I. Introduction to the Book of Job
   A. Its Date:
      1. Exactly when the author of Job lived and wrote is unknown.
      2. The classical Hebrew of the prologue seems to place the author after 1500 BC.
      3. The final form of the book may not have appeared until the era of Solomon, or somewhat later when Hebrew literature reached its zenith.
      4. The date of the writing of the book is not to be confused with the date of the history narrated.
         a. The events the author narrates belong to the early patriarchal period, as is evident from features like Job’s longevity, revelation by theophany outside the Abrahamic covenant, the nomadic status of the Chaldeans, and early social and economic practices.
   B. Its Author:
      1. The author is unknown, but was probably a skillful Israelite poet from within the covenant community.
      2. The author probably used sources from patriarchal times, including some from Job himself in composing the book.
   C. Its Characteristics:
      1. The literary format of Job is not unique among documents from the ancient Near East.
         a. Like other literature from the ancient Near East:
            1. The book of Job wrestles with the complexities of suffering as they relate to the influence and activity of God (or the gods) and the piety or impiety of the sufferer.
            2. Job consists of a prose prologue, a poetic dialogue, and finally a prose epilogue.
         b. While there are many similarities between Job and various extra-Biblical wisdom pieces, Job differs altogether from the non-Biblical wisdom literature because *it represents the unique message of redemptive revelation, the wisdom of God which makes foolish the wisdom of men.*
            1. There is also no other literary work that deals with the problem of human suffering in light of the transcendence and goodness of God that approaches the theological depth, literary sophistication, and practical application of the book of Job.
      2. Jobs language presents many challenges to the translator because of its poetic grammar and its rich vocabulary.
         a. In its literary structure, considered as a whole, it is unique—a masterpiece universally acclaimed.
      3. The wordiness of Job, his three counselors, and Elihu would have been considered eloquent in their ancient, Near-Eastern culture.
      4. The book of Job stands with Ecclesiastes as a kind of anti-wisdom.
         a. It counters the traditional wisdom as it wrestles with the difficult question of suffering alongside the affirmation that God is just and good.
   D. Its Covenantal Setting:
      1. There are clear evidences of a covenantal relationship between God and Job.
         a. Implicit presence of God’s revelation of Himself/His will via theophany

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1. “Theophany” = an appearance of God (often dramatized via nature) that is perceptible to human sight
b. Offering of animal sacrifices as an atoning means of grace
c. Presence of bless and curse language
d. Presence of an ancient Near-Eastern form of a retroactive oath of covenant allegiance (Ch. 31)
e. Use of the term “Almighty” (Heb. “shadday”), which served as the patriarchs’ covenant name for God (Gen 17:1)
   1. This term appears 48 times in the OT, and 31 of the 48 usages are in the book of Job.
2. The name “Almighty” (Heb. “shadday”) reveals God as:
   a. Strong and powerful, able to lay waste, to desolate
   b. A powerful deity who is able to perform whatever He asserts
   c. An almighty, all-powerful source of blessing
d. A covenant benefactor that is all-sufficient, enough, a Mighty Promiser of blessings
3. “El shadday” served as the patriarchs’ covenant name for “God,” and continued as such until the time of Moses, when a further revelation took place (Exod. 6:3).
f. Use of the term “LORD” (Heb. “Yahweh”) the covenant name of God, throughout the book of Job (32 total usages).
   1. The 32 usages of “Yahweh” in Job:
      a. 18 usages in chs. 1, 2
      b. 1 usage in ch. 12
      c. 13 usages in chs. 38-42
   2. The covenantal name “Yahweh” reveals God as the self-existing, self-sustaining, self-determining eternal one who will be with His people forever.
   3. The presence of the covenantal name “Yahweh” in the book of Job indicates that God was in a covenant relation with Job in love and mercy from first to last.

E. Its Lesson To The OT Jewish Church:
1. A foreigner, Job lived “in the land of Uz,” an extended region east of Judah (1:1a, 3c).
   a. Job is not identified as a Hebrew but as one of the children of the East (1:3), a term applied broadly to those living east of Canaan.
   b. Three quotes from John Calvin regarding God’s purpose for using this foreigner as a lesson to the Jewish church:
      1. “. . . the Holy Spirit has dictated this book to this use, namely, that the Jews might know that God has had a people, who have served Him, although they were not separated from the rest of the world, and although they had not the sign of circumcision, who nevertheless have walked in purity of life.”
      2. “[Although Job was a foreigner, yet] we see in what integrity he lived, and how he served God, not only with respect to conversing with men in uprightness and equity; but by having a pure religion which was not polluted with the idolatries and superstitions of unbelievers.”
      3. “. . . we see the intention of the Holy Spirit: namely, that the Jews might have a mirror and a pattern to recognize how they had to observe the doctrine of salvation which was given them, since this man who was of a foreign nation had so preserved himself in such purity.”

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c. Through the book of Ezekiel, we may deduce that the name of Job was renowned among the people of Israel.
   1. Job is mentioned in Ezekiel as being on a par spiritually with Noah and Daniel (Ezk 14:14, 20).
      a. All three men were notoriously righteous.
   2. Job’s place as a foreigner historically anticipates that there would be godly, loyal covenant-servants gathered into the kingdom of God from other nations (cf. Acts 10:22).
      a. In addition, the loyal covenant-servants gathered into the kingdom of God from other nations would be equals and not subordinate spiritual step-children (cf. Gal 3:28, 29).

F. Its Themes:
1. The book of Job raises questions regarding the relationship of personal suffering to personal guilt.
   a. For example:
      1. Can anyone assume a one-to-one relationship between the amount of suffering that Job experienced and his guilt?
      2. Do people always suffer according to the number of sins they commit in this world?
   b. This book deals with the subject of suffering alongside the affirmation that God is just and good with a frankness that is often baffling.
      1. God’s purpose in Job’s suffering is complex, involving more than one question of faith.

2. The book of Job also settles questions regarding the relationship of personal suffering to personal guilt.
   a. Its message: While in this fallen world there is ever and always—somehow—a connection between sin, suffering, and death (e.g. sin’s entrance into this world is clearly connected to the origin of suffering and death in this world), such doesn’t necessarily mean that when a person suffers it is always because of some sin(s) in his or her life.
      1. A theme that obviously anticipates the suffering of an innocent Christ.

3. Job is given the high calling of remaining true even when everything is taken away, and grim suffering becomes his daily lot.
   a. Will Job do as the Adversary predicts, and curse God to His face?
      1. This is the question that drives the moving drama of the book as Job loses his initial confidence and sinks into despair.
      2. If Job remains faithful, God through Job will show that the Adversary is a liar.

4. The book of Job uses problems associated with “theodicy” as a means in its revelation of the pathway of redemptive wisdom.
   a. The term “theodicy” has to do with a vindication of God’s divine attributes, particularly holiness and justice, in establishing or allowing the existence of physical and moral evil.
   b. Dr. Kline: “Through the medium of the problem of theodicy, the book of Job sounds anew the central religious demand of the Covenant. It calls men to unreserved consecration to their sovereign Lord. And this way of the Covenant, this consecration to the transcendent, incomprehensible Creator, it identifies with the way of wisdom. Thereby it presents the church with its proper testimony to redemptive revelation before the wisdom schools of the world.”

G. Its Interpretation:
1. An important hemeneutical consideration:
   a. Neither Job’s emotional raging nor his friends’ subjective philosophizing should be used as a basis for constructing normative OT or Christian theology.
1. Consider the disparity between 3:13-19 and 10:21, 22:
   a. In the first passage life beyond the grave is described as a place of
      peace and rest, but life beyond the grave in the second passage is
      depicted as a land of darkness.

2. The rule of interpretation should be that when Job or the counselors are in
   agreement with normative theology we accept them, but in the dramatic flow of
   the book (which is filled with the accounts of Job’s emotional experiences and
   his counselors’ subjective assumptions), neither Job nor his friends can be relied
   on as a source for theological formulations.

II. Outline of Job’s Structure and Themes (extracted from the Geneva Study Bible)

1. Prologue (1:1-2:13)
   A. Job Blessed and Blameless (1:1-5)
   B. Job Tested (1:6-2:13)
      1. Satan Accuses Job (1:6-12)
      2. Job’s Commitment Despite Tragedy (1:13-22)
      3. Satan Accuses Job Again (2:1-6)
      4. Job’s faith Despite Personal Suffering (2:7-10)
      5. The Arrival of the Counselors (2:11-13)

2. Dialogue (chs. 3-27)
   A. Job Laments His Birth (ch. 3)
   B. The First Cycle of Speeches (chs. 4-14)
      1. Eliphaz (chs. 4; 5)
      2. Job’s Reply (chs. 6; 7)
      3. Bildad (ch. 8)
      4. Job’s Reply (chs. 9; 10)
      5. Zophar (ch. 11)
      6. Job’s Reply (chs. 12-14)
   C. The Second Cycle of Speeches (chs. 15-21)
      1. Eliphaz (ch. 15)
      2. Job’s Reply (chs. 16; 17)
      3. Bildad (ch. 18)
      4. Job’s Reply (ch. 19)
      5. Zophar (ch. 20)
      6. Job’s Reply (ch. 21)
   D. The Third Cycle of Speeches (chs. 22-26)
      1. Eliphaz (ch. 22)
      2. Job’s Reply (chs. 23; 24)
      3. Bildad (ch. 25)
      4. Job’s Reply (ch. 26)
   E. Job’s Closing Discourse (ch. 27)

3. Interlude on Wisdom (ch. 28)

4. Monologues (chs. 29-41)
   A. Job’s Final Oration (chs. 29-31)
      1. Past Blessing, Honor, and Personal Benevolence (ch. 29)
      2. Present Dishonor and Suffering and No Benevolence
      3. A Protestation of Innocence Under Sanctions and Oath (ch. 31)
   B. Elihu’s Speeches (chs. 32-37)
      1. Apology for Speaking (32:1-5)
      2. The First Speech (32:6-33:33)
      3. The Second Speech (ch. 34)
      4. The Third Speech (ch. 35)

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5. The Fourth Speech (chs. 36; 37)
   C. God’s Responses (38:1-42:6)
      1. God’s First Discourse (38:1-40:2)
      2. Job Humbled (40:3-5)
      3. God’s Second Discourse (40:6-41:34)
      4. Job Repentant (42:1-6)

5. Epilogue (42:7-17)
   A. The Counselors Rebuked (42:7-9)
   B. Job Restored (42:10-17)

III. Outline of Job’s Structure and Themes (Dr. Kline’s outline extracted from the Wycliffe Bible Commentary)
   A. Desolation: The Trial of Job’s Wisdom (1:1-2:10)
      1. Job’s wisdom described (1:1-5)
      2. Job’s wisdom denied and displayed (1:6-2:10)
         a. The enmity of Satan (1:6-12)
         b. The integrity of Job (1:13-22)
         c. The persistence of Satan (2:1-6)
         d. The patience of Job (2:7-10)
   B. Complaint: The Way of Wisdom Lost (2:11-3:26)
      1. The coming of the wise men (2:11-13)
      2. The impatience of Job (3:1-26)
      1. The Verdicts of Men (4:1-37:24)
         a. First Cycle of Debate (4:1-14:22)
            1. First discourse of Eliphaz (4:1-37:24)
            2. Job’s reply to Eliphaz (6:1-7:21)
            3. First discourse of Bildad (8:1-22)
            4. Job’s reply to Bildad (9:1-10:22)
            5. First discourse of Zophar (11:1-20)
            6. Job’s reply to Zophar (12:1-14:22)
         b. Second Cycle of Debate (15:1-21:34)
            2. Job’s second reply to Eliphaz (16:1-17:16)
            3. Second discourse of Bildad (18:1-21)
            4. Job’s second reply to Bildad (19:1-29)
            5. Second discourse of Zophar (20:1-29)
            6. Job’s second reply to Zophar (21:1-34)
         c. Third Cycle of Debate (22:1-31:40)
            1. Third discourse of Eliphaz (22:1-30)
            3. Third discourse of Bildad (25:1-6)
            4. Job’s third reply to Bildad (26:1-14)
            5. Job’s instruction of the silenced (27:1-28:28)
            6. Job’s final protest (29:1-31:40)
      2. The Voice of God (38:1-41:34)
         a. The divine challenge (38:1-40:2)
Reflections on the Book of Job

Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

b. Job’s submission (40:3-5)
c. The divine challenge renewed (40:6-41:34)

D. Confession: The Way of Wisdom Regained (42:1-6)

E. Restoration: The Triumph of Job’s Wisdom (42:7-17)

1. Job’s wisdom vindicated (42:7-9)
2. Job’s wisdom blessed (42:10-17)

IV. Desolation: The Trial of Job’s Wisdom (1:1-2:10)

A. Job’s wisdom and prosperity (1:1-5)

1. Although Job was a sinful man, he was a man of eminent integrity (1:1 cf. 13:26; 14:16, 17).
   a. The Hebrew word for “perfect” in 1:1 denotes genuine, sincere religious devotion. (also the same word used in 1:8; 2:3; 8:20; 9:20, 21, 22).
   1. “Perfect” and “upright” does not denote sinless perfection but straightforward integrity, specifically, covenant fidelity (cf. Gen 17:1, 2).
   a. Dr. Kline: “The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, was the hallmark of Job. The wellspring of his life and character was the covenantal religion of faith in the Christ of promise, ‘who of God is made unto us wisdom.’”
   b. Job was “perfect” and “upright” in that there was an honest harmony between Job’s profession and his life.
   c. No mere moralist, Job recognized, as special redemptive revelation had made clear, that there was no remission of sins without the shedding of sacrificial blood (1:5).
   d. Job did not claim sinlessness, but he did affirm that all of his sins had been dealt with by God.
      1. Job knew that God pardoned sins and did not hold them against him (7:20, 21).
      2. Job affirmed strongly his righteous state before the Lord, meaning of course, a righteousness that was established on the basis of his faith (13:18).
      3. Job also seemed fully confident that this precious doctrine of righteousness which he held to would be vindicated in the end (17:9), and that his own righteous stand before God, in faith, would stand the test of God and be proven (23:10).
      4. Though Job stressed the integrity of his former life (i.e., his honest commitment to covenant godliness and righteousness), he never denies that he was a sinner.

2. God Himself openly acknowledged Job’s pious covenant fidelity (1:8; 2:3; 42:7).
   a. Piously conscientious regarding his family’s spiritual needs, the patriarch Job, like Abraham, filled the role of priest for the family (cf. Gen 15:9, 10), consecrating his children to the Lord.
      1. It was Job’s “regular custom” to diligently attend to his family’s redemptive needs (1:5).
   3. Job was also very blessed of God materially; he was said to be “the greatest man among all the people of the East” (1:3c).
      a. Job possessed several things that would have been perceived as distinguishing marks of great blessedness and prosperity in the ancient world:

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1. He had 10 children, 7 of them sons (1:2).
2. He had much livestock—wealth (1:3a).
3. He had a multitude of servants (1:3b).

B. Job’s wisdom denied and displayed (1:6-2:10)

1. Despite Job’s eminent integrity and his covenant relationship with God, his faith was severely tested.

   a. A divine council convened in heaven, a royal court with the Sovereign seated on His throne amid his celestial servants (1:6).

      1. Dr. Scott: “Most have concluded that they [i.e. the ‘sons of God’] were some kind of angelic beings. However, the term ‘sons of God’ in Scripture generally refers to believers among mankind (Gen 6:2-4; Jn 1:12; etc.). These may have been those who had already died in faith and who were in some sense in the presence of God.”

      2. However, all things considered, the phrase “sons of God” in 1:6 probably refers to divine beings, celestial creatures—angels (cf. 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Isa 14:12).

         a. By God’s command, the angels present themselves before God’s throne to receive His commands and give an account of their negotiations.

         b. Satan is among those summoned to appear before God’s throne to give an account.

      1. Dr. Scott: “It is surprising to see Satan also in such an assembly. Scripture seems to imply some sense in which Satan was allowed in God’s presence prior to Jesus’ work of redemption. After that, he was said to be cast out of heaven and confined to earth (see Lk 10:18 cf. Rev 12:7-10; Jn 12:31; Isa 14:12-20; Ezek 28:2-9).”

   c. In 1:6-2:13 the Lord reveals the developments in heaven and their consequences on earth that led to Job’s suffering.

   b. The Lord, after hearing of Satan’s reconnaissance survey of the earth (wherein Satan would have found the vast majority of men serving him), sovereignly drew Satan’s attention to Job’s unique covenant loyalty (1:6-8).

      1. Job is honored by God, who approves of him as a true and faithful servant (i.e., one who keeps the solemn oaths of the covenant relationship).

      2. It is God, not Satan, who singles out Job for testing.

         a. God glorifies Himself by pointing to Job as a noteworthy creation of His redemptive grace (a spiritual trophy).

   c. Satan responded by attacking Job’s character, and accusing him before God of an impure, ulterior religious motive (1:9-11).

      1. In the temptation in Eden, Satan disparaged God to man; here he disparages man to God.

         a. Obviously, Satan hates it when the saints wisely and sincerely love God.

      2. Essence of the accusation: “Job only loves You because of what You have done in blessing, prospering, and protecting him.”

         a. “Job doesn’t really love You (the person) simply and purely for who You are (i.e. for ‘nought’ or ‘nothing’).”

         b. “Job’s godly wisdom and covenant loyalty are not genuine.”

         c. “Job’s apparent devotion is that of calculated self-interest.”
3. The satanic assault on the integrity of Job is ultimately an assault on the integrity of God: God has allegedly bribed the profane Job to act pious.
   a. The opportunity given to Job by this trial, therefore, is not so much to vindicate himself as to justify God.

d. Satan is then permitted by the Lord (with strict limitations) to severely test and afflict Job (1:12).

e. Job suddenly and violently lost his livestock, servants, and children (1:13-19).

f. Despite Job’s many tragic and compounding losses, Job’s commitment to God stood amazingly firm; his sincere love for God was clearly proven (1:20-22).
   1. Job responded to God’s sovereign, afflicting hand of providence with amazing covenant fidelity.
      a. Job’s loving, faith-filled response to the Lord reflects an astounding depth of spiritual wisdom, dignity, and beauty.
      b. In the face of all his significant losses, Job avoided the fierce temptation to charge God with wrong.
         1. He was tempted to do what he feared his children might do (1:5).
      c. In the face of all his significant losses, Job simultaneously expressed a profound depth of legitimate grief, unwavering faith, and sincere worship.
      d. Job inadvertently proved that Satan’s previous accusation was dead wrong.
      e. Initially, any “whys?” Job had (and surely he had some) were asked in a spiritual atmosphere of holy submission versus unholy accusation.
         a. Anecdote: Moving painting of Jacob’s face ambivalently looking up in submissive grief, with the bloody coat of many colors in his hands
      f. Consider Job the wise man!
         1. Not wise because he comprehended the mystery of his sufferings, but because, not comprehending, he feared God still.

g. Subsequently, the divine council convened in heaven again (2:1).
   1. By God’s command, again the angels presented themselves before God’s throne to receive His commands and give an account of their negotiations.
   2. Again, Satan is among those summoned to appear before God’s throne to give an account.

h. Again, the Lord, after hearing of Satan’s reconnaissance survey of the earth (wherein Satan would have again found the vast majority of men serving him), sovereignly drew Satan’s attention to Job’s unique covenant piety—which was quite nobly in tact, even after Job had experienced terrible sufferings (2:2-3).
   1. Job is double-honored by God, who approves of him again as a true and faithful covenant servant.
   2. Again, it is God, not Satan, who singles out Job for testing (2:3a).

i. Again, Satan attacks Job’s character, accusing him before God of an impure, ulterior religious motive (2:4, 5).
   1. Essence of the accusation: “Job’s covenant loyalty and love only remain in tact because You have not touched his body with affliction.”
Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

a. Again, “Job doesn’t really love You (the person) simply and purely for who You are (i.e. for ‘nought’ or ‘nothing’).”

2. Thus, further developments in heaven, and another round of accusations from Satan, precede more suffering for Job on earth.

j. Satan is then permitted by the Lord (with strict limitations) to severely test Job by afflicting him bodily (2:6-8).

1. Job’s life must be spared, but he is covered with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

a. Modern medicine is not unanimous in its diagnosis of Job’s disease, but according to the prognosis in Job’s day, it was apparently hopeless.

b. The horrible symptoms included and involved inflamed eruptions accompanied by intense itching (2:7, 8), maggots in ulcers (7:5), erosion of the bones and constant pain day and night (30:17), blackening and falling off of skin accompanied with a fever (30:30), weight loss (17:7; 19:20), bad breath (19:17), and terrifying nightmares (7:14)—though some of these symptoms may possibly be attributed to the prolonged exposure that followed the onset of the disease.

1. Job’s whole body, it seems, was rapidly smitten with these loathsome, painful symptoms.

2. Though Satan had been obliged to spare his victim’s life, Job probably thought his death was imminent.

k. Seeing Job’s severe state, and experiencing her own derived suffering from it, Job’s wife then issued perhaps the deepest emotional wound Job would experience through this entire ordeal (2:9-10a).

1. She left Job emotionally, and in doing so, she betrays her own spiritual apostasy.

2. The “foolishness” Job referred to regarding his wife’s words is not a lack of intellectual keenness but rude, arrogant lawlessness and godlessness (cf. Ps 14:1).

3. The Hebrew word for “foolish” or “fool” has to do with faithlessness and religious apostasy.

a. Job’s words therefore reflect more of an ethical judgment than an intellectual one.

l. Despite Job’s many tragic losses, the devastating loss of his health, and the unsettling loss of his wife’s emotional/spiritual support, Job’s covenant commitment to God continued to stand amazingly firm—and again his love for God was clearly proven (2:10b).

1. Again, Job’s loyal and loving response to the Lord reflected an astounding depth of spiritual wisdom, dignity, and beauty.

2. Again, in the face of all his losses, Job avoided the fierce temptation to charge God with wrong.

3. Again, Job responded to God’s sovereign, afflicting hand of providence with unwavering faith, implicitly declaring Him praiseworthy.

4. Again, Job inadvertently proved that Satan’s previous accusation was dead wrong.

5. Again, any “whys?” Job had (and surely he had more and more of them) were asked in a holy spiritual atmosphere of submission versus unholy accusation.

a. Consider, again, Job the wise man!
1. Not wise because he comprehended the mystery of his sufferings, but because, not comprehending, he feared God still.

C. Dr. Kline: “The primary purpose of Job’s suffering, unknown to him, was that he should stand before men and angels as a trophy of the saving might of God, an exhibit of that divine wisdom which is the archetype, source, and foundation of true human wisdom. . . . The angels saw the world trembling with every tremor of Job’s spirit. For if the redemptive power of God could not preserve Job in the fear of God, not only Job but the world was lost to satanic chaos.”

1. God, who glorifies Himself in all His works, had decreed Job’s trial for the praise of His redemptive wisdom.

D. Misc. Redemptive/Historical/Eschatalogical observations:
1. Called of God to walk the pathway of redemptive wisdom, Job was the epitome of virtue, the manifest exemplar of righteousness, the deeply devoted covenant-servant who was plunged into the depths of suffering.
   a. Such historically anticipated two eschatalogical layers of spiritual reality (eschatology = the study of the last days/things):
      1. In part, it anticipated the unreserved consecration of the Christ—the loyal covenant-servant who exemplarily maintained the pathway of redemptive wisdom patiently and perfectly amid the depths of his many terrible earthly sufferings.
         a. Christ’s earthly sufferings involved several facets that seem inseparably and complexly woven together in the Scriptures.
            1. He not only suffered for His people vicariously (e.g. 1 Pet 2:24) and with His people sympathetically (e.g. Heb 4:15), but He also suffered before His people exemplarily (Mat 16:21-25; Phil 2:3-8).
                  1. These passages, of course, also involve the vicarious and sympathetic facets of Christ’s suffering—as, again, all the facets are inseparably and complexly woven together.
               b. He suffered before His people exemplarily as an exhibit of that divine wisdom which is the archetype, source, and foundation of true human wisdom (Isa 11:1, 2 cf. 1 Cor 1:18, 30).
                  1. These passages, of course, also involve the vicarious and sympathetic facets of Christ’s suffering—as all the facets are inseparably and complexly woven together.
            2. Job’s covenant loyalty, many sufferings, fierce temptations, patient endurance, intense faith-struggles, final vindication, and final restoration, in part, anticipate Christ’s exemplarily perfect passage through much earthly toil and suffering to future glory.
   2. In part, it also anticipated the unreserved consecration of Christ’s church—a virtuous body of loyal covenant-servants, who like imperfect Job, are also called to

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patiently maintain the pathway of redemptive wisdom amid a divinely-ordained age of great suffering. (cf. Jn 16:33b; Acts 14:22b; Rev 1:9; Jas 1:2-8, 12; 5:7-11; 1 Pet 2:21; Heb 12:1-3ff.)

a. All these passages (bold) contain a common Greek word, “hupomone”, that is translated in the English “steadfastness”, “endurance”, “perseverance”, or “patience”.
   1. In the NT, the word represents the characteristic of believers who are not swerved from their covenant loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.

b. The NT church is intimately identified with Christ and His cross, mirrors and shares his sufferings, and is also called to tread the hard pathway of redemptive wisdom (Luk 9:23; 1 Pet 4:12-19; Rom 8:17-25).

c. Job’s covenant loyalty, many sufferings, fierce temptations, patient endurance, intense faith-struggles, final vindication, and final restoration, in part, anticipate the church’s Christ-like, imitative passage through much earthly toil and suffering to future glory.

V. Complaint: The Way of Wisdom Lost (2:11-3:26)

A. As Job settled into the bitter reality of his sufferings, his inner struggles must have seemed unbearable.
   1. Illustration: Like a man in agonizing discomfort from a pinched nerve whose finger is also painfully held to a flame
   2. What do you suppose constituted Job’s biggest moment-by-moment problem? (charged feelings!!!!!!!)

B. After Job’s second crisis (involving the loss of his health and all its consequent temptations), and before the arrival of his three friends, there was probably an interval of some months (7:3a), during which Job’s spirit was stretched taut by the unrelenting distress in his flesh and the ravages of the foul disease which disfigured him beyond recognition (cf. 2:12a).

C. Having heard of Job’s adversity, Job’s friends (sages of renown) arrive to comfort him in the midst of his terrible suffering (2:11-13).
   a. Consistent with ancient Near-Eastern protocol, the behavior of Job’s three friends (mourning, lifting their voices in lamentation, weeping, tearing their robes, sprinkling dust on their heads, sitting on the ground seven days and nights, and not speaking a word to Job) expresses the most intense form of grief they could display.
      1. They maintained an appropriate vigil of silence.
      2. Near-Eastern protocol for comforting the grieved demanded that Job (the person facing the grief) should be the first to speak.

D. Job impatiently expresses his grief.
   1. After a week or so, Job breaks the silence with a fiercely emotional lamentation (3:1-26).
      a. Job’s many burdens, now mentally and emotionally digested over time, here total up in his experience.
      b. He gives vent to the swelling fullness of his feelings of frustration and confusion.
      c. He experiences a catharsis; that is, his deep grief is brought to the forefront of his consciousness and afforded expression, resulting in the purging of his pent-up emotions.
         1. Amid this catharsis, Job’s many complex, charged feelings step, as it were, impatiently in front of his faith.
         2. Obviously, the more intently Job sought an explanation for his circumstances, the more anxiously aware he became of the wall of mystery encompassing him.
            a. Inordinately seeking the “why?”, he soon lost his way.
b. Obsessed by the dread that God had abandoned him, he cursed his forsaken existence.
c. Job here perceives himself as one hemmed in by God with darkness and disfavor.

3. Extremely frustrated, Job does not curse God, but he does goes so far as to implicitly question God’s wisdom by cursing the day of his birth (3:1).
   a. He questions God’s wisdom in giving him life (3:11, 12).
   b. He questions God’s wisdom in sustaining his life (3:20-26).
   c. Knowing nothing about the heavenly events that led to all his sufferings, Job’s “whys?” take an impatient step toward accusing God of unwisely mishandling his life and therefore, by implication, of unwisely mismanaging the universe.

1. Such is at the bottom of his understandable although inexcusable overstatements and exaggerations.

E. Thus far, we’ve observed both the open manner in which Job grieved (Job 1:20-22) and the public, cultural custom of comforting the grieved observed by his acquaintances (Job 2:12, 13).

1. How important is it for believers to have some outlet amid Christ’s church for the horrendous grief they can potentially experience in this world?
   a. Anecdote: Woman who, after attending several Bible studies in our home, took a picture of our old coffee table the day we moved, a place where she had simply been given interpersonal permission to be emotionally honest about her grief.
   b. Amid the vulnerability of one’s horrendous grief, a trustworthy, competent consoler who is deeply empathic, emotionally bold, and skilled in managing complex grief is more precious than a pound of pure gold.

   a. Is there any legitimate place for ever feeling sorry for one’s self (Phil 4:4-7 cf. Matt 26:38; Lk 22:44)?
   b. What are the long-term consequences of emotionally going around one’s grief instead of going through it?

   a. Of all these responses, which do you suppose becomes most important to the person, like Job, who is overcome with complex grief?

F. Job lost his way after a long period of devastating loss and severe, chronic pain, but consider how easy it is for believers (still battling remaining sin) to do the same even after briefer and lesser forms of suffering.

1. It is very common for believers to implicitly (perhaps even inadvertently) accuse God of unwisely mishandling their lives and therefore, by implication, of unwisely mismanaging the universe:
   a. When the things that give them comfort and security in this world (jobs, $, relationships etc.) are providentially jerked out from under them and not quickly replaced;
   b. When the expectations attached to their dreams, plans, and goals are met with successive providential disappointments;
   c. When a day or a week seems to spin out of control, resulting in compounding providential inconveniences and/or expenses;

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Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

1. When other people somehow prove untrustworthy, emotionally betraying them, and perhaps treating them as insignificant and unworthy of being loved.

2. Even our legitimate grief is usually mixed with some portion of our remaining sin. In fact, the godly believer’s acute sense of sin under affliction is most likely among the heaviest burdens he or she will bear.

   a. The “mind set on the flesh” that is “hostile” toward God (Rom 8:7) may have been mortally wounded by grace in each of our conversions, but it is not yet completely dead.

3. Consequently, we all desperately need the patience and understanding of other believers who wisely empathize with our suffering without getting inordinately side-tracked by the sins that ooze out of our grief (Eccl 3:1-8).

   a. The absence of such patience and understanding may lie at the bottom of why many believers conceal their deep grief.

G. The spiritual path of the way of wisdom God has revealed in the book of Job not only applies to those believers who grieve in this world but also to those who visit and attend their grief.

1. Hence, believers would do well to remember several things as they comfort one another amid heart-wrenching seasons of grief:

   a. Consider that the Scriptures clearly teach that Christ’s church is not only a spiritual school, it is also a spiritual hospital (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 2:42; Eph 4:14-16; 1 Cor 13:2; Rom 12:15; Gal 6:2; Phil 1:9-11).

      1. God has designed that Biblical love should flow from Biblical knowledge.
      2. God has defined love in the Scriptures as intrinsically empathic (e.g. Matt 22:39).
      3. Consider the spiritual beauty and usefulness of a local body of believers that glorifies God by an orthodox pursuit of both truth and love (1 Pet 1:22; Jn 13:35).

   b. Realize that other people in your life desperately need you to be there for them.

      1. Anecdote: One night a small boy, troubled with nightmares, cried out for his father. The father came to his room, talked to him, hugged him reassuringly, and tucked him in. But no sooner had he returned to his bed than his son called out again. This time the father turned on a night-light and left the bedroom door open. His son still wasn’t comforted, however. Finally, the father sat on the bed next to his son and said, “Don’t be afraid. You’re not alone—God is here.” The little boy thought about this. Then looking up at his father, he said, “Yeah, but right now I think I need someone with skin on.”

   c. Understand that being skillfully empathic is a means of God’s using you that will inevitably require concentrated effort and practice on your part.

      1. In the presence of a person’s deep grief, an inexperienced consoler may, at first, feel uncomfortable (like a man walking in the unfamiliar environment of the moon) or awkward (like a young child learning to independently ride a bicycle).

         a. At times grieving people can be very complex to figure out.
Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

b. God’s grace along with your practice and experience will overcome such daunting obstacles.

2. How would you feel/respond if you were called on to be the first friend to visit Job in his horrendous grief? (Mk 14:40)

3. How would you pray for Job? (patient endurance of his faith? shameless persistence in his prayers?)

d. Assume that even the most godly, mature, seasoned believer struggles through sin and unbelief to trust God in seasons of severe affliction and grief (Job—ch. 3ff.).

1. In this stage of kingdom life, the church (like Job) has been wisely called of God to suffer before it enters glory (Acts 14:22; Jn 16:33).

e. Acknowledge and accept that every individual emotionally processes grief differently.

f. Resist the temptation to ignore and minimize a person’s grief-born feelings while at the same time fixing your attention on their grief-born overstatements, exaggerations, and misaligned thoughts.

1. Refrain from technically auditing a grieving believer’s every word with a view to giving them a verbal front end alignment.

   a. His or her problem likely has much more to do with being full of raging, charged feelings than a lack of theological information.

   b. Empathetically enter into feelings first.

   c. Listen with your eyes and your ears in an effort to sincerely understand the grieving person’s feelings.

2. Dismiss the erroneous assumption that somehow you compromise before God if you sometimes sit in silence and refrain from immediately correcting an upset believer’s grief-born sins.

   a. Anecdote: Christian woman who, after 10 years of mistreatment and betrayal from her husband, emotionally exploded in our front room—her grief-born sins and all.

3. Realize that often godly believers, whose full feelings have been empathetically vented, will later correct their own rash, grief-born words.

4. Acknowledge the legitimacy of the grieving person’s charged feelings and emotionally reward his or her openness.

5. Prudently and considerately explore other options for relieving the grieving person—after his or her feelings have been shared.

   a. Often, by God’s wise providence, there may be nothing more you can do—accept this.

6. Save your caustic reproofs for the person who habitually and rebelliously wallows in their sins of grief—long after they have been empathetically heard (e.g. 2:9, 10).

7. Understand that few things deeply challenge our innate self-centeredness like attempting to empathetically listen to others.

   a. By default we are autobiographical; that is, our mental reflex is to utilize our own experiential frame of reference and then probe, interpret, evaluate, advise, and fix.

   b. Instead of seeking to enter into the thoughts and feelings world of others, we ever seek to draw people into our own “me,” “my,” and “I” world of thoughts and feelings.

   g. Realize that some grief people experience, while mitigated some in this life, will be a part of them until the New Creation.

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1. Acknowledge it as legitimate—let it be there.
2. Refrain from trying to talk them completely out of it.

h. Don’t underestimate the spiritual/emotional value of empathetic listening (i.e. entering and maintaining an emotional mode of understanding that patiently postpones making premature, interruptive judgments).
   1. Such makes people feel more relieved and unconditionally loved than any other thing you could possibly do for them.
      a. The highest expression of loving a grieving person is, more often than not, seeking to sincerely understand them.

2. Dismiss the assumption that mere listening constitutes doing nothing.
3. Realize that empathetic listening is always interpreted as effective caring.
   a. It involves exiting one’s own world and entering the world of others—emotionally absorbing another person’s deep, inner being.
   b. It gets to the real center of a grieving person’s inward pain.
   c. It acknowledges a person’s raging, charged feelings, and not merely his or her thoughts.
   d. It is always an appropriate interpersonal strategy when it comes to approaching another person’s complex grief.
   e. Understanding empathetic listening is very liberating; it alleviates that tension in us that prompts us to think we must always say or do something in the face of another’s grief.
      1. It frees us to “be”, and being something is doing something.

4. Understand that empathetically entering and shouldering another person’s deep grief is often simultaneously daunting, humbling, and honoring.
   1. Anecdote: Godly women who, days before her death, called me and essentially asked me (through her broken breathing/speaking) how to die by faith.

5. Empathetic listening always significantly improves any relationship.
   i. Refrain from speaking/doing unwise things simply because you feel helpless in the presence of someone’s deep feelings of grief (e.g. offering fixes, cures, a critique, platitudes, advice in the place of empathy).
      1. Anecdote: Well-intentioned woman who, after hearing of pressing afflictions I faced, attempted to publicly draw me into a spiritual chant for “Jesus’ help”.
   j. Be careful not to inordinately rush the emotional trust-levels in your relationship with other believers who grieve.
      1. A hurting person’s initial expressions of grief will probably not reflect what is really at the core of his or her inner pain.
         a. Most people refrain from diving into deep, troubled waters initially and instead choose to share peripheral issues first.
         b. Often the person hurting doesn’t even know exactly what lies at the root of all that he or she is experiencing.
         c. When there are low levels of trust, this interpersonal process is slow, but when there are high levels of trust, this interpersonal process is much quicker.
         d. Grieving people will usually disclose the true core of their pain and grief when they perceive their consoler as patiently empathic, trustworthy, and competent—safe.
1. Guard against impatiently plucking up the flowers to see how the roots are coming.
2. Self-denying patience, patience, patience will (usually), in time, bear the fruit of openness.
3. Acknowledge that such relationships require much time to deeply develop—maybe even years.

k. Patiently understand that many believers have learned, by bitter experience, to cloth themselves in a full array of thick emotional armor when they hurt and grieve.
   1. Anecdote: My present struggles with a time (several years ago) when I disclosed some very sacred, personal information to some “friends”. Later, I heard from an outsider that such was referred to as the time “when Jack cracked up”. Moreover, a few years later, I providentially discovered that many other outsiders came to know much about some very personal things I shared.

l. Keep confidential sharing confidential.
   1. Confidential doesn’t always mean the same thing as keeping secrets, although such is certainly part of confidentiality.
   2. Confidential means having confidence in someone’s discernment, discretion, and judgment.
      a. Normally that means the confidant does not even intimate knowledge of someone’s personal problem to others—except in extreme circumstances.

m. Give yourself spiritual/emotional permission to both privately grieve and sometimes openly grieve in the presence of trustworthy, empathic consolers.

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Oh for a Listener

Oh for a listener, a genuine friend to my soul;
Who pursues understanding, seeks no control;
Who feels what I’m feeling, sees what I see;
Who enters my world, expects nothing from me.

Oh for a good Samaritan, who passes not pain;
Who harps not what I know, heeds as I complain;
Whose eyes discern inner hurt, look inside of me;
Whose ways allow grief a place, empathetically.

Oh for a comforter, whose ears are my balm;
Whose silence refreshes, whose quiet makes calm;
Who hearing my cares, prompts a fresh start;
Who in my soul’s sanctum, vents my full heart.

Oh for a counselor, who knows the “me” within;
Who looks past my faults, forbears with my sin;

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VI. Judgment: The Way of Wisdom Darkened and Illuminated (4:1-41:34)

A. In three cycles of dialogue and disputation, Job and his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar debate (4:1-31:40).

1. Their debates center around the reasons for Job’s terrible predicament.

   a. In these three cycles of speeches, the writer of Job explores human perspectives on suffering.
   b. Each of these three counselors, who under the guise of friendship come to console and comfort Job, by God’s sovereign design, come to represent one of the prevalent views that people had about the cause and meaning of suffering in the world.

B. The atmosphere and content of Job’s dialoging with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar:

1. Because the dialogue of Job and his friends attaches to Job’s complaint rather than directly to his calamities, the friends’ mission assumes less the air of pastoral consolation than of judicial discipline, and this becomes increasingly so with each successive cycle of speeches.

   a. Hearing Job’s initial words, wherein his sin oozed out of his grief (ch. 3), the friends obviously concluded that Job had a rebellious attitude, and such betrayed the root of why he was suffering.
   b. The friends, ignoring Job’s months of patience and concentrating on his moment of impatience, sit as a council of insensitive elders to pass judgment on the clamorous offender.
   c. For seven days the wise men sat in appropriate silence. However, when Job complained, the comforters could not restrain reproof for a moment. They reproach Job as though he had given up at the first taste of adversity (esp. 4:3-6).

   1. For the whole course of the debate their sights were fixed on Job’s temporary lapse into impatience, while his earlier prolonged display of patience quite disappeared from their perspective.
   d. All the subsequent propositions put forward by the friends of Job tended to persuade him that he was a man reproved by God and that he was certainly mistaken in trusting that God should be favorably inclined toward him (e.g. 4:1-9; 8:1-7; 11:1, 13-20).

   1. The underlying assumption of their many accusations, insinuations, intimations, and innuendoes: “Good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people, and extreme calamity is the consequence of extreme wickedness.”

   a. “People only maintain God’s blessing by obediently meriting it.”
   b. “Job, something you have done has caused all this to happen to you.”

2. Job’s friends, immersed in the erroneous assumptions of their retribution dogma and law, further suggested that if Job would just follow certain spiritual formulas all would soon be well (e.g. 11:13-19; 22:21-28).

3. The counsel of the three friends betrayed their ignorance of the comfort of redemptive righteousness.

   a. God inevitably executed against Job all he had foreordained, in disregard of merit or demerit.
   b. Job was called by God to join a grand, historic company of innocent sufferers for the glory of God.
4. Though the friends recommended their observations as primeval law (20:4, 5), they were ivory-tower theorist, out of touch with real life ("primeval" = relating to the earliest ages).
   a. Their counsel was a subtle but arrogant, incestuous mixture of truth, tradition, and their own personal subjectivity.
   b. While apparently well-intentioned in the beginning (2:11-13), later Job’s counseling friends proved themselves cruel (sometimes probably inadvertently, and other times probably deliberately).
   c. In reality, true love for Job (a wise spiritual blend of truth and empathy) was, for the most part, relationally absent.

5. The friends’ weighing of Job’s guilt involves the discussion of broader aspects of the problem of theodicy, but always with Job’s particular case and condemnation in view. (Remember: the term “theodicy” has to do with a vindication of God’s divine attributes, particularly holiness and justice, in establishing or allowing the existence of physical and moral evil.)
   a. The friends are beguiled by their adherence to traditional theory into aiding and abetting Satan in his hostility to God, and darkening the way of wisdom for God’s servant, Job.

2. For Job, the debates are not a detached academic study of suffering in general, but a new, more painful phase of his sufferings.
   a. At times, when Job’s feelings and experiences are in front of his faith, his theodicy is as inadequate as his friends (e.g. 7:20, 21); however, ultimately his conscience refused to acknowledge transgression commensurate with his suffering (e.g. 10:7).
   b. Throughout the disputation:
      1. Job exaggerates, but he is nearer to the truth than his opponents.
      2. Job admits that he is perplexed and left with no answer; the counselors arrogantly assume that they know exactly what is going on.
      3. Job’s high views of God make his problem even more perplexing.
   c. Job’s changes in mood are abrupt and extreme, often inviting the wisdomless wise men to renew their witless counsel.

3. In the whole dispute, Job maintains a good case, and his adversaries maintain a poor one.
   a. Job maintaining a good case pleads it poorly, and the friends bringing a poor case plead it well.
      1. Job’s good case that is poorly pleaded:
         a. Job knows that God does not always afflict men according to the measure of their sins.
         b. He knows that God has His secret judgments, of which He does not give men an account.
         c. Job knows that he must wait until God reveals to him the sovereign purpose of his suffering.
         d. He maintains that he was not a man rejected by God, as his adversaries wished to make him believe.
         e. Job often throws himself off balance, using excessive and exaggerated propositions, and betraying that he is desperate in many respects.
            1. He even becomes so heated with charged feelings that it seems that he wishes to resist God.
      2. Job’s adversarys’ poor case that is pleaded well:

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a. Job’s adversaries argue that God always punishes men according to the measure of their sin.

1. They speak beautiful and holy sentences, saying many true things regarding God’s providence, His justice, and the sins of men.
2. They present doctrines we have to receive without contradiction (e.g. “whatever a man sows, this he will also reap”), and yet the result that these “friends” put Job in despair and deeply discourage him is completely bad.
   a. The friends abuse, corrupt, and profane the truth by mis-applying it; applying to a bad end that which is good and just in itself.
   b. They make some truths disproportionately more prominent than others in their discourses.
   c. While ignoring the agonizing, subjective state of Job’s thoughts and feelings, they share objective truths with Job insensitively and unseasonably.

4. Job persistently denies his guilt before the Lord; he knows of no sin which he has not confessed. He believes strongly in justification by faith, so he does not accept the argument of the friends that all is not right between him and God.
   a. Dr. Scott: “In the end Job knew that the doctrine he held to of justification by faith was right and that he could not concede to his friends that his faith in God was of no value (27:4-6). Job understood that far more was at stake here than winning an argument. At stake was the whole basis of man’s relationship to God through justification by faith.”
      1. The “righteousness” Job “holds fast” by faith (27:6) is a redemptive righteousness, both covenantally imputed (in his justification) and covenantally imparted (in his sanctification).
      2. Job perceives himself as a servant of the Lord who has maintained covenant fidelity; he feels confident that he has fruitfully displayed an honest harmony between his profession and his life.
   b. Job was right, and his friends were wrong. Job was not claiming sinlessness but a right relationship with God—as can every true child of God who stands justified by faith in God’s provision of righteousness.
      1. Dr. Kline: “The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, was the hallmark of Job. The wellspring of his life and character was the covenantal religion of faith in the Christ of promise, ‘who of God is made unto us wisdom.’”
      2. No mere moralist, remember Job recognized, as special redemptive revelation had made clear, that there was no remission of sins without the shedding of sacrificial blood (1:5).

C. Other misc. highlights of the overall content of Job’s dialogue and debate with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

1. Job does not primarily engage in academic theological and philosophical musings regarding his theory of theodicy in the cosmos. Instead, again and again, he vents his inner ferment, the consequences of his sense of estrangement from the God who afflicted him.
   a. Job returns time and time again to his original complaint: he wants fellowship with God but does not feel it (23:8, 9).
   2. As the three “friends” badger him mercilessly, Job shows signs of increasing bitterness—toward his friends and even toward God.

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3. Misc. highlights regarding the influences and responses of Job’s “friends” amid the disputation
   a. These friends:
      1. Remained blind to Job’s transparent sincerity;
      2. Seemed incapable of empathy with the agony of Job’s predicament;
      3. Never attempted to really understand what bothered Job;
      4. Offered Job blunt, unsolicited, and unfeeling counsel aimed at re-aligning his spirituality;
      5. Were increasingly cruel and erroneous in their accusations, adding insult to Job’s injury;
      6. Made themselves out to be as God, and sought to judge and condemn Job;
      7. Managed to weave some token words of kindness and consolation into their discourses, yet only truly succeeded in intensifying Job’s temptations.

4. Misc. highlights regarding the feelings and responses of Job amid the disputation
   a. Job (quite emotionally) expressed:
      1. That he had lost his felt sense of being blessed of God;
      2. That he agonized regarding the apparent meaninglessness of his suffering;
      3. That his enormous grief and compounding afflictions had left him hopeless and wore out;
      4. That he couldn’t understand why the same God who fashioned him, gave him life, and blessed him, treated him so badly;
      5. That he grew weary of his “friends” failure to say anything helpful (the more Job protested his innocence before God, the more denouncing and derogatory the friends became in their statements);
      6. That he longed to die and find relief and comfort in the afterlife.
   b. Job felt/experienced an especially acute sense of death (i.e. alienation/estrangement) from God, himself, others, and nature (consistent with the terrible death-fallout of the curse imposed on man in the garden of Eden, Gen 3:6-19).
      1. Death, like man’s other spiritual enemies—Satan, sin, the flesh, the world—is routinely felt/experienced by believers long before they physically die.
      2. Death, like man’s other spiritual enemies—Satan, sin, the flesh, the world—is often acutely felt/experienced by believers who suffer under God’s sovereignly designed afflictions (e.g. 19:7-22).
   c. Job lost the experiential sense of God’s lovingkindness, and then significantly fell short in his faith and loyalty to God.
      1. His faith was volatile moment-by-moment, and he frequently wandered from hope into doubt (e.g. 16:6-17).
      2. He complained to God in the mood of reckless defiance, approaching blasphemy in his frenzies.
      3. He questioned God’s justice, intimating that he had been treated unfairly.
      4. He defiantly affirmed his own uprightness.
      5. His thoughts and feelings abruptly vacillated in the midst of his suffering:
         a. For example, on one occasion, he complains that God is too observant and intrusive, not leaving him alone; then, on another occasion, he complains that God is too far away.
      6. He accused God of wronging him and not listening to his plea for justice.
      7. He accused God of stripping him of honor and attacking him, of alienating his kinsmen and friends.

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8. He fantasized that God was a giant adversary who was relentlessly hunting him down.
9. He daringly desired to come before God’s throne as a defendant or complainant, to defend his integrity and demand an explanation of God’s hostility (e.g. 23:1-7).
   a. He desired an audience with God to prove his innocence, but thought that this cause would prove hopeless (e.g. 9:14-20).
10. Though Job’s confidence in the justice of God was at times obscured and distorted, at other times his once notorious faith resurfaced into supreme expressions of trust (e.g. 13:15a).
11. Job never completely abandoned his faith, but nonetheless he was full of foul feelings.
   d. Strangely, while Job was defiant before God, at the same time, he was confident in God’s vindicating justice.
1. Even though he imagined God was angry with him, in his better moments he still believed God was just and would provide him a Redeemer-Vindicator (16:19 cf. 19:25).
   a. The office of the “Redeemer” in the ancient world was that of next of kin. It was his responsibility to restore the fortune, liberty, and name of his relative when necessary, and to redress his wrongs, especially to avenge the shedding of innocent blood (e.g. Gen 14:12-16).
   1. Job hoped for a divine, heavenly Redeemer-Vindicator.
   2. In Job’s mind this Vindicator-Defender he looked to would be both heavenly (16:19) and earthly (19:25).
   3. Job was confident that although all earthly kin might disown him (19:13-19), his divine Kinsman was prepared to own him and to speak in his favor the last word in his case (cf. Isa 44:6).
   4. Calvin (paraphrasing Job’s words in 19:25): “I [i.e. Job] may be considered as a wicked and desperate man, as if I had blasphemed against God, trying to justify myself against him. No not at all, I ask only to humble myself and rest in his grace; however, I maintain my integrity against you, for I see that you proceed here only by slanderous words; I then defend myself in such a way that I regard God and have my eyes fixed on God.”
2. While Job craved human vindication, he craved divine vindication more.
   a. While sometimes Job took the offensive, reproving his friends for their pitiless attitude and expressing his bitter disappoint in his “comforters” (e.g. 13:4, 5; 16:1-5), other times, Job turns from his friends and addresses himself to God, being compelled to look anew to his heavenly Friend and divine Kinsmen-Vindicator for sympathetic understanding (e.g. 19:1-29).
   1. This inclination of Job to talk to God (to pray) is in notable contrast to the counselors, who never say a word to God.
      a. While the counselors say many right things about God, they never say anything to Him.
      b. Job wrestles with God and tells Him every doubt and fear.
Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

3. Here are the beginnings of what progressive revelation would ultimately enunciate in the doctrines of the coming of Christ at the end times, the resurrection of the dead, and final judgment.

a. Christ will come as His people’s Kinsman-Vindicator.
   1. He will reverse His people’s misfortunes.
   2. He will fully free His people from captivity.
   3. He will clear His people’s smeared reputations/names.
   4. He will make right all the wrongs done to His people.
   5. He will avenge the shedding of His people’s innocent blood.

D. The sad fallout of the cycles of dialogue and debate between Job and his three “friends”.

1. Job’s friends, while starting well in sharing Job’s grief (2:11-13), proved themselves in the end sorry empathizers.

   a. They failed to humbly empathize with Job in his suffering, thus bearing his weighty burden and entering into his understandable confusion.

   1. These well-meaning “friends”, who originally came to comfort and console Job, insensitively left Job in the loneliness of an existential solitude.

   a. While Job was not physically alone, he was quite really all alone experientially.

   1. Sometimes a person’s loneliness is the result of being separated from people, but at other times—especially when one has been deeply misunderstood—a person’s loneliness can actually be the consequence of being with people.

   2. In reality, Job bears the heavy burden of his terrible suffering in lonely isolation.

   b. Job felt emotionally/spiritually betrayed and isolated by his friends, and he experienced deep inner pain because of it (e.g. 19:1-3).

   1. Job’s many sarcasms suggests how insufferable he found the pretensions of the trio who had all sung the same empty tune.

   b. Sadly, the presence of Job’s friends, instead of relieving Job’s suffering, added yet another layer to it, making it all the more heavier.

   1. The friends’ words instrumentally fueled (instead of quenched) Job’s raging feelings and consequent temptations.

   2. Job was treated more like a project than a person.

   c. Though Satan does not appear again, he was nonetheless present, subtly using Job’s well-intentioned comforters as his unwitting accomplices, with more apparent success than had marked his previous efforts.

   1. In reality, Job’s counselors endorsed Satan’s view of Job as a hypocrite, and thinking to defend God, they became Satan’s advocates.

E. Job’s terrible experience anticipated the eschatological sufferings of both Christ and His church.

1. Christ, the deeply devoted covenant-servant, was also:
   a. Bombarded by Satanic assaults;
   b. Betrayed by His closest acquaintances;
   c. Left existentially alone in His greatest hour of need;
   d. Falsely accused;
   e. Badgered by insults;
Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

f. Forsaken of God.

2. Christ’s patient responses to his horrendous suffering were exemplarily superior to Job’s sometimes impatient responses (1 Pet 2:20-23).

3. Christ’s church is also destined and called to mirror and endure similar sufferings (e.g. 1 Thes 3:4; Luk 9:23; Mat 5:10-12; Jn 15:18-20).

F. In chapter 28, the way of wisdom, having been darkened, is briefly illumined again in Job’s experience.

1. This hymnic interlude constitutes an artistic re-introduction to the way of wisdom, and it demonstrates that Job’s piety is both genuine and fervent.

2. In chapter 28, Job’s words inferentially reflect:
   a. That man’s reverent acknowledgment that he and his world are subject to the Creator is so much the lifeblood of human wisdom that it can be identified with wisdom;
   b. That a man begins to be wise when he ceases to strive for wisdom independently of God and his own power;
   c. That while Man advances in wisdom through meditation on the moral law and investigation of natural law, the fear of the Lord, expressed in sincere covenant consecration, is the beginning and chief part of true wisdom.

G. Job drifts from the path of wisdom throughout chapters. 3-27, later he briefly resumes the path of wisdom again in chapter 28, and then in chapters 29-31 he issues his final grief-filled protest.

1. Chapters 29-31 contain Job’s final monologue, wherein he summarizes his cause.

2. Job’s engagement with the three friends is over, and now his encounter with God comes to the fore.

   a. In chapters 29 and 30, Job contrasts the prosperous, peaceful past with the bleak, turbulent present.
      1. He bemoans the loss of God’s favor on him and his house.
      2. Here, point for point, Job laments how the blessings he enjoyed were taken away from him.
   b. While significantly distressed by the cruelty of men, Job is even more distressed by his perception of God’s cruelty toward him (30:19-22).
      1. Though Job fails here to pursue the logical implications and to appropriate the comfort of his recently expressed thoughts concerning wisdom, human and divine (ch. 28), it must be remembered that he was not stone but a man of flesh, and still being crushed by the serpent’s coils.
      a. By this time he had to be deeply exhausted by both the intensity and longevity of his many compounded afflictions.
      b. A protestation of innocence had been Job’s main burden all along, so in chapter 31, elaborately formulated, it becomes the climax of his long, lofty, pompous speech.
         1. The most important issue in Job’s mind in chapter 31 is the false accusation that he was a man of exceptional wickedness, suffering no more than what he deserved.
         2. Chapter 31 is based on an important theme in the legal procedure of Job’s day.
         3. In ancient, Near-Eastern form, this is a retroactive oath of covenant allegiance.
            a. Job appeals to God with an oath in the divine name and with a call for divine sanctions if he is lying.
               1. In such oaths, the speaker called down curses upon his own head for proved violations of the moral code.
               b. The picture is that of the covenant vassal protesting his faithfulness to the various stipulations laid upon him, dumbfounded that his
sovereign has visited him with the curses rather than the blessings of the covenant.

1. God seems to Job to have forsaken the suzerain’s role as a protector, and strangely turned enemy against an obedient vassal.

4. In chapter 31 Job systematically clears himself of lust, greed, adultery, injustice, neglecting the needy, abusing the helpless, idolatry, hatred, and selfishness (31:9, 13, 16, 24, 29, 38).
   a. Job represents the defense he has offered as a signed and sealed legal document. Then with consummate arrogance, he declares how he will stride before God as a prince, crowned with the very scroll of his indictment which will be transformed into an emblem of honor for him by being refuted charge by charge (31:35-37).
   b. Though again Job fails to pursue the comfort of his recently expressed thoughts concerning wisdom, human and divine (ch. 28), and instead here exposes a remarkable depth of self-righteousness, it must also be noted that such blindness to the depravity and deceitfulness of his own heart did not negate the genuineness of the divine redemptive work in Job.

H. In chapters 32-37, Elihu, apparently one of a larger audience attending the debate of the masters, comes forward and presents his theodicy.

1. He enters the account unintroduced, though apparently listening in to the conversation.
2. Elihu is a young man who gave a promise of saying something significantly new (32:1-10).
3. Elihu’s critique centers on Job’s words uttered during the dispute.
   a. He quotes Job, but does not accuse him of having lived a wicked life.
   b. He criticizes what Job had said, and its effect on his relationship to God.
   c. He assures Job of God’s good purpose in his suffering, and he sternly admonishes him to receive his divine discipline with its promise of deliverance from distress.
   d. While Elihu acknowledges the truth, “whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (34:10-12; 36:11, 12), he perceives it within the redemptive context of another truth, “those whom the Lord loves He chastens” (33:19-30; 36:5-15).
   1. “chastens” = educates, trains, nurtures, corrects, reproves, sometimes castigates—in a nutshell, loving, instructive-discipline that aims at increasing virtue
   2. Elihu’s perception of the relationship of these truths is consistent with the Apostle Paul’s NT teachings (Gal 6:7-10 cf. Rom 2:5-11).
4. Elihu perceives the significance of the all-important principle of God’s free grace, which the other friends had slighted.
   a. He stresses an issue neglected by the three friends: the disciplinary and redemptive role of suffering (cf. Heb 10:32-12:29).
   b. With this speech, the light of day begins to dawn on the way of wisdom after the long night of debate which had only been pierced by an occasional gleam of understanding.
   c. Elihu saw chastening in its redemptive context, as informed and governed by the principle of sovereign grace.
      1. He contended that since grace is by its very nature sovereignly free, it may bestow the blessing of chastening most abundantly on the saint who has relatively least need.
a. Hence, Elihu removed the sting from the mystery of the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked.
b. Job’s heart likely leaped for joy (because of Elihu’s liberating insights) but probably also filled with shame (because he recalled the railing accusations he previously shouted against God).
   1. The overwhelming loss entailed in Job’s chastening allured him away from the instruction of affliction into a response of angry judgment and scoffing.
   2. Illuminating Job’s way, Elihu declares that the way of wisdom is to fear God who is incomprehensible and excellent in all His attributes.
   3. By a series of humbling questions, Elihu impresses on Job his creaturehood, reminding him that by his finite standards he cannot judge God, all of Whose ways are infinitely higher than human thought.
c. Humbled, Job refrains from defending himself and holds his peace; he remains silent, even when he is afforded opportunities to speak.
   1. Job is now more acutely aware that to criticize the consequences of righteousness is to assume a righteousness superior to God’s.
   2. Hence, Elihu instrumentally summoned Job back to the wisdom of his original response of faith and doxology in the midst of grief (cf. 1:21; Prov 3:11, 12).
5. Via this discourse, the princely arrogance of Job is subdued, and Elihu serves as one sent before the face of the Lord to prepare the way for His coming in the whirlwind/theophany (38:1ff.)
   a. In the closing words of Elihu’s exhortation, his appeal shifts to the excellency of God’s power, and that becomes the grand subject of his conclusion, the herald’s cry before the advent of the Lord.
      1. Elihu’s graphic description of God’s majesty displayed in the forces of nature is somewhat like the first speech by God (36:27–37:13 cf. 38:1ff.).
   b. The Elihu discourse forms an eminently successful transition to the following theophany.
      1. His vivid description of the fury of the elements sets the mood for the approaching whirlwind vehicle of God.
      2. His thematic concentration on natural revelation is continued by the Lord, as is also even the interrogating style of his final exhortation (38:3ff.).
   c. In judging Job’s controversy with his friends (42:7–9), the Lord does not mention Elihu, because the younger man was not a party to the dispute of the older ones, nor had his words been such as to require expiation.
      1. Though the Speaker from the whirlwind does not mention Elihu by name, He does not ignore him. For by continuing Elihu’s essential argument and endorsing his judgments concerning both Job (cf. 32:2; 40:8) and the friends (cf. 32:3; 42:7), the Lord owns Elihu as His forerunner.
   d. His ministry accomplished, Elihu retires from the scene. He has prepared the way of the Lord in the hearts of Job and his friends.
6. The book of Job (as we have already seen), in part, anticipates Christ’s church, a body of loyal covenant-servants, who are called to patiently maintain the pathway of redemptive wisdom amid a divinely-ordained age of great suffering.
Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

a. Job’s covenant loyalty, many sufferings, fierce temptations, patient endurance, intense faith-struggles, final vindication, and final restoration, in part, anticipate the church’s Christ-like, imitative passage through much earthly toil and suffering to future glory.

b. In addition, chs. 3-37 of the book of Job further anticipate some other realities that correspond with the history of Christ’s church:
   1. Her fierce, internal wrestlings with religious but worldly wisdom;
   2. Her seasons of deep darkness that are interrupted by seasons of great illumination;
   3. Her fragile spiritual life that often (on the surface) appears volatile, unsuccessful, transient;
   4. Her intense struggles with Satan and his cruel schemes;
   5. Her making foolish the religious world’s wisdom by the providential raising up of young, unlikely men who speak profound truth in her midst;
   6. Her agonizing struggles to persevere as she is divinely chastened;
   7. Her divine preservation and utter dependence upon a sovereign, covenant God.

I. In chs. 38-41 the Lord speaks from a whirlwind, challenging Job’s creaturely ignorance, frailty, and presumption.

1. This characteristic vehicle of theophany dramatized the spoken revelation it accompanied.
   a. Remember a “theophany” is an appearance of God (often dramatized through nature) that is perceptible to human sight (cf. Ps 18:7; 50:3; Ezek 1:4, 28; Nah 1:3; Hab 3; Zech 9:14).
   b. The image of this theophany, a tempestuous, storm-like wind, itself ironically communicated something to Job regarding his presumptuous words (cf. 30:20-22; 38:1-3; 40:6-8).

2. In His appearance to Job, God does not mention the subject of Job’s suffering, much less give the reason for it.
   a. Instead, the Lord calls on Job to withdraw his accusations against Him, and He exposes Job’s weaknesses and foolishness.
      1. Job learns that he must rest his case, including his desire for vindication, in the hands of a sovereign and good God, who is not his enemy.
      2. Job is not rebuked as one suffering for his sins, but is humbled before the Lord as one whose ill-advised speech had obscured God’s purpose (38:2; 42:2, 3).
         a. Neither does Job receive the bill of indictment he incorrectly imagined (31:35), because there wasn’t one.

3. The verdicts passed on Job by men had darkened the way of wisdom until Elihu spoke, but that way is now fully illuminated by the Voice of the Lord from the whirlwind.
   a. It is eminently appropriate that the Lord’s approach to Job is in the form of a challenge.
      1. He had done the same in confronting Satan (1:7, 8; 2:2, 3).
      2. God challenged both Satan and Job by confronting them with His wondrous works.

4. God’s challenge to Job proceeds in two stages (38:1-40:2 and 40:6-41:34), with a pause midway, marked by Job’s initial submission (40:3-5). In the face of God’s fearful challenge, Job could only humble himself.
      1. He was absent at creation.
      2. He cannot explain the forces of nature.
Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

b. The absurdity of Job’s criticism of God’s counsel lies in their respective identities: the creature critic of the Creator.
   1. The opening and conclusion of God’s first speech are directed toward Job’s bold but erroneous utterances during his moments of doubt (cf. 38:2; 40:1, 2).
c. The ordeal to which the Creator challenges his creature is a test of wisdom.
   1. The Lord takes Job on a verbal tour of the universe.
   a. He describes the earth poetically, as having subterranean architecture, and He also utilizes poetic figures to refer to His creation and control of the forces of nature (e.g. 38:4-12).
   2. Via a barrage of questions, attention is drawn to the Creator’s unsearchable wisdom everywhere displayed:
      a. On the earth (38:4-21)
      b. In the heavens (38:22-38)
      c. In the animal kingdom (38:39-39:30)
   3. Many of God’s questions deal with executive power, but the OT concept of wisdom also includes the craftsmen’s talent (cf. Exod 28:2, 3; Prov 8:30).
   4. The purpose of the Creator-Lord’s challenge is to convince Job of his incompetence for the role of world governor, while magnifying His own wisdom as the all-sovereign Creation-Ruler.
      a. In this cross-examination of Job, the Lord reveals Himself as sovereign over the natural world.
         1. He is creator (38:4-14) of the earth (38: 4-7), of the sea (38:8-11), and of day and night (38:12-15).
         2. He is Lord of inanimate nature (38:16-38) and of animate nature (38:39-39:30).
         3. He is sovereign and exercises full dominion over the creation’s invisible, spiritual realm (38:17).
   d. Job becomes increasingly impressed with the immensity of his own ignorance and impotence, as his knowledge of the earth suffers from spatial and temporal limitations.
   e. The final vignette of God’s first challenge (39:26-30) directs Job’s eyes on high, toward His Creator’s throne—to the predatory hawk and eagle, waiting to be called by God to His judgment feast, with its prey of rebel men, kings, captains, horses and riders together (cf. Ezk 39:17ff.; Rev 19:17ff.).
      1. Anticipated here is the ultimate vanity of all the efforts of human wisdom—that man is reduced to food for the subhuman creation.
   f. Finally, God demands that Job admit defeat (40:1, 2).
      1. The Creator’s surpassing wisdom has been so effectively impressed on Job that he does not further dispute God’s ways as he had once and again. Job admits his ignorance and becomes silent (40:3-5).
         a. God’s answer left Job speechless:
            1. Job is brought low before the Almighty.
            2. It is Job’s turn to speak, the one who previously yearned for an opportunity to boldly plead his case before God as a prince (31:37), but now he has nothing to say.
         b. Job’s ways begin to adorn again the doctrine of wisdom he had previously confessed (chs. 1, 2, 28).
         c. Job abandons his obsession with being vindicated.

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Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

g. After Job’s first, brief response of humility (40:3-5), the Lord renews His divine challenge (40:6-41:34).
   1. Job’s initial submission was good but only the beginning of his repentance.
      a. He must recognize not only the unreasonableness but also the sinfulness of criticizing the Almighty (cf. 10:3; 40:8).

h. God’s second challenge involves Job’s creaturely frailty (40:6-41:34):
   1. He cannot overrule God’s ways.
   2. He cannot control the forces of nature.

i. The Lord opens His second discourse (40:6, 7) as he did the first (38:1-3), but here challenges Job with a new line of reasoning.
   1. He challenges Job’s questioning Him, regarding whether He is just in judging the wicked.
   2. In His first speech, God revealed Himself as Lord of nature, but here as the Lord of the moral realm.
   3. This section (esp. 40:8-14) emphasizes God’s power over pride and wickedness.

j. Since Job obviously cannot ascend to the heavenly throne to try his hand at judging the wicked (40:10-13), God proposes another test.
   1. God stages an imaginary battle between Job (the human hero) with Behemoth and Leviathan (animal champions).
      a. The motif of a deity commissioning an animal champion to battle a human hero is paralleled in ancient mythology (e.g. Gilgamesh Epic, in which Ishtar sends the bull of heaven against Gilgamesh).
   2. The point of the imaginary battle: Job is to discover from his inability to vanquish even a fellow creature, the folly of aspiring to the Creator’s throne.
      a. “Behemoth” = “the beast beyond comparison”, a large animal whose exact identity is unknown.
      b. “Leviathan” = a large sea creature whose exact identity is also unknown.
   3. The monsters referenced in these verses may well have represented powerful creatures on two levels of reality:
      a. On the one hand, they may represent physical creatures that were actually part of the ancient, natural world, and on the other hand, these creatures may have had mythological significance to ancient mankind, representing the realm of the supernatural and spiritual.
         1. For example, in the ancient world, Leviathan was a mythological symbol of the foe of cosmic order.
         2. Hence, these passages are perhaps best understood when Behemoth and Leviathan are perceived as pictures of real creatures painted with some highly figurative strokes.
            a. The poetic descriptions in these passages are anchored in nature, but the creatures described seem to represent something more (cf. 40:15, 19; Isa 27:1; Ps 74:12-14; Rev 12:7-9; 13:1-4).
            b. In addition, it is at least possible that “Leviathan” and “Behemoth” form a poetic repetition, both referring to one creature.

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c. Hence, Behemoth and Leviathan probably represent such forces of evil that God can control but before which Job is helpless, symbolizing threatening powers in the heavenly and earthly realms.

1. In fact, there may well be a divine intimation to Job in chapters 40 and 41 that his wrestlings were, in reality, with the prince of proud rebels (40:11, 12; 41:33, 34).

k. Following, in Job’s second response, he confesses his presumption and repents (42:1-6).

5. *Dr. Kline*: “Job’s criticism of God’s government, especially his boast that he will overcome the Lord’s imagined opposition to his justification, was, in principle, a usurpation of the divine prerogative of world government, a lusting after godlike knowledge of good and evil (cf. Gen 3:5), a self-deification.”

a. Job’s many, charged feelings stepped, as it were, impatiently in front of his faith.
b. Job’s “whys?” impatiently accused God of unwisely mishandling his life and therefore, by implication, of unwisely mismanaging the universe.
c. Amid his suffering, Job’s overwhelming feelings resulted in his rebellion.
   1. He implicitly attempted to assume the role of the Creator instead of the creature.
   2. Job criticized God’s sovereign oversight of cosmic judicial matters (e.g. 10:3).
   3. In an atmosphere of self-will, Job ceased fully acquiescing to the will of God; he took matters into his own hands, seeking to clear his own good name by rebelliously judging God.

a. Such prideful sentiments of self-will and partial, selective submission ever tempt believers on a moment-by-moment basis—especially when they are suffering.
b. Such arrogant sentiments can be deeply rooted in our hearts, even if they are never openly expressed in our words (cf. 1 Sam 16:7b).
c. The seeds of such rebellious sentiments, while always capable of coming to life, usually lay dormant in our hearts when we perceive our lives as smoothly under our control.

d. Job learned that even though he failed to fully acknowledge and submit to God’s divine prerogatives, God ever claimed for Himself—on His own sovereign terms—the divine right to be his Creator.

   1. *Francis Schaeffer*: “If we [Christians] would only stop desiring to be God, and, in reality and practice, take our place as creatures, then I think we could get on.”

e. Communion between God and Job was never really broken. All creation and providence declared that fact. The answer then was all around Job all that time, but he turned inward toward his own feelings and therefore missed the answer.

   1. Like a frantic pilot blindly maneuvering through fog or darkness, trusting in the seemingly real feelings of vertigo, Job distrusted his firm reference points and then dangerously lost his bearings.

   a. “Vertigo” = a dizzying sensation that, contrary to a pilot’s objective instruments, may make him falsely feel like he is tilted, spinning, diving etc.

   2. Job had relied on his full and foul feelings to interpret his circumstances instead of depending, by faith, on God’s natural and special revelation.

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6. Hence, we would do well to avoid inadvertently projecting unrealistic expectations upon godly believers who are up to their necks in affliction and grief.

   a. There is a side of us that wants to hear and experience the Christianized, Hollywood version of suffering then glory (i.e., the good and positive usually overcome the bad and negative—and in spite of much adversity—everything ends up satisfyingly happy *in this life*).

   b. Sometimes we want to romantically believe that there are impervious “Super Saints” that are ever brave, strong, faithful, and persevering in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances.

   c. If Job lost his way amid severe affliction, the covenant-servant that God declared to be the most “blameless and upright” in all the earth (1:8; 2:3), then one can assume that such is also sometimes true of godly believers today.

      1. If we treat suffering believers like impervious “Super Saints”, we may inadvertently make them feel like they can never lose their way without deeply disappointing us.
      2. Many eminent believers, who marvelously maintain their faith amid terrible afflictions, do so because God has somehow blessed them with empathetic outlets via His church.
         a. They are kept emotionally vented, so their feelings stay behind their faith.

   d. The book of Job frees believers from romantic, unrealistic expectations of themselves and others.

      1. It is bluntly realistic in its representation of how even the most godly saints really pass through severe affliction—refreshingly blunt!
      2. It refreshingly obliterates the romantic notion that some saints ever and always suffer successfully, their faith always in tact.
      3. It frees believers to be fully human, and therefore transparent and unpretentious—warts and all.

7. Some Biblical countermeasures aimed at battling this innate, insane tendency of ours to pursue God’s place as the Creator when we suffer (an ever-pressing, moment-by-moment itch):

   a. Accept the hard Biblical reality that you, other people in your life, and the world you inhabit are seriously fallen, broken, disoriented, bleeding, and dying (ref. Isa 1:6; Eccl 1:2).

      1. God has provided His church with a wonderful foretaste of eternal life (2 Cor 5:17); nonetheless, her earthly world is still dominated by the painful, alienating fallout of sin, the nagging ache of spiritual death, the fearful anticipation of physical death, and a hateful, busy Devil.
         a. These realities simply must come to practically and realistically effect how you frame your earthly expectations.
         b. In a very real sense, you should expect, at least to some degree, to ever ache, bleed, and groan, spiritually and emotionally, all the way to the New Creation.

      2. God may sometimes effect substantial healing in some aspects of your life; nevertheless, humanly speaking, many of your problems in this life will likely remain insolvable.
         a. By faith, you need to realistically manage such insolvable problems, instead of *only* attempting to tenaciously resolve them.
b. Our bones of contention with God often involve His sovereign will for us to patiently manage pressing problems that we are inwardly demanding get promptly SOLVED!!!!!

1. Seeking to fully resolve one’s problems is not bad in and of itself; what is bad is when we stubbornly refuse to inwardly accept any other possible providence.
   a. Hence, unrealistic expectations are at the root of many of our deepest disappointments—disappointments that we often inadvertently set ourselves up to experience.

2. Hard as it is for us to accept (especially as creatures that pursue happiness with every breath we take), we need to remain ever-mindful that God may be more intent on changing us rather than our adverse circumstances.

c. Francis of Assisi (Serenity Prayer): “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

b. Rather than always suppressing your feelings, explore ways to frequently process the inner pain that lies at the root of your deep grief.

1. Pour out your feelings (1 Sam 1:15, 18 cf. Mat 26:36, 39, 42, 44) and confess your sins to God (1 Jn 1:8-10) in honest prayer.
2. Seek out other empathetic believers who wisely understand your deep need to express your feelings (Rom 12:15 cf. Mat 26:38) and confess your sins (James 5:16).
   a. Trustworthy acquaintances who allow you to openly vent your feelings, and who refrain from pelting you with unseasonable platitudes, fixes, and cures.
   a. Unprocessed and unexpressed feelings don’t just die, they are buried alive and come forth later in uglier ways.

c. Be aware, especially amid seasons of intense, prolonged affliction, that you must ever remain suspicious of the powerful influences of your full and foul feelings.

1. When impatient believers (like Job) suffer imperfectly and unwisely, they can be significantly comforted by the thought that Christ, their example, not only walked the way of this redemptive wisdom exemplarily, but He also vicariously suffered perfectly and wisely in their stead (1 Pet 2:21-24; 2 Cor 5:21).
   a. This is a stabilizing, invaluable anchor that can keep believers from dangerously drifting amid raging spiritual storms.
   b. Spiritually cultivating an acute sense of this blessed reality calms and tames the wild feelings of our remaining sin, as it is the ultimate confirmation of God’s unconditional love for us.
2. How we think significantly effects how we feel, and how we feel significantly effects how we think.
Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

a. Remember, like a frantic pilot blindly maneuvering through fog or darkness, trusting in the seemingly real feelings of vertigo, Job distrusted his firm reference points and then dangerously lost his bearings.

1. “Vertigo” = a dizzying sensation that, contrary to a pilot’s objective instruments, may make him falsely feel like he is tilted, spinning, diving etc.

b. Job found himself caught in a seemingly impossible dilemma:

1. On one hand, he thought of himself as a loyal, forgiven covenant-servant, but, on the other hand, the inner voice of his bitter experience (i.e. his full and foul feelings) loudly proclaimed that God was unjustly treating him like a disloyal, guilty covenant-breaker (30:21).

3. If in the dark night of afflictive providences you do not feel God is near, or if you do not feel that He forgives, loves, and favors you (because your experience is forcibly proclaiming otherwise), then you must learn that such feelings are dangerously unreliable.

a. Unbridled, false feelings of imagined alienation and guilt will eventually give birth to a large family of other vile affections.

b. Consider the faith-filled words of John Bunyan and Robert Murray M’Cheyene, who both learned to counter their full and foul feelings of illegitimate guilt amid dark spiritual eclipses in their spiritual experiences:

1. Bunyan: “I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, ‘the same yesterday, today, and forever’.”

2. M’Cheyene: “I feel, when I have sinned, an immediate reluctance to go to Christ. I am ashamed to go. I feel as if it would do no good to go—as if it were making Christ a minister of sin, to go straight from the swine-trough to the best robe—and a thousand other excuses; but I am persuaded they are all lies, direct from hell. John argues the opposite way—‘If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,’ Jeremiah 3:1, and a thousand other scriptures are against it. I am sure there is neither peace nor safety from deeper sin, but in going directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is God’s way of peace and holiness. It is folly to the world and the beclouded heart, but it is the way.”

d. Understand that especially amid seasons of intense, prolonged affliction, you must ever talk to yourself instead of only allowing ‘yourself’ to talk to you (ref. 29:1-31:40).

1. Ps 42: 5, 11: “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And {why} have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him {for} the help of His presence.”

a. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (commenting on Ps 42: 5, 11): “. . . we must learn to take ourselves in hand. . . . we must talk to ourselves instead of allowing ‘ourselves’ to talk to us! . . . most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself. . . . The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address
Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

youself, preach to yourself, question yourself. . . . you must go on to remind yourself of God, who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. . . . The essence of this matter [in a nutshell] is to understand that this self of ours, this other man within us, has got to be handled. Do not listen to him; turn on him; speak to him; condemn him; upbraid him; exhort him; encourage him; remind him of what you know, instead of listening placidly to him and allowing him to drag you down and depress you. For that is what he will always do if you allow him to be in control.”

VII. Confession: The Way of Wisdom Regained (42:1-6)
A. This confession is the counterbalance to Job’s complaint in ch. 3.
1. It acknowledges the sinful rebelliousness which began with that complaint.
   a. Job humbles himself here, but he also appropriately repents for his rash words in doubting God’s justice during his intense suffering.
   b. His repentance is unforced and sincere.
2. His confession is not an admission of sins prior to his sufferings (such as would support the friends’ accusations).
3. By this unreserved commitment of himself to his Lord, a commitment made while he was still in his sufferings, not having received either explanation of the mystery of the past or promise for the future, Job shows himself a true covenant servant, ready to serve his God for nought (i.e. for nothing).
   a. Therefore, this confession marks Job’s final “bruising” of Satan, the final vindication of God’s redemptive power.
      1. Remember, the Adversary charged that Job’s godly wisdom was not genuine, that his piety was only a temporary by-product of his prosperity.
      2. Put to the test, Job bruised Satan under foot by demonstrating that he was ready to serve God “for nought”.
   b. This confession is not bare resignation under omnipotent pressure, but praise of the living God and a trusting acquiescence in His wise purposes.
      1. In 42:3a, 4b Job quotes God’s words (cf. 38:2, 3b; 40:7b), directing their convicting light upon himself, and then essentially responds, “I am the man” (42:3b,c, 5, 6).
   4. No form of God had appeared in the whirlwind; but the revelation of the Voice had been a transforming experience to Job, illuminating all other divine revelation, whether general or such earlier special revelation as had been transmitted to him.
      a. By this new light, Job finds again the pathway of wisdom:
         2. Godly hatred of his own defilement accompanies his spiritual renewal (42:6).
         3. He again experiences God’s living presence in his inner being.
         4. He meets with the Lord as Savior and friend and, above all, God.

VIII. Restoration: The Triumph of Job’s Wisdom (42:7-17)
A. Job’s wisdom is vindicated; he is shown to be right in his claim that he is innocent of the false charges that the three counselors had been making against him.
1. The drama introduced in the prologue (1:1-2:13) here comes full circle.
   a. Satan was proved a liar, and God was glorified, as Job never cursed God.
b. Dr. Kline: “Prostrated by well-nigh total bereavement, [Job] utters doxology. While hopelessly despondent and protesting passionately against what he interprets as an unjust divine sentence upon him, it is still to God that Job turns and cries. And he repentantly commits himself anew to his Lord, although the Voice from the whirlwind has offered neither explanation of the mystery of his past sufferings nor promise of future restoration from his desolation. By following the covenant way, Job shows himself ready by God’s grace, and contrary to Satan’s insinuations, to serve his Lord for nought.”

1. Job’s covenant servitude, while stained with many moments of sin and unbelief, is nevertheless deemed notoriusly faithful in the sacred records of redemptive history (e.g. Ezek 14:14-20).
   a. How amazing it is to know that our redeeming God may gracefully consider us faithful covenant servants—even when our suffering is sometimes so impatiently endured and our service so imperfectly performed!

2. The Lord works deliverance from Job’s evils in the reverse order of their incurrence and in the obverse order of their gravity (i.e., the Lord reverses Job’s latter, heavier trials first).
   a. Job’s false sense of God’s estrangement had been the first evil corrected. Then the defamation of Job’s name among men is dealt with, and afterwards family and wealth are restored. (Note: the reversal of Job’s poor health is not explicitly mentioned, although it does seem necessarily implied.)
   1. Job is vindicated and his three friends are divinely reproved, but in such a way that the friends are forgiven by Job as well as by God.
      a. God declares that Job was right for contending for justification by faith, against the erroneous counsel of the three friends (42:7).
      b. God’s remedy is that Job should mediate for his friends by offering sacrifice, which was a mode of expressing public repentance in OT times (42:8).
      c. The very form of Job’s vindication is the privilege of praying for those who have despitefully used him.
         1. An aspect of Job’s suffering that certainly anticipates the pattern of suffering realized in the Christ and His cross (Lk 23:34).
   2. God’s vindicatory acknowledgment of Job as “My servant” (mentioned four times in 42:7, 8) was the confirmation of God’s original boast to Satan (cf. 1:8; 2:3) and so crowns His triumph over the evil one.

3. The Lord restored Job’s losses, giving him twice as much as he had before.
   a. God poured out rich blessings on Job in the end; however, Job was already satisfied before these blessings were bestowed.
      1. The blessings therefore were not for his sake but for the sake of the friends and for us that we should all see that indeed God was pleased with Job and still favored him.

4. The participation of Job’s daughters as co-heirs in their father’s inheritance (something usually reserved for sons in the ancient world) anticipated the equality and dignity bestowed upon women in the emerging, prosperous kingdom of God (cf. Num 27:1-8; Gal 3:28, 29).

5. The life of Job was deliberately shaped by God to be an example of patience and a prophetic sign of “the end of the Lord” (Jas 5:11).
   a. The message:

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1. In this world, piety and prosperity are not invariably companions, but under the government of the righteous Creator, righteous men must ultimately be given beauty for ashes.

2. Religion is not a means to prosperity as an end, but God’s creation is good, and the inheritance of the earth promised to the meek is an integral part of the total beatitude (i.e. blessedness) of the whole man.

6. Job’s philosophical “why?” had not been answered, but God, by the condescension of his coming, assured Job of his gracious concern. That was enough for Job.
   a. Job finally comes to recognize that God is and remains his friend.
      1. Job comes to understand that God on His throne is sovereign, and rewards those who belong to Him despite seasons of great pressure and pain.
      2. The reader learns that Job suffered, not because he was one of the worst of men, but because he was one of the best, and that his ordeal glorified his God.

IX. Conclusion: Some Final Remarks Regarding the Book Of Job Considered as a Whole.

A. The book of Job employs a veiled theme of anticipation: in the scheme of God’s humanly incomprehensible wisdom, sufferings are compatible with exemplary piety on one side and divine favor on the other side (cf. 1 Cor 1:20).
   1. Suffering is not sent in exact proportion to sin in this life, and neither is prosperity granted in proportion to piety. All depends on God’s good pleasure.

B. Dr. Kling:
   1. “Satan seduced Adam even while Adam was standing in the integrity of his creation righteousness. From this it might have appeared that Satan could trip up the depraved sons of Adam at will and trample upon them. But herein lies a great wonder of redemptive grace: sinner Job stands triumphant where righteous Adam tragically fell! Thus, for the confounding of Satan and the reassurance of the saints, the Lord gave clear proof that a righteousness more enduring than that of Adam was being provided through the second Adam. This triumph of Job’s patience over the Adversary’s malice provided a seal, especially for the ages before the Incarnation, of God’s promise that He would bestow on the faithful the gift of eternal salvation through the Christ to come.”

   2. “The ultimate hope of redemption is not the central theme of the book of Job. The book does, indeed, challenge us to endure, with hope. But it confronts us with an even more profound demand. It sounds the primary and everlasting call for glad consecration, come what may, to the covenant Lord” (italics mine).

   3. “That the heavenly scene and the transactions of the heavenly court are not disclosed to Job is in keeping with the fact that the book is not intended primarily to answer the question, Why do the righteous suffer? Rather, the book represents absolute consecration of self to man’s faithful Creator-Savior as true wisdom. A man must continue to fear God even when his world flies apart and life strands him, like Job, in stunned bewilderment on the refuse heap” (italics mine).
Inferential Meditations:

- Intense affliction both tests and clarifies one’s relationships:
  1. Consider Job’s relationship with God (challenged, Job’s loyalty remained intact);  
  2. Consider Job’s relationship with his wife (challenged, his wife’s loyalty broke down);  
  3. Consider Job’s relationship with his three counselors (tested, his “friends” proved a disloyal source of severe discouragement);  
  4. Consider Job’s relationship to Elihu (unexpectedly, youthful Elihu stepped in and instrumentally defined Job’s complex experience).

- Our lives are in God’s hands, and it belongs to Him to order our lives and to dispose of them according to His good pleasure.

- It is quite reasonable that we be altogether God’s, both to live and to die.

- Amid affliction, our duty is to fully submit ourselves to God in all humility and obedience.

- Even if it shall please God to raise His hand against us, and though we may not perceive for what cause He does it; nevertheless, we should glorify Him always, confessing that He is just and equitable.

- When suffering, we should not murmur nor enter a dispute against God, knowing that if we struggle against Him, we shall be conquered.

- With respect to our afflictions, although God sovereignly sends them and they proceed from Him, yet the Devil may have a hand in bringing them on us.

- When God shows a strictness that we at first find strange, we should keep our mouths closed in order not to murmur, confess that He is just, and expect that He may, as it pleases Him, disclose to us why He wisely chastises us.

- Consider how wise it is of God to make believers acutely sensitive to their true helplessness, so that they may also become more acutely sensitive to their dire need to look to God’s omnipotent strength for resources.

- Consider how wise it is of God to make believers acutely sensitive to Satan’s intense hatred, so that they may also be more acutely sensitive to their constant need for divine protection.

- Consider how wise it is of God to make believers acutely sensitive to the sinfulness of their sin, so that they may also become more acutely sensitive to their utter dependence on a foreign, alien righteousness.

- Consider how wise it is of God to make believers acutely sensitive to the empty meaninglessness of this world, so that they may also be more acutely sensitive to the satisfying meaningfulness of serving the Lord in His kingdom forever.
Lessons in Suffering on the Pathway of Redemptive Wisdom

- Consider how wise it is of God to make believers acutely sensitive to the death context in which they live (i.e. estrangement from God, self, others, nature), so that they may also become more acutely aware of their pressing need for transforming life in the anticipated New Creation.

Works Cited

(In some instances, these sources have been quoted verbatim and identified. In other instances, these sources have been totally or partially paraphrased, suitably and liberally re-arranged, and left unidentified.)


Abbreviations used:

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