

Serving A Just God

Printed Text • Job 42:1–6, 10–17

Devotional Reading • Job 37:14–24

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will UNDERSTAND the necessity of being humble before God, APPRECIATE how God listens to our thoughts and responds with justice, and HELP others see the justice of God in difficult situations.

In Focus

A woman named Carrie had finally been released from jail. She was happy to get out, but Carrie was also fearful and anxious about returning to society. How would she take care of herself? How would she be able to get hired with a felony on her record? The odds were stacked against her.

On top of that, she still felt anger and frustration at the events that one night long ago. Carrie had not done anything wrong except be in the wrong place at the wrong time. While she and her friends were hanging out in front of their apartment building, police officers came by and frisked them for drugs. One of the officers planted drugs in Carrie's jacket. She had no record or any history of being affiliated with drugs or dealers, but she had no voice in the courtroom. She ended up spending 6 years in prison for a crime she did not commit.

Carrie happened to walk past her old church while a Wednesday night Bible Study was going on. She went in without really knowing why. The pastor immediately recognized and embraced Carrie. In the weeks that followed, Pastor Jackson helped Carrie find a job and a place to stay. Carrie also began to go back to school to be a lawyer so she could be an advocate for those who needed a voice against injustice.

Where do you find hope, and how do you share it when you have it?

Keep In Mind

"Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." (Job 42:3, KJV)

Words You Should Know

A. Pervert (Job 8:3) 'avath (Heb.) — To falsify, bend, subvert, or make crooked

B. Evil doer (v. 20) hanep (Heb.) — A hypocrite

Say It Correctly

Eliphaz. ELL-uh-fazz

Zophar. ZOH-far

Elihu. Ee-LIE-who

Jemimah. Jeh-MY-muh

Keziah. Keh-ZIE-uh

Keren-happuch. KER-en-HA-pook

KJV

Job 42:1 Then Job answered the Lord, and said,

2 I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

10 And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

12 So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters.

14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch.

15 And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

NLT

Job 42:1 Then Job replied to the Lord:

2 "I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you.

3 You asked, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?'

It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me.

4 You said, 'Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.'

5 I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes.

6 I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."

10 When Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes. In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before!

11 Then all his brothers, sisters, and former friends came and feasted with him in his home. And they consoled him and comforted him because of all the trials the Lord had brought against him. And each of them brought him a gift of money[a] and a gold ring.

12 So the Lord blessed Job in the second half of his life even more than in the beginning. For now he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 teams of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys.

13 He also gave Job seven more sons and three more daughters.

14 He named his first daughter Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch.

15 In all the land no women were as lovely as the daughters of Job. And their father put them into his will along with their brothers.

16 Job lived 140 years after that, living to see four generations of his children and grandchildren.

17 Then he died, an old man who had lived a long, full life.

The People, Places, and Times

The Book of Job. This book was written late compared to other Scriptures. Its Hebrew is oddly archaic, but its theological questions ring throughout the ages. The setup of Job's misfortunes provides a reason for a lengthy discussion of theology. The poetry of the book is organized into cycles, with a narrative, prologue, and epilogue. First Job sets out the scope of his misery (Job 3), then his friends try to convince him what he needs to do to appease God and have his blessings restored. Three times, Eliphaz speaks, then Bildad, then Zophar, with Job answering after each (Job 4–31), although in the last cycle, Job is so frustrated that he preempts anything Zophar wanted to say and speaks for much longer than usual. In chapters 32–37, another of Job's friends, Elihu, tries to offer a more nuanced answer to both Job and the other friends, but this is ultimately rejected as well. Finally, God answers them all from out of a storm (Job 38–41), overwhelming Job into awe at God's amazing breadth of insight and control. Job is humble in his reply, and God blesses him again (Job 42).

Background

Job is the first poetic book of the Old Testament. Job is a book of wisdom, it answers the soul-aching questions of godly sufferers. Job grapples with the question, "If God is loving and just, why did he allow such pain and degradation in the life of a righteous man?" Job essentially exposes three distinct scriptural truths. First, God allowed Job to be tested as he was perfect and upright, feared God and eschewed evil. God's omniscience is evident. Satan was granted permission to test Job. Secondly, human frailty and limited thinking stumbles to understand the counsel of God. The awesomeness of God is too wide for human understanding and comprehension without the illumination of God's grace. Finally, the reality of faith is not in blessing, favor, humanistic understanding and answers, but in the revelation of God Himself. Faith is God being revealed to us, in us, and through us. Job conveys that testing purifies character and integrity. God never initiates pain and suffering without benevolence and grace. God makes full restitution and can be fully trusted.

At-A-Glance

1. God's Wisdom and Counsel (Job 42:1–3)
 2. Job's Humanity (vv. 4–6)
 3. God's Justice (vv. 10–11)
4. God's Faithfulness in Adversity (vv. 12–17)

In Depth

1. God's Wisdom and Counsel (Job 42:1–3)

God is wisdom and His understanding is infinite (Romans 16:27; Psalm 147:5). Job tried rationalizing God's counsel and wisdom through his own understanding, and it was fruitless. It is foolish to believe we understand God's counsel and wisdom at work in our lives. God's wisdom annihilates humanistic wisdom, and knowledge falters in gaining access to the mind and counsel of God. God's wisdom and counsel exposes secret and hidden things, even thoughts. Job confesses that God can do anything, including discern thoughts (v. 2). God is revealed as omniscient and His counsel powerful (v. 3). God's counsel is great, mighty in works, and stands forever. Our purposes are worked out through the counsel of God's will. God's wisdom and counsel will cause human utterings that are too wonderful to understand. Job recognizes the abundance of God's wisdom and his own frailty and fragility in the illumination of God's counsel.

How does interpreting God's wisdom and counsel impact how we see God's wisdom and counsel at work in the adversity of your own life?

2. Job's Humanity (vv. 4–6)

Job has a head knowledge of God, but a limited understanding of the operation of God's involvement in our suffering and adversity (v. 5). Job proclaims that the personal revelation of God is far more excellent than the perception of God.

Thoughts are personal, yet never hidden from God. The revelation of God in Job's anguish and calamity produced disgust within Job, and he relegated himself to dust, ashes, and repentance. As our eyes see God's wisdom and counsel in suffering and adversity, rejection of personal wisdom and repentance is the only response (v. 6). When humans are absent from the presence and reality of God, they grow in pride toward Him, which hinders them from seeing the justice and faithfulness of God in suffering.

What hinders us so that we do not see the reality of God in our deepest pain and misfortunes?

3. God's Justice (vv. 10–11)

God's justice is evident in Job's life. As Job vindicated his friends, God vindicated Job (v. 10). Earnest prayers of forgiveness for those who hurt and abandon us demonstrates God's justice in us. The turning of Job's captivity just as he prayed for his friends indicates God's expectation of us when we are wronged by loved ones. God expects us to see through His eyes in their failure, just as God sees us when we fail. All who abandoned Job returned, comforted, and blessed him. Job received them without reservation and celebrated with them (v. 11). Job was blessed with words of comfort and the restoration of relationships. God's justice always prevails.

How might restoration of personal suffering and adversity reside within your power? How can you reconcile in your mind that God's justice might be dependent on us?

4. God's Faithfulness in Adversity (vv. 12–17)

God is faithful in not tempting us beyond our capacity (1 Corinthians 10:13). Despite the trouble we walk through, God preserves us (Job 42:16). Our life's preservation is God's demonstrated faithfulness in adversity. Job suffered a while, then God restored, confirmed, strengthened, and established him (v. 17). Adversity tests faith and commitment to God, but as faith is fortified and commitment solidified, our blessings are verified. Surviving adversity is an indication that God's faithfulness is operating in your life. God always blesses us with more than we had as we remain faithful (v. 12). With God, the ending of a thing is always better than the beginning (v. 12). God's faithfulness can always be fully trusted in adversity.

During adverse circumstances of your life, how did you show your faithfulness to God? Where has God demonstrated faithfulness toward you?

Search the Scriptures

1. What does knowing that "no thought can be withholden from thee" cause you to think? Why?
2. How can you adjust what you think about God and His ways (Job 42:2)?
3. Reread Job 42:11. What does this passage suggest about the heart of Job concerning his brethren, sisters, and his acquaintances?
4. Should boundaries be given in these relationships because they abandoned and rejected him in his most vulnerable state?
5. How do you handle relationships when people hurt you?
6. Read Job 42:1–6 (for more details read the entire passage). What does this passage suggest about Job's relationship with God?
7. What can you infer about the faithfulness of God in adversity?
8. How should we respond when we experience Job-like circumstances?

Discuss the Meaning

It is easy to fall into thinking that God blesses us because we're good and punishment comes for some specific sin. However, this understanding does not allow for God's grace. Because of Jesus' completed work of redemption, namely His paying the price for our sins (death), we now live in the age of grace. The wages of sin is still death, but by grace through faith, we can all receive the gift of eternal life.

How does this knowledge affect your attitude toward sin?

Liberating Lesson

Adversity comes to all of us, but many of us view adversity as punishment. How could a loving and just God allow devastation?

Like Job, these questions are too wonderful for us. In our humanity, we struggle with the realities of adversity and God's allowing of the adversity. The outcomes of adversity are up to God; we are responsible for our responses. God allows specific circumstances because He desires specific outcomes. God's justice always prevails. From slavery to "Black Lives Matter" the circumstances have been adverse, yet God is faithful. God executes justice in His faithfulness. God selected Job, and He may select you as an active part of His justice. Like Job, we must pray purely and forgive simultaneously.

Application for Activation

Consider your own life. How might things have worked out differently had you showed faithfulness to God in the area instead of rejecting His counsel and wisdom? We know that “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). Has God been faithful in your life, when you were not? We see the faithfulness of both Job and God. Can we see your faithfulness to God in personal adversity? Ask God to bring to mind those you need restoration with during your times of adversity. Seek forgiveness for rejecting God’s counsel and wisdom in your life.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Job 42 comes after two speeches of God addressed to Job (Job 8:1–40:2; 40:6–41:34). In those speeches, God addressed Himself to the fact that Job had been presumptuous in his desire to dispute with God. The display from creation put Job in his place, but it has not yet dealt with Job’s flagrantly impious attitude. Job had levied a charge. In his reply to the first divine speech (40:3–5), Job has said that he stands by what he has previously argued, and he will not reiterate his case. Job’s response to the second divine speech is our text for today (42:1–6). Job is convinced of God’s majesty and wisdom. Job has three crucial remarks to make in the address. First, he acknowledges the omnipotence of God (v. 2). Second, Job accepts that he has intruded into the area of wonders in which he has no competence (v. 3). Third, now that Job has heard the utterances God has addressed personally to him (v. 5), he abandons his complaints against God together with his mourning, and he intends to resume his everyday life (v. 6).

1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said, 2 I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. 3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. 4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

Starting his response to God’s second speech, Job does not immediately retract what he has said; Job does not admit that God is in the right or that he is in the wrong. He does not confess to any sins or apologize for what he has said. He simply begins by affirming God’s omnipotence, something which, curiously, he had acknowledged all along. He accepts the argument of the divine speeches: he is a mere mortal, unfitted by capacity or knowledge for the management of the universe; as he has

said already, in comparison with Yahweh, he is of little account (40:4). Nothing is beyond God's ability. He also asserts that no purpose (KJV: thought) of God can be thwarted.

Job's second remark (v. 3) is a paraphrase of God's question, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2) followed by his response to it, making it quite explicit that he is responding formally to the challenge which God posted against him. By doing so, Job admits that he is guilty as charged. He has spoken about things that are far beyond his knowledge and experience.

Job again references God's words: "I will question you, and you shall answer me" has been spoken by Yahweh at the beginning of both his speeches (v. 4; cf. 38:3; 40:7). Obviously Job has been listening intently, as we all should when God speaks.

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

"I have heard of thee" (v. 5) indicates that Job's knowledge of God has been far too limited. He had been academic. His friends and religious teaching had told Job about God. He had passed this information to others—probably including his children—and engaged in a great deal of theoretical discussion about the nature of God. But the conceptions held by his friends were inadequate to meet his needs or fit his present circumstances. Those held by himself led him to make rebellious and blasphemous charges against God. Job had longed that he might see God in order to receive some kind of vindication of his position (19:24–27). That vision has been partly fulfilled in the visions of God that Job has now seen in the storm.

Already, Job has come to appreciate something about God that he had not known before. Through this trial, Job has come in some way face-to-face with God. What Job had known of God in the past was secondhand. Even so, Job had believed in God and lived for Him. But he had now been changed—"but now mine eye seeth thee." It is as if Job is saying that, through his experience of loss, abiding uncertainty, and unrelieved suffering—and his relentless turning toward God—he has come to "see" in a new way. It is this kind of seeing generated by way of anguished turning toward God that forms the basis of his repentance. Now Job has received personal experience of God. What Job saw physically is not essential. Like the crowd that followed Jesus due to the initial proclamation of the Samaritan woman (John 4:39–42), it is no longer hearsay truth that Job relies upon. He has been confronted by God on a Person-to-person basis.

6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Then comes the climax of the whole dispute between Job and God (v. 6). Job has definitely learned something about himself. Thus, he says, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The Hebrew word, *ma'as* (maw– OS) translated as abhor also means to spurn, contemn, or become loathsome. However, this is not the abject self-loathing of radical repentance that requires admitting known sins. Job never says: "Now, at last, I concede that I deserved that punishment." Connected with verse 3, Job here expresses regret at his foolish words, uttered hastily and in ignorance—a fault deserving correction, but not a wickedness deserving punishment. If he is sorry about what he said, repentance from that could be the spiritual growth and character formation Job's catastrophe was intended to promote, and Job now recognizes this.

From the very start, Job had erred in his response to his trial. He repents of his arrogance in impugning God's justice. He repents of the attitude whereby he simply demanded an answer as if such were owed him.

Job's reference to dust and ashes reminds us of Abraham's words when he was praying to God (Genesis 18:27). The expression "dust and ashes" shows that, as a humble suppliant, he knows his status. The words dust and ashes are very similar in Hebrew and they both refer to matters which so much resemble each other. Dust (Heb. *aphar*, *aw-FAR*) is the lightest particle of earth. Ashes (Heb. *epher*, *EH-fer*) are the residue of consumed substances. By these expressions he shows how deeply his soul was humbled in the presence of God. He who has high thoughts of himself must have low thoughts of the dignity of the divine nature, of the majesty of God, and the sinfulness of sin.

10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Verses 7–9 show God was displeased with Job's friends. God is concerned only with the false things they had said about Him. They had declared that Job's sufferings proved he had offended God and brought them on himself. This was not the right thing to say about God. Therefore, God told Job to make intercession for his friends, so that God does not punish them for their terrible advice and flawed theology. Job does so.

In verse 10, Job is restored. The word "captivity" translates the Hebrew word *shebuth*, (*sheh-BOOTH*) which commonly means "exile."

However, it also has the meaning "to restore someone to his or her former state of prosperity," welfare, and happiness. Job's fortunes are restored—his possessions are doubled, and his friends bring presents to him. Job's restored divine blessings are not contingent on Job's confession of his own sins, contrary to what Bildad predicted (8:7), but are granted by God after he obediently prayed for his friends. One could imagine how hard and painful it was for Job to pray for his friends after their harsh words to him. Nevertheless, Job overcomes evil with good (cf. Romans 12:21). Job was not motivated by self-interest as the adversary charged to begin with (1:9–11). He cares for his friends, even when they have not taken good care of him.

11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

God has now restored the vertical relationship between Himself and Job, and He has healed the horizontal relationships between Job and other people who were once close to him. During this time of need, Job's family and friends abandoned him (19:13–19), but now they return to fellowship with him. Job does not seem to begrudge these fair weather friends. He welcomes them to his house and dines with them. Even though Job's crisis is over, he still has to deal with the considerable loss that he has incurred, especially the death of his children. His solitude and pain are replaced by community and rejoicing, as Job receives belated consolation and encouragement. Job's wide circle of family and friends also give him a bit of money to help him back to his feet. No one feels obligated to give lots, but each is able to give a piece of the funds Job lacks.

12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

Job was tested to the limit, but now God restores his fortune twofold, doubling the number of Job's flocks and herds from before his affliction (1:3). It is as though he has to be given some consolation for an unwarranted trial initiated as a wager between God and his adversary in the council of heaven

(1:6–12). Yet this act of restoration is an act of God's grace, not a reward for Job's goodness, integrity, or honesty with God. Job now enjoys greater blessings in the post-disaster period of his life.

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. 15 And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

The number of Job's children is not doubled, though the beauty of his daughters is mentioned probably as a public indication of special blessing. By giving his daughters an inheritance with their brothers, Job demonstrates that he continued a policy of justice and equity in his life, which went beyond the practice of the ancient world (cf. Job 31) and even some contemporary societies. In Israel, for example a daughter would only inherit the property of her father if there was no male heir (cf. Numbers 21:7–8).

The names of Job's three daughters probably represent a symbol of beauty and love. Jemimah means "turtle dove." The dove was a symbol of beauty and love. Keziah is cassia, an intensely aromatic spice made from the cassia tree (most commercial cinnamon is cassia). Cassia is one of the perfumes scenting the clothes of the queen (Psalm 45:8). Keren-happuch seems to indicate "horn of antimony," a black powder used as an eye cosmetic (or as anointing oil, 1 Samuel 16:1, 13; 1 Kings 1:39). The three names invoke three of the senses: Jemimah the hearing, Keziah the taste or the smell, and Keren-happuch the sight.

16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. 17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

The total length of Job's life marks him a patriarchal figure from that heroic era when people survived at least twice an average life span. Thus, Job is to be compared with Abraham, who lived 175 years and, like Job, died an old man sated with days. The precise expression "full of days" is used elsewhere only of Isaac (Genesis 35:29) and of David (1 Chronicles 29:28); Abraham died in a "good old age, an old man, and full of years" (Genesis 25:8); Jehoiada the priest "waxed old, and was full of days" (2 Chronicles 24:15). Job's death, at such an age, is no calamity, but the natural and even desired end of a full and satisfying life. There will be ritual lamenting over him, of course, as on every occasion of death. Still, this last little sentence in the story of Job has its profundity: death is the completion of Job, as it is of his story, and the end of his life is not a failing or a fading or a weakening but a filling up to the brim, a fullness, even satiation of days.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Abraham Pleads for Justice
(Genesis 18:20–33)

TUESDAY

Trust in God's Coming Justice
(Psalm 37:1–11)

WEDNESDAY

The Lord Loves Justice
(Psalm 37:21–28, 34–40)

THURSDAY

Righteousness, Peace, and Joy
(Romans 14:13–23)

FRIDAY

Jesus Demonstrates God's Justice
(Matthew 12:1–13)

SATURDAY

Job Cries Out for a Redeemer
(Job 19:23–29)

SUNDAY

Job's Fortunes Are Restored
(Job 42:1–11)