of God and that he must quit trying. God is infinitely great, so great in fact, that even if God explained his ways to Job, Job could not understand. As Isaiah said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isa. 55:8).

The text we are considering is Job's response to God's word. It is a response of faith – a faith that humbles Job and ought to humble us. Job means to say that he cannot and will not try to answer God nor justify his own conduct. He realizes how presumptuous he had been and how he, by his search for an answer, was really robbing God of his own greatness and sovereign right to do as it pleases him.

Job has nothing to say; he can have nothing to say and may not say anything more about the problem – except what he said at the beginning of this awful trial: "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21b). Or, 'What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil (Job 2:10b)?

In Psalm 39 David says, after what must have been a very dreadful affliction: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle... I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good... I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." (Ps. 39:1, 2, 9).

When the Lord sends us trials, we may not ask, "Why? Why me?" We must learn to obey Peter's admonition: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" (1 Pet. 5:6). In ourselves we deserve whatever the Lord is pleased to send; it is his wonderful grace that he uses affliction to sanctify us.

Memory Verse: *Job 2:10b What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*