

# **GOD'S GREAT GOOD to JOB**

**Dr. James M. Tarter**

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This book shows specifically how Job's experience provided great good for Job for all eternity, even though he had a season of horrible affliction. Key New Testament promises that God makes to believers in Jesus were fulfilled for Job. God brings all things together for good to His people who love Him, but we shall see from Job why sometimes it is literally impossible to see the real good that God will produce out of a terrible event while it is happening. Our walks in Christ are like being in the middle of a maze with high walls (see the front cover): in many situations the path to the great and lasting good has many turns.

The book of Job vividly illustrates how God reverses Satan's most vicious schemes against God's servant, so that they end up providing exactly what he needs for his life forever. Understanding what really happened to Job enables us to receive the strong encouragement in the truth that God provides in Job.

I want us to gain a better perspective of God's eternal purpose for good to each of us, so that we will trust Him more fully and freely. We shall see Satan's will for evil in the painful situations he devises, and then realize that God has a plan for good which dwarfs the evil goals. By firmly grasping God's word in the book of Job, we shall be confident of His plans for our good, so that we shall co-operate with Him in circumstances where we cannot see His good purposes for us. Our confidence in Almighty God and His great love, wisdom, and power for us can also free us from fear about possible future situations.

Jim Tarter, 2012

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**DEDICATION**

**to**

**OUR ACTIVE GOD**

**who provides for  
each of us in Jesus  
in more and better ways  
than we can appreciate now**

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I call the New American Standard Bible the NAS or NASB. I add boldface to specific words and phrases in Scriptures to add my emphasis for discussion.

First Edition

## Chapter 1

# DECISIONS IN HEAVEN DISASTERS ON EARTH

People normally have a sense of justice and righteousness. They usually also want to believe in a good and almighty God who loves and reliably provides justice to everyone – including oneself, family, and loved ones. The fact that disasters hit “both good and bad people” challenges this belief. Both Christian and non-Christian authors have written books that try to reconcile disasters, justice, and pain with the goodness of Almighty God. Many conclude that God is not good, is not almighty, or does not get involved in some very important issues in our lives on earth.

Christians who realize the authority of the Bible as God’s word can also realize that He provides His answer in the book of Job. But I find that very few really understand what God shows in the book of Job, which is clear and simple when we see it. Indeed, the most common view is something like this: Job began blameless and upright; then had his faith severely tested by personal disasters and torturing illness; and when he passed the test, God restored twice as much as Job previously owned. Another common wrong view is that Job opened himself up to all of this disaster by his fear of it.

All such views completely miss the main point of Job’s experience. As we shall see in Scripture, Job began his tribulation blameless and without doing anything to cause it. But Job had an enormous need for his eternal life: he had a distant relationship with God because of a

distorted view in Job's heart of what God is really like. Satan devised and executed vicious schemes against blameless Job, but God allowed them and even incited them in order to provide the eternal good that Job needed and could not do without. And as soon as Job had received what he needed to move ahead, God moved him out of this terrifying and disastrous season of his life into the beginning of his eternal blessings.

We do not need another nice-looking theory or many anecdotes. We need to see this picture clearly in Scripture. This book offers this foundation and shows how it applies to Christians now. We shall see how Job received the great promises for good that God makes to believers in Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

James 5:11 provides a brief summary of Job that is thoroughly confirmed in this book: *"We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is **full of compassion** and is **merciful**."* Most personal views of Job do not lead to the conclusion that God is full of compassion and merciful: they show Job as passing a brutal test that proves how good and faithful he was, or show how he opened himself and his family up to awful brutality.

The insights from Job are most helpful for Christians. They alert us to God's great work in bleak situations when His word and His promises seem unreal. As we see powerful New Testament themes and promises worked out in amazing ways for Job, we can wonder about the good surprises that our Lord has prepared for us as we walk with Jesus. Our walks include heavy attacks from our evil enemy and tremendous victories and great blessings for eternity.

I have made some bold claims about God's word in Job and what this book shows about it. I believe that you will find them accurate.

*Job's Initial Blamelessness*

Job 1-2 provides the foundation for understanding Job's whole experience. Job 1:1 begins: *"There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was **blameless**, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil."*

V. 2-3 show Job's vast possessions, and v. 4-5 give a glimpse into his personal and family life. V. 5 shows how clean he had made his sin account: *"...Job would...consecrate them [his ten grown children], rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, 'Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus did Job continually."* Job was sacrificing for sins his ten sons and daughters perhaps committed. Job was blameless and was doing all that he could to keep his family from having a sin on their records.

One day Satan came among the sons of God when they came to present themselves before the Lord (v. 6). The conversation between the Lord and Satan in Job 1:7-12 shows explicitly how blameless Job was opened up to Satan's attacks:

*<sup>7</sup>The Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?"*

*Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about **on the earth** and walking around on it."*

*The Lord said to Satan, "**Have you considered** My servant **Job**? For there is no one like him on the earth, a **blameless** and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."*

*Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that He has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."*

*Then the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him."*

*So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.*

Notice that Satan was talking about the whole earth when God brought up Job and bragged about him: God stirred Satan's jealousy when Job was blameless. Notice also that a hedge fully protected him until God gave all that Job had to Satan: he merely used an opening that God freely gave him. It was "free", because he gave no basis to remove the hedge. He merely complained that the hedge was totally effective and wrongly guessed that if God hurt Job deeply, then Job would turn against God. God already knew that this was not true.

Job 1:13-19 shows what Satan did with his opportunity. All of Job's children and possessions were destroyed, with the reports coming to him in rapid succession. V. 20-21 show that Job responded by worshiping God and blessing His name, and v. 22 evaluates this response: ***"Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God."***

Then Satan again came among the sons of God who were presenting themselves before Him. Job 2:2-6 shows what happened:

*The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"*

*Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."*

*<sup>3</sup>The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a **blameless and upright** man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him **without cause**."*

*<sup>4</sup>Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face."*

*So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."*

God again brought up Job and praised him to Satan, which again helped his jealous pride to come out against Job. V. 3 states clearly that Job was still blameless and upright and did not cause the first attacks. Then with only another wrong guess by Satan, God gave him



even more freedom to choose ways to get Job to curse God.

God again gave Satan his opportunity to afflict Job with no valid reason from Satan. We can see this now and shall understand it later as we see God's good to Job. But the ease with which God gave Satan everything that Job had can surprise and perplex us now.

The rest of Job 2 shows the awful pain that Job suffered as Satan tried the most extreme tortures that he could devise to get Job to curse God. This is not surprising: Satan's name means "the Adversary", which describes his nature. Knowing the end from the beginning, God fully anticipated all that Satan would do.

Satan's efforts extended beyond his direct assaults on Job. In the midst of his great pain, Job's wife exhorted him toward Satan's goal for him: *"Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die"* (Job 2:9). Satan did not allow Job to sleep (Job 7:3-4). And Job's three friends came *"to sympathize with him and comfort him"* (Job 2:11), but Satan was using them – especially with their good intentions toward Job – to complete this goal against Job by means of emotional torture.

### *Job's Fear Did Not Cause the Attacks on Him*

Rom. 14:23b says that *"whatever is not from faith is sin"*. Many people are taught that fear replaces faith, so that Satan could attack Job because of his fear: *"...what I fear comes upon me..."* (Job 3:25). This teaching claims that Job's fear left him in sin, thereby removing his hedge of protection and opening him up to Satan's attacks.

But consider God's statements: Job's sin record was clean. After Satan destroyed all, Scripture says clearly: *"Through all this Job did not sin"* (Job 1:22a). Then in Job 2:3 God calls Job blameless after the hedge had been removed without cause

Rev. 12:9 shows that another name of Satan is "the Devil". This

means “the Accuser” and reveals another key feature of his nature. Even the Accuser could find no unresolved sin to accuse Job before God. If Satan could have provided a legal basis to get an opening instead of having God give it to him, then he would have. The Accuser and proud rebel would have loved saying to God: “Look at Job’s fear. He is sinning! You should not continue protecting him like You are.”

Therefore Satan did not get to attack Job by his sin of fear or any other sin. Satan got this because God chose to remove almost all of His protection of Job and to give Satan an almost unlimited freedom to choose ways to get Job to curse God to His face.

Why did God do this to His blameless servant? Because God loved Job and wanted the best for him. We shall understand later.

### *Job’s Phenomenal Righteousness and Horrid Torture*

What is a perfect life on earth like? Many people, including Christians, would describe Job’s life before his tribulation began. He did all he could to be a good father to his children. He prospered exceedingly without cheating or defrauding. He was blameless before God. The Accuser could find nothing against Job. No person found a sin when people looked for any sin that Job might have committed.

Yes, Job’s righteousness was truly exceptional. God said that there was no one like him on earth in both Job 1 and 2. In Ezekiel 14 God picked three of the most righteous people of all time up to 600 B.C., and He chose Noah, Job, and Daniel (God did not limit Himself to Jews here: Noah and Job were Gentiles).

Consider further Job’s righteousness in his extraordinary situation. God placed no limit on what Satan could do to Job except to leave him alive. Satan uses utter poverty to destroy some people, excessive riches to destroy others, and so forth; but he chose to destroy Job by

the most extreme pain, hopelessness, and subtle grinding down that he could devise against a person. And Job responded admirably: he did not let these enormous external and internal pressures cause him to let go of his great integrity and his faith in God and His justice. Although we shall soon see that Job stumbled later in his distress, even then he was being as righteous as he was able.

How can we relate to such righteousness? My righteousness might compare with many believers, but not with Job's. When I look at my sins and responses in distresses far milder than Job's, I need to improve very much. But comparing my righteousness and suffering with Job's is a distraction that can keep us from the heart of God's message to us in Job. When obvious truths and natural priorities kept the Corinthian believers from realizing much more important truths, Paul reproved: *"You are looking at things as they are outwardly"* (2Cor. 10:7a). In v. 12 he adds, *"...when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding."*

Do not let Job's admirable righteousness and intense suffering keep you from realizing the more important eternal issues that were at work in Job's situation: his great righteousness is not even what God calls perfection or completeness. Job had a great personal eternal need that God fulfilled through his entire situation: to have a closer, growing relationship with God by more fully seeing His nature and receiving His love. Most or all of us on earth have this very need, which we shall examine in Chapters 2-7. The book of Job shows us how God can work with believers in Christ Jesus, even if we have major weaknesses or if we caused some of our problems by sinning.

*Romans 8:28 for Job and for Us*

This book will reveal how God worked to bring good through huge tragedies. It is good for us to see clearly that Rom. 8:28 applied to Job in addition to us. Consider what Paul wrote to the New Testament believers in Jesus: *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for **good** to those who **love God**, to those who are called according to **His purpose**”* (v. 28).

This is Scripture now (confirmed to be God's word), but was not a Scripture when Paul wrote it to believers in Rome. How did New Testament believers know that this is the truth? Almighty God's nature and character guarantee that He fulfills this word.

Job was doing what v. 28 says: he loved God as much as he was able at that time, and was called according to His purpose. In this book we shall see how God fulfilled v. 28 for Job. And when God made this insight to become a Scripture, it became “even more impossible” for Him to not fulfill His promise that is in His character and nature.

We have seen that Job was truly blameless when God started this whole situation. Let us see the great work that God was doing on behalf of Job. We shall see it in Chapter 2 by considering some of Job's statements that reveal his condition and progress through his whole experience. The great good to Job illustrates how God fulfills major New Testament themes for the true good of Christians in situations that provide no hope (Chapters 4-6).

## Chapter 2

# JOB'S NEED REVEALED AND FULFILLED

In order to appreciate how Job develops through his experience, I first describe his initial condition beyond what Job 1-2 shows. We shall see this condition as we go through the book of Job in this chapter.

Blameless Job did not open up the attacks. Was God giving him a useless test of his faithfulness? No! God was working for Job's good, providing for Job's great need instead of judging his sin. Job needed a new kind of relationship with God, which would let Job grow to spiritual maturity. He started with a great fear of God while needing to know His love like never before. He also had established a righteousness and integrity within himself that – after much prodding – he believed to be better than God's righteousness and judgment. Job's own great righteousness eventually became a source of rebellion.

The weaknesses in Job's righteousness had not yet surfaced at the beginning of his experience. He was still not guilty, but he had reached a plateau in his growth in God. God was using this whole experience to move Job into a healthy new relationship with Him. Job is still benefiting wonderfully from this experience: how can his temporary problems compare with this great eternal good for Job?

### *The Development of Job from This Beginning*

Job's initial condition continued through all of Satan's devastating attacks in Chapters 1-2. Job's responses here were neither sin nor a climax: he remained blameless and upright, but also needing to move into a new dimension in his relationship with God.

Job 3-31 shows the conversation between Job and his three “friends”. Some of his statements especially reveal his progressive development up to the time of the statement. I also supplement these statements with brief summaries of certain chapters that show less essential features of Job's development.

Job's statements in Job 9:28 and 10:14 reveal a key weakness in his level of maturity, view of God, love for Him, and relationship with Him before this whole experience: *“If I sin, then You would take note of me, and **would not acquit me of my guilt**”* (Job 10:14); and *“I know that **You will not acquit me**”* (Job 9:28b). This wrong view of God is a likely source of Job's actions in Job 1:1-5. In Chapter 5 – after we see Job's development from beginning to end – we shall examine this key weakness and how God healed it through this tribulation.

In Job 6:10 he says: *“But it is still my consolation, and I rejoice in unsparing pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One.”* It is good that Job had not denied them, but this is a little “boast”, a very early indicator of his pride and self-righteousness which are coming to the surface. We shall see the ultimate development of this boast when we get to Job 27.

Job 9:2-4 and 11-24 reveal Job's fear of God that once served him so well. Job says: *“If one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him once in a thousand times. Wise in heart and mighty in strength, who has defied Him without **harm**?”* (Job 9:3-4); and *“For though I were right, I could not answer; I would have to implore the mercy of my judge”* (Job 9:15).

In v. 20b-21 Job adds: *“Though I am **guiltless**, He will declare me guilty. I am guiltless....”* And in v. 22-23 he says about God: *“It is*

*all one; therefore I say, 'He destroys the guiltless and the wicked.' If the scourge kills suddenly, **He mocks the despair of the innocent.**"*

Job's condemning judgment of God and His ways is already beginning to surface, but is held back now by Job's great fear of God: "...let not the dread of Him terrify me. Then I would speak and not fear Him; but **I am not like that in myself**" (Job 9:34b-35).

Although contrary to his nature, Job vows to "give full vent to my complaint" (Job 10:1). He challenges God in v. 2-3:

*I will say to God, "Do not condemn me; let me know why You contend with me. **Is it right** for You indeed to oppress, to reject the labor of Your hands, and to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked?"*

In Job 13:3 and 15 he grows bolder, saying that he wants to "**argue**" with God; and Job will grow still bolder after this.

Also in v. 15, Job says about God: "*Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.*" This sounds noble, and a believer can express it with a good heart-attitude toward God, because the believer appreciates his eternal life and his just condemnation if he were without Jesus. In Job's case, this statement comes from his wrong view of God: that Job would be more faithful than God.

But Job also had a real hope in God and His righteousness. Hope helped Job to speak his case for his innocence despite his great fear that God could harm him even more than He already had.

In Job 16, 17, and 19, Job goes through a stage of self-pity in his truly unbearable situation. He uses "I, me, or my" over 150 times in only 67 verses, because the comforters have helped him to become crushed by his situation. He says: "*Pity me, pity me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me. Why do you persecute me as God*

*does, and are not satisfied with my flesh?"* (Job 19:21-22).

In Job 19:25-27 God provides a great revelation for hope, which enabled Job to move out of his painful and deadly self-pity into a more philosophical discussion. After much prodding by the three comforters, Job challenges how God handles the wicked and the righteous in Job 21, 24, and 27. Job starts judging the wicked while not seeing his own iniquity, and he both describes their just destruction and exalts his own righteousness. This helps us see how Job's righteousness within himself not only contaminated his relationship with God, but ultimately also his attitude toward other people.

As Job continues to speak his case while the comforters "defend God" with painful barbs and empty replies, Job develops more confidence in his own righteousness and God's injustice toward him; and the rebellion that had been lying dormant in Job would soon fully emerge for its complete resolution.

In Job 27:2-6 we can see the outgrowth of Job's "holding on to his own integrity and righteousness" without needing to call upon God to give him strength to do what is right. Job says:

*As **God** lives, who **has taken away my right**, and **the Almighty**, who **has embittered my soul**, for as long as life is in **me**, and the breath of God is in **my** nostrils, **my** lips certainly will not speak unjustly, nor will **my** tongue mutter deceit. Far be it from **me** that **I** should declare you right; till I die **I** will not put away **my integrity** from me. **I** hold fast to **my righteousness** and will not let it go. **My** heart does not reproach any of my days.*

Job's strong resolve and mighty fear of God have been corrupted into a boastful attitude of "God has wronged me, but I stay righteous".

In Job 28:28 Job claims that God said: "*And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is*



*understanding.*” Job 1:1 said explicitly that Job was fearing God and turning away from evil, and Job’s claim in 28:28 reveals his level of maturity at that verse. Proverbs 9:10 and Psalm 111:10 express the truth more accurately: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, instead of being wisdom itself. Job did not yet appreciate the “knowing the Lord with His love” that is beyond this good beginning of wisdom.

In Chapter 29 Job longingly recalls his blessings, honor, authority, righteousness, and justice in the good old days. Job brings this into a stark contrast with the “now” of Chapters 30-31, where he accuses God of cruelly persecuting him while he stays righteous. In Job 30:21 he says to God: *“You have become cruel to me; with the might of Your hand You persecute me.”*

Job 29-31 shows that Job’s righteousness, coming from a fear of God, had left his flesh (sinful nature) very much alive, with its self-righteousness, independence, rebellion, etc. Consider two statements in Job 31:35 and 37, which were nearly Job’s last words before God began to answer him: *“Let the Almighty answer me!....Like a prince I would approach Him.”*

Job is now ready to be confronted with the truth. God begins this with a shy and lightly respected young man, Elihu, who was not one of the three comforters. Elihu answered Job’s rebellious assertions clearly in Job 32-37, and then God answered Job directly in Job 38-41.

Here we consider only two points in Job 38-41. When ministering directly to Job for rebellion and presumptuous claims of knowledge, God forcefully confronted Job about lacking the Creator’s knowledge, understanding, authority, wisdom, and power to do whatever He desires to do in His creation. Also, He called Job a faultfinder in Job 40:2, and in v. 8 asked him: *“Will you condemn Me that you may be*

*justified?*” This shows what Job had lapsed into doing as his tribulation continued.

Job 42, the final chapter, shows the outcome of Job's experience. His reply to God shows the great change in Job from what he was like in both Job 1-2 and Job 29-31. In Job 42:2-6 Job says:

*I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. “Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me. I have **heard of You** by the hearing of the ear; but **now my eye sees You**; therefore **I retract**, and I repent in dust and ashes.*

Job is now different in the most basic way. Before this, he had only heard of God, but now he “sees God”! Before God was distant and only hearsay, but now He is real. And God's refusal to condemn sinful Job in Job 42 (and later) would change Job's wrong view of God.

At this point God accepts Job's repentance and restores his fortunes twofold when he prays for his friends. Therefore God's restoration came without any delay, and Job enjoyed an exceeding prosperity for 140 years after his tribulation was completed.

### *Contrasting Job Before and After His Tribulation*

Before the tribulation, Job's conduct was blameless, because he had a great fear of God. But Job had a basic flaw in his righteousness: it was based upon his own works of righteousness, coming from himself instead of from God. This flaw allowed circumstances to change Job's righteousness into being a source of rebellion and boasting before God. When God's righteousness and justice were not seen from Job's perspective – with his limited insight into all that God was doing for all eternity – Job set himself up as an independent

authority who might be able to judge what is just and right better than God.

This basic flaw in Job's righteousness created many other problems that were initially suppressed and not evident, because Job knew they were unrighteous, which he truly detested. These dormant problems in him would be uncovered during this time of testing.

Problems lying dormant in his heart until provoked into expression by this situation include self-pride, self-pity, rebellion, arrogance, boasting, and speaking presumptuously about God. For example, in Job 3-31 Job joined the comforters in speaking presumptuously about God: he presumed that he knew enough to judge God's decisions and actions. All of these problems were pointed out in Job 32-37, as soon as they had become exposed enough for Job's complete repentance – including his claim, *“like a prince I would approach Him”* (Job 31:37).

In such ways Job provides a vivid personal illustration for us of the weakness in even the very best of “a person's own righteousness”, instead of a “righteousness by faith” (Chapter 4).

God knew the hidden spiritual weakness and iniquity in Job's heart\*. Satan believed that Job had a heart problem without knowing what it was. Job could not see it, so that he could not repent of it and be healed. Indeed, the whole book of Job shows how God was giving Job a clean heart. Job began blameless and upright, but with a heart that was ready to sin if cultivated under certain conditions.

After the tribulation, Job had repented with a changed heart and had seen God. Job 42:5 shows that Job had moved from only “hearing of God” into meeting Him: Job's relationship with Him had moved into a whole new dimension, which enabled Job to grow in God again – this time to maturity. This revelation of God to Job was given

as soon as he was prepared to benefit from it, and when Job also prayed for his torturers, this terrifying part of his life was finished.

Job's pride, rebellion, etc., had surfaced through his tribulation so that he could see them, and Elihu had pointed them out at the right time. This enabled Job to repent of these things as well as his faultfinding with God. Job was humbled and had received God's forgiveness, so that they could have a truly healthy relationship for the first time. Job needed to see that God's forgiveness, goodness, wisdom, and love for him were so much greater than his own qualities, which he could now see were limited. Then God could clean his heart. Fully consider the diagram on p. 21 about this cleansing.

Notice: if Job had been "restored" before all this happened, then he would have received only a "band-aid" instead of a preparation to grow in a healthy relationship with God. But when Job reached this point, there was no good reason for a delay, and it pleased the Lord to bless him as soon as he was prepared for it.

Another important change in Job is that now he would not be OVERprotective of his new sons and daughters, because he had a new appreciation of God, His love, and His forgiveness. Also, now Job could communicate to them a forgiving God whom he knew and loved. These changes surely played a major part in his daughters' becoming the fairest women in all the land (Job 42:15).

As a summary statement, Job suffered extremely severe "temporary" losses in order that he could be given more lasting and satisfying major improvements, which he absolutely needed. God really was bringing all things together for good to Job throughout this whole experience.

## JOB'S HEART AND ITS DEEDS

### AT THE BEGINNING

Job was blameless, but his distant relationship with God was going nowhere. Greatly fearing God, Job made his actions as good as he could, but he did not know God well enough and produced his own great righteousness. This left him especially vulnerable to exalting himself and rebelling against God when he could not see what God was doing in a most pressing situation.

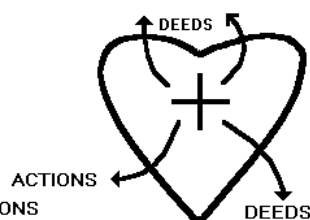
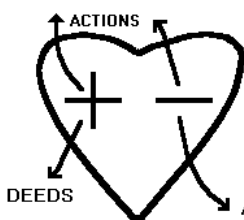
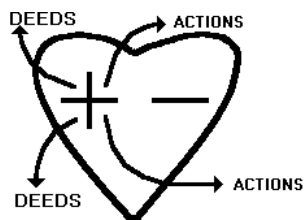
### IN JOB 27-31

At this point near the end of his tribulation, Job's heart was mostly unchanged, and his deeds were worse – not better. Boasting, judging, rebellion, arrogance, and presumption surfaced as Job exalted himself and accused God of wronging him.

[In the diagram, + represents good and – bad in the heart.]

### AT THE END

Job was humbled by seeing his sin and God's majesty. Being reconciled to God and seeing Him for the first time, Job began to comprehend God's great forgiveness and love while establishing an even better fear of God. Job's heart had been cleansed of the sins that came out of it in Job 27-31 (see p. 50), and in Job 42 he had become prepared to grow in a healthy relationship with God like never before.



\* We need a Biblical definition of the heart in order to understand God's ways with us. Considering its use in all the Bible, the heart is the whole inner person – the spirit, soul, personality, mind, will, emotions – everything beyond the visible body that makes a person who he or she is. (You may look up “heart” in Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* and Harris's *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*). In this way our hearts are “who we are” into eternity.

What does this show? A person's heart may contain many attitudes, some of which may contradict each other. The pure in heart shall see God (Matt. 5:8), and impurities in the heart affect what we see in God (you may consider Psalm 18:25-26). James 4:8 calls for God's people to purify our hearts from the things that would keep us away from Him. (I discuss how to work with God to purify our hearts in Chapters 1-5 of *Destroying Spiritual Strongholds*. Its PDF file is free at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com): put “James Tarter” in its search space).



## Chapter 3

## JOB'S COMPLETE HEALING BY JESUS' PERFECT SACRIFICE

Some Christians think that believers are protected from what Job experienced by the New Covenant, so that his experience is sometimes dismissed as irrelevant for believers. To help those who question if his experience is relevant for us, and to give all of us a fresh reminder of God's great provision of Jesus for us and Job, let us see clearly that God's great provisions for Job came by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

### *A Remarkable Description in Job of Jesus' Provision for Us*

By the time of Chapter 31 Job had fallen into sin and needed God's just forgiveness. How was Job righteously reconciled to holy God, so that Job could see God without paying his just penalty for his sins? Christians realize the answer: Jesus and His sacrifice. God even provides a Scripture in Job to show this to us: Job 33:23-28.

(In Elihu's Spirit-inspired intercession, I insert "Job" for "him" when that clarifies the statement. To get the actual NASB Scripture, simply re-substitute him or he for Job, who is not mentioned by name in this intercession in Job 33.)

*<sup>23</sup>If there is an angel as **mediator** for Job, one out of a thousand, to remind a man what is **right for him**, <sup>24</sup>then let him [the mediator] be **gracious** to Job, and say, "**Deliver** him from going down to the pit, I have **found a ransom**;" <sup>25</sup>let his flesh become fresher than in youth, let him return to the days of his youthful vigor; <sup>26</sup>then he will pray to*

*God, and He will accept Job, that Job may **see His face** with joy, and He [God] may restore **His righteousness** to man. <sup>27</sup>Job will sing to men and say, "I have sinned and perverted what is right, and it is not proper for me. <sup>28</sup>He has **redeemed** my soul from **going to the pit**, and my life shall see the light."*

How does Jesus fulfill this Scripture? He is the only mediator between God and men (1Tim. 2:5); He is full of grace and mercy; and He delivers His people from going down to the pit by the ransom He found to justly redeem us: His blood sacrifice of Himself on the cross after perfectly fulfilling the Law.

Moreover, God's great provisions to Job in v. 25-28 came by this ransom of Jesus. Job's health was fully restored. He was reconciled to God before His face with His righteousness. In Job 42 Job confessed his sin and presumption with repentance. Job could also confess God's great goodness toward him in the 140 years after Job 42, and he can continue singing v. 28 for all eternity.

Wow! V. 23-28 also show what God gives believers through Jesus, and we can thank God afresh as we meditate on this. Our own just restoration has come at a great price for our sins by our great and gracious Mediator, so that with God's righteousness we can come before His face in His pure holiness while living on earth.

Being grounded in the New Testament, many Christians may not appreciate how much revelation is included in Elihu's intercession. Consider these insights that are contrary to the thinking of the "natural man", and that were normally unavailable to people before the New Testament except by revelation from the Holy Spirit:

1. That God would provide a great, gracious, and exceptional mediator for sinners.
2. That this mediator would need to find a suitable ransom to justly keep sinful Job from going to the pit, and would find this ransom.



3. That Job would be healed and delivered by this unique provision of this great mediator.
4. That God would give His righteousness to Job or anyone else.

Furthermore, Elihu showed amazing insight in describing benefits of God's giving His righteousness to Job. By receiving it in place of Job's corrupted righteousness, Job could:

1. be healed and restored beyond anyone's imagination at that time;
2. see our holy God's face without paying his just penalty for his sins;
3. confess to men both his sin and God's great goodness to him; and
4. confess the truth of his great future with God.

Such a precise "New Testament" intercession for Job surely did not originate from Elihu or any man, but the Holy Spirit: He described what Jesus would do for Job in the fullness of time, so that he could be justly delivered, healed, and reconciled to God with His righteousness when this was good for Job. How often in the Old Testament do we find the idea that God gives His righteousness\* to a man? This was not made clear until the New Testament Epistles. But all these provisions in Jesus were precisely prophesied for Job, and they were also fulfilled for him by the unique ransom of this gracious Mediator.

### *Major New Testament Themes Illustrated in the Book of Job*

The New Covenant did not render the book of Job obsolete. Job was justly saved by Jesus' perfect sacrifice, and Job's experience meaningfully illustrates and clarifies many New Testament themes and promises. Indeed, Job's experience is a vivid example of them and shows believers clear meanings that do not fit into some common ideas about these themes.

The key work that God accomplished through Job's tribulation is the greatest development for anyone: his personal relationship with God was moved into a whole new dimension for Job's subsequent

growth and development. The New Testament themes and promises in Chapters 4-6 are all related to this key work of God in Job and us.

\* I consistently use the New American Standard Bible (NASB), a very accurate literal translation that I believe repeatedly catches the sense of God's basic message in Job – even when the Hebrew can be translated or interpreted in several ways. This happens in Job 33:26: the NASB translates it as “...*He may restore His righteousness to man*”. Some other versions translate this to the effect of restoring a man to his righteousness – that is, making him righteous again.

But how does a truly sinful man justly get rid of the sins that he committed? How does he become truly righteous before God? Christians now realize that the only way a sinful person can come before God's face without paying his just penalty for his sins is to receive the righteousness that God gives people in Christ (Chapter 4, Rom. 3:21-24, 5:17). What happened to Job in reality causes me to believe that the NASB captures the true sense of this Scripture.

The other translations still show a profound insight by Elihu: that sinful Job was made righteous not by any works of his own, but by this Mediator. This idea is also very rare in the Old Testament (unless one had a profound understanding of animal sacrifices like the author of Hebrews had). Therefore the conclusion that Elihu's intercession was amazingly inspired by the Holy Spirit does not depend on a specific Bible translation. Moreover, the remarkable provisions in Job 33:23-28 that God justly provides to Christians through our Lord Jesus were also provided to Job – and we know that God provided this justly. These are confirmations of the Holy Spirit's inspiration of Elihu's intercession with any translation that I have seen.

## Chapter 4

## RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD BETTER THAN YOUR OWN

Job achieved the greatest righteousness that anyone can produce for himself, and his achievement reveals an enormous flaw. Therefore Job powerfully demonstrates how the righteousness from God for a believer is far superior to the best of his own righteousness.

In Philippians 3:8-11 Paul says:

*I count all things to be loss in view of the **surpassing value** of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, **not having a righteousness of my own** derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, **the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him**, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

The context (v. 1-7) shows Paul's excellent credentials under the Law, even being blameless as to the Law. But Paul values them as nothing compared to the righteousness from God based on faith, so that he could come to know God.

This Scripture is a New Testament theme, not just about Paul. The rich young ruler provided his own great righteousness, and failed to receive real life. This source of righteousness is the basic issue in "faith vs. works", which is the heart of the entire book of Galatians and is a vital part of the foundation of faith in the book of Romans. Rom.

5:17 describes believers as *“those who **receive** the abundance of grace and the **gift of righteousness**”*. In contrast, one who seeks to be justified by a law of works falls from grace and is severed from Christ (Gal. 5:4). These consequences in Galatians are staggering!

If righteousness comes from oneself, then he can boast about himself and his deeds. Boasting really is a great problem: *“... **that no one should boast before God**”* (1Cor. 1:29). *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, **that no one should boast**”* (Eph. 2:8-9). Also, Rom. 3:27 shows that boasting is excluded by a law of faith – a trusting relationship with God – but not by a law of works.

We have seen (Chapter 2) that Job's righteousness changed into boasting and rebellion against God. After a long time of enormous pressures and God's ways not making any sense to Job, he became an independent authority who judged God. Job accused God and boasted: *“As **God** lives, who **has taken away my right, and the Almighty, who has embittered my soul....Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go....**”* (Job 27:2, 5-6). In Job 29-31 Job accused God of cruelly persecuting him and continued to boast about his great righteousness and integrity. Then Job challenged God: *“...Let the Almighty answer me!...**Like a prince I would approach Him**”* (Job 31:35, 37).

Job is by far the best example in Scripture of the problems produced even if anyone does establish a real righteousness by himself. We see how the best righteousness that anyone can produce for himself – true blamelessness before God – can eventually be corrupted into being a source of pride, rebellion, boasting, arrogance, judging, etc. Even if one is able to establish his own righteousness, he is predisposed to fall later by his basically wrong attitude about himself,

God, and others. Righteousness from oneself is unstable by its own nature and is not adequate for eternity.

It astounds the natural mind that righteousness from oneself is a problem: isn't it good to make yourself so righteous that you will do the right thing without depending on the help of someone else? This is a key stumbling block of many people and religions that reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Job reveals key shortcomings in their noblest goals and shows God's wisdom in His plan of salvation through Jesus. And many believers become bewitched like the Galatians: how many believers begin to focus on producing one's own righteousness instead of focusing on cultivating one's relationship with God by His Spirit?

God calls His people to be righteous in practice, but He has a better way to produce this in us than to make us the source of it. In contrast to a righteousness that is sure to fail, the gift of righteousness by grace through faith emphasizes that our righteousness comes from God. Because it is not from oneself, it requires and nurtures a loving, trusting relationship between God and the believer, which a person needs most for his eternal well-being. This trust in God also hinders self-righteousness, which ruins relationships with other people. God's way of salvation equips us to relate well to Him and others for eternity, whereas the "natural" way of mankind is self-centered and causes prideful heart attitudes that work against producing this vital outcome.

The example of Job convinces me that my greatest efforts to establish my own righteousness would at best produce a flawed, unstable righteousness, which would be a source of boasting and eventually collapse under certain conditions. In contrast, if my heart knows that God is my only source of goodness and righteousness, then I cannot switch from trying to learn and receive from Him into judging Him, even if conditions are unbearable and my ways seem to

be so much better than God's.

Moreover, receiving my righteousness from God also helps my growth and development now and for all eternity in these vital ways:

1. This enables me to focus on my relationship with God instead of the consuming task of producing my own righteousness.
2. This requires and nurtures a loving and trusting relationship between God and me.
3. This helps me to relate better to God and others for eternity.

In short, Job can help anyone to see clearly from Scripture that even if he can establish his own righteousness, it is corruptible and not adequate for eternity.

## Chapter 5

## GOING BEYOND A GREAT FEAR OF GOD

The fear of God is good. It is the beginning of wisdom, keeps us from doing foolish things that could cause our ruin or death, and helps us to give God the respect He deserves. It may surprise us that the New Testament shows we should move out of living by the fear of God into something much better: loving Him. The book of Job shows how this is so much better in practice. Job moved from fearing God into seeing Him in His majestic holiness, and into realizing that He loves and forgives Job. Then he was able to approach and stay near God, know Him better, and grow in His love with even better obedience.

### *Perfection Blocked by Job's Fear of God*

Fearing God is a good start in relating to God and others, but the New Testament shows that this does not allow us to grow to perfection in God. (This Greek word for “perfection” means “a good end result”, a completion or maturity, and does not mean “never sinning again”.)

1John 4:18b-19 states this New Testament theme clearly: “*fear involves punishment, and the one who **fears is not perfected in love**. We love, because **He** [God] **first loved us**.” Love can take us further into maturity than fear. To grow to full maturity, we need to go beyond fearing God into truly loving Him, and each of us needs to receive His love before we will love God and others consistently and effectively.*

Job began with a great fear of God. Let us see how Job vividly illustrates the practical truth in this Biblical theme and Scripture.

Luke 7:47 shows the barrier that kept Job from receiving God's love for him, so that he could not grow further in God. In v. 37-50 Jesus explained to Simon the Pharisee why the sinner woman loved Jesus much more than Simon did. Jesus gave this principle in His conclusion: ***“he who is forgiven little, loves little”*** (v. 47).

This was precisely Job's need at the beginning of his tribulation. Job knew much about God and was devoted to Him, and ***“was blameless, upright, **fearing God**, and turning away from evil”*** (Job 1:1, 1:8, 2:3). But Job also had a wrong view of God that was greatly harming their relationship, and he was ***“forgiven little”*** and had matured as much as his fear of God allowed.

How did fearing God stop growth? Look at Job's view of God in Job 10:14: ***“If I sin, then **You would take note of me, and not acquit me of my guilt.**”*** I will illustrate his view of God: He is looking closely at Job as he walks blamelessly along his life journey, always watching for him to do something wrong...“GOT YOU! Job, do you see how you sinned here? I am going to make you pay for your sin.”

Clearly Job had no more than a mixed love for a “faultfinding god” and little desire to stay near God. Job's wrong view of God motivated him to live righteously without realizing God's love for him, and he was unable to learn the wonderful truth. As Job made sure that he never sinned in order to avoid punishment, he also cut off every opportunity for God to show that His love for Job went beyond his ability to live without sinning. He was sacrificing for sins that his ten children possibly committed, and he had resolved all of his sins so well that the devil – whose name is his nature and means “the accuser” – did not challenge God's bragging about Job's great righteousness (Job 1:5-10). Because of Satan's nature, he surely would have accused Job if he had an unresolved sin.



God greatly loved Job, but Job did not know it: he had received little forgiveness, and so he loved God only a little. Job greatly feared God, but fear involved punishment and did not draw Job toward God. Truly loving God would have drawn Job to God, but was beyond Job until later (after he received God's forgiveness). Unable to receive His love, Job had a huge problem in his heart-attitude toward God. This problem surfaced later as Job's great righteousness got corrupted (Job 27-31), but even when unseen this wrong belief about God had kept Job from knowing God better and growing toward Him.

Job enables us to see clearly how a fear of God can go only "so far" in bringing Job or anyone else into the maturity or perfection of 1John 4:18-19. After going that far, Job's great fear of God, his self-control, and his own righteousness actually started to work against his growth to maturity. They kept him from receiving God's forgiveness and love: Job did not realize that God loved him beyond his ability to stay sinless, and he did stay sinless. But fifty years later, would he be any closer to God? Job's personal relationship with God had reached a plateau that prevented further growth to maturity until Job was opened up to receiving God's love.

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Insight into *"the one who fears is not perfected in love"*:

Seeing how Job's fear of God  
started to work against his growth in love

*"We love, because He first loved us"*:

We need first to receive God's love in order to love better.

Job believes: "If I sin, then God will not acquit me".

Job's fear keeps him blameless and receiving no forgiveness.

*"He who is forgiven little, loves little"*

Not knowing God's love, Job receives little and keeps loving little

God healed Job's problem through his situation. Before the healing, major areas in Job's life were being injured. In Chapter 2 we saw a few damaged areas as we surveyed the book of Job: his attitude toward God, himself, and others; and probably the development of his first ten children (he may have overprotected them because he did not truly know God).

*Job: an Excellent Example of Our Growth to Maturity*

Christians have an opportunity to be blameless and upright before God by being washed in the blood of Jesus. Outside of Him, one must be blameless and upright by his own works. Who can be a blameless and upright example for us in the Old Testament?

Consider Job: his condition at the beginning of his tribulation is like a believer whose sins are fully resolved in Christ – we are clean and totally blameless before God.

Job also was not yet mature. Who among us is fully mature now?

Even further – as 1John 4:18-19 says and Job illustrates – many people are kept from really appreciating God's great forgiveness and love by fearing His punishment in their hearts. This hinders their drawing near to God through Jesus' perfect sacrifice, and their growing to perfect maturity in God.

*Truly Loving God Produces Better Obedience*

God requires obedience in both the Old and New Covenants. Fearing God can produce much obedience and a disciplined lifestyle. But God's calling for us goes beyond obedience and righteousness: we are to have healthy relationships with Him and with others. Job was so disciplined and self-controlled that he could live blamelessly before God. Job still lacked: he still needed to move into a healthy

relationship with God, in which he would draw near to God and hear and obey Him better. Consider this further.

God gives His 10 Commandments so clearly that we have no excuse for disobedience. But He gives some other words so softly that we need to draw near to Him to hear what He says to us. Illustrating this truth, Jesus did not tell the spiritual meaning of His parables to everyone, but only to His disciples near Him (Mark 4:9-11).

A great fear of God's punishment would keep us from drawing near to Him and staying close to Him. Then we would not hear His soft words to us, so that we cannot obey them. No matter how much we fear consequences, our sin nature and Satan's deceptive schemes would cause us to not hear and obey all that God wants us to do.

Fearing God's punishment might produce a stricter obedience that by nature is legalistic. If I fear punishment from a watchful authority, I want to stay legal. If I also greatly want something illegal, the key issue in my heart is, "How far can I go and not have God come after me?" In order to stay safe, I may set up rules or boundaries to keep me legal, but they do not cleanse my heart and thereby fail to correct my long-term problems (Col. 2:21-23, p. 49-50).

Truly loving God wipes out these great problems. Jesus told His disciples, ***"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"*** (John 14:15). Both fearing consequences and loving God help us to obey Him, but knowing God's love and loving Him draw us near to Him and cause us to want to hear all that He wants us to do – taking us beyond a duty or self-serving reward. If we truly love God, then we will do what He wants in our desire to please the One we love, so that punishment for disobedience is no longer an issue. 1John 4:18 says: *"...perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment..."* Paul said, *"For the love of Christ controls us..."* (2Cor. 5:14).

Obedying God by loving Him instead of fearing Him fits into our calling to be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:29, 2Cor. 3:18). Jesus obeyed His Father by loving Him – drawing near to Him, staying near to Him, and listening carefully to all that He had to say. Unlike Jesus, our natures need to be conformed into His in many ways. How much more do we need to listen to Him like Jesus did? Truly we must listen to Him better than one who fears punishment.

Obedying God by loving Him instead of fearing Him also fits into our calling to be sons of God (Rom. 8:14-23). In many situations with immature children (which most of us are), great fear produces a more diligent obedience. If that were God's top priority for us, then great fear has its advantage. But our Father's key priority is His calling for us to be His children, which includes taking on His nature and His ways.

Knowing His love gives His children more freedom to learn His ways personally – even to judge a commandment and learn its wisdom and goodness by an objective examination or even by consequences of disobedience. Checking the goodness of what a threatening, mighty punisher says adds huge distractions to learning the quality of the command. 1John 4:18-19 confirms our need to move beyond fearing God's punishment into a mature love for Him.

### *Growing Well After a Good Start in God*

Proverbs 9:10, Proverbs 1:7, and Psalm 111:10 say, *"the fear of the Lord is the **beginning** of"* wisdom and knowledge. 1John 4:18 shows that in growing to personal maturity, we ultimately need to go beyond a fear of God into receiving His love; and v. 19 shows that this enables us to love God and others much better than before.

Dreading God – often a big part of fearing Him – serves a purpose for good to those who have not yet moved into really loving God: to

keep them from giving in to some temptations that would wreck or even end their lives. In my immature state, sometimes my desire to do a wrong thing would have won if I had not been reminded: “God is not mocked.” Then I remembered how God knows my deeds, thoughts, and motives, and I did not want to harm our fellowship by a deliberate sin. Therefore I thank God whenever my fear of God rescues me when I do not love Him enough. But what I need most – my best long-term solution – is to grow in His love.

In maturity I embrace God’s love for me and release only a dread of Him: I do not release a healthy fear of God, in which I truly respect and honor Him. In fact, Jesus commands us twice to fear God in Luke 12:5 alone, and the epistles tell us this repeatedly (1Pet. 2:17, 2Cor. 7:1, Eph. 5:21, and Rev. 14:7). If I truly love God, I will respect, honor, and seek to hear and obey Him. Again, punishment is not an issue.

### *Correcting an Often Misquoted Verse about Fearing God*

When going through Job in Chapter 2, we briefly saw another key error in Job’s beliefs that reveals his lack of maturity in relating to God. Then we quickly continued with considering Job’s total development. This error is often quoted by well-meaning believers now, and so let us consider it further.

In Job 1:1 the Lord says that Job was fearing God and turning away from evil. In Job 28:28, near the end of Job’s tribulation and before his correction, he quoted God as saying: “*Behold, the fear of the Lord, that **is wisdom**; and to depart from evil **is understanding**.*” This is almost what God says in the Bible, but Job quoted only what he understood and did not realize what was beyond his level of maturity. Job’s quote is accurate only for his stage of development, which was early in his growth toward God.

We have seen that Prov. 1:7, 9:10, and Psalm 111:10 all state the truth more accurately: *“the fear of the Lord is the **beginning** of”* wisdom and knowledge. *“To depart from evil **is** understanding”* also reveals Job's immature level of understanding. Psalm 111:10 and Prov. 9:10 again say the truth: all who do His commands have a good understanding, and *“...knowledge of the Holy One **is** understanding”*. Both departing from evil and doing the Lord's commandments are only features of understanding, which is knowledge of the Holy One. In this light, consider again Paul's comprehensive goal of knowing the Lord (Phil. 3:8-10, quoted on p. 27): Paul moved out of his previous level of understanding (where he related only to the commandments of God's Law) and into a mature understanding (knowing holy Lord Jesus).

Finally, remember that Job would soon go beyond this stage of development and into seeing holy God as He is and receiving His forgiveness and love: Job would come to know Him personally.

### *Preventing a Distortion of the Truth in Job*

Consider again the great insight from Job 10:14: Job did not trust God to forgive him if he sinned. Job's lack of trust shows that he did not realize that God's love for him extended beyond his ability to walk blamelessly in God's ways. In turn, not realizing God's love limited Job's love for other undeserving people and for God.

But what if Job decided to sin in order to trust God to forgive him? Could this have shortened his awful time of agony? Or anyone might see his need to love God more and then think that he should go ahead and sin freely, so that he can receive more of God's forgiveness and love. Therefore let us briefly consider this kind of error.

In Job God warns against letting ourselves sin. By His Spirit Elihu warns Job: *“Be careful, do not turn to evil; for you have preferred this*

to affliction” (Job 36:21). Our hearts need to hear this, because most believers already know in our heads that choosing to sin causes problems that are greater than afflictions now. But a sin often seems like the most profitable action, so that our hearts make many decisions contrary to this warning unless we diligently choose God’s will for us.

Sin means “missing the mark”, which produces its own problems. But choosing to sin has a far greater consequence for ourselves than creating problems: deliberate sin works against our getting to know Christ or God. Eph. 4:17-20 shows this effect clearly:

*So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being **darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God** because of the **ignorance** that is in them, because of the **hardness of their heart**; and they, having become **callous**, have **given themselves over to sensuality** for the practice of every kind of **impurity with greediness**. **But you did not learn Christ in this way.***

1John 1:7-2:6 shows that believers must avoid sinning, but also that if one does sin, then to honestly admit it. Job actually needed to see sins that initially he had not committed. This is rare if not unique; in Job 1 God said that there was no one like blameless Job on the earth. Much more often, people do as I have done: we commit sins that we could see, but we refuse to acknowledge them as we seek to be righteous in practice. That is, we tend to deny the mistake or justify the action, instead of confessing the sin with repentance and with God’s loving sacrifice of Jesus as our only justification. But if I often deny that I have sinned, then I will find myself to be like Job and Simon the Pharisee (p. 32): not receiving much love from God, my love for Him and others will not be enough to obey Him when that is hard to do.

Eventually sin is only harmful. Sin is any way to “miss the mark” of God’s best for us. We do not get to know God nor grow in His love by

choosing to sin or by denying it. It gives us a hard heart, so that we fail to appreciate God's costly forgiveness when He offers it to us without cost.

But how do we grow to maturity while avoiding unnecessary "Job experiences"? To answer this, let us answer another question. Who is the best source of my "self-control"? Does it mean my control of myself, or my letting God's Spirit control myself?

### *The Best Source of "Self-Control" in Believers*

We have seen that Job's solid control of his actions began to work against his growth, because this control originated in his great fear of God that included a dread of His punishment (1John 4:18). Job's built-in righteousness kept him from realizing God's love, which in turn kept Job from loving Him and drawing near to Him.

Job could not shorten or avoid his tribulation by choosing to sin, by letting go of his excellent control of himself. That would have hurt his coming to truly know God, and was not the way that Job did get to see Him accurately. But Job did need to be moved out of his complete control of himself in order to grow in God, and God did this for him.

Christians must make a change like Job's. Our own control of our righteousness must be replaced with the better control by God's Spirit while we do not let go of our commitment to righteousness (God's work in and through us available in Christ). This change in control of self is produced as a believer comes to see, know, and appreciate his own weaknesses and God's great personal love for him. This involves the believer's heart realizing these three truths:

1. he often does not make good choices for righteousness;
2. he lacks God's wisdom and perspective about what is truly needed and good both now and for the future;



3. God in His love consistently makes better choices for him than he knows how to make for himself.

In a way people like me are ahead of Job: we have already sinned and need only to fully face our sins with God in order to receive all the forgiveness that He lavishes upon us. By being honest with ourselves, we do not need great pain to enable us to see our sins, so that we may receive God's love through Jesus' great sacrifice for us. But from Adam and Eve onward, mankind has had unconscious ways to avoid facing unwanted truths that must be addressed (often called "denial").

This change in our control is Scriptural and quite important. Self-control is a "*fruit of the Spirit*" (Gal. 5:23). Paul said, "*For the love of Christ controls us...*" (2Cor. 5:14). The Law of sin and death is replaced by the Law of Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2-4, 7:6, Gal. 3:22-26, and 2Cor. 3:6-9).

In this last point, a believer abandons efforts to satisfy religious requirements by his own strength in order to yield the control of himself to the Holy Spirit (or Christ Jesus), who leads him to do what is both right and life-giving (Rom. 8:2-4 and its context of Rom. 7-8). In this way "*we establish the Law*" by faith (Rom. 3:31).

All of this fits into the theme from Job in Chapter 4: it is far better to continually yield to God and let Him produce His righteousness in us than to establish our own righteousness – to look to one's own self as the source of righteousness. Paul shows this eloquently in Phil. 3:8-10 (p. 27) and in Gal. 2:16-21. In v. 20 he says: "*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is **no longer I** who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.*"

This change in control seems academic. In practice a believer must exercise faith that God has given him whatever is needed to

overcome any temptation, and must exercise all of the available control of self. But realizing the true source of self-control is vital. It causes a believer to have a very different heart-attitude toward God, himself, and others as he sees God working righteousness in him: the self-control from God prevents the self-righteousness, rebellion, boasting before God, and other corruptors that eventually come with producing one's own righteousness (Chapter 4).

Yes, we need to see God accurately, but each of us also needs to see himself accurately to get a good foundation for a healthy long-term relationship with Him. We need to see both who we are with Jesus and what we would be like without Him in order to grow well to maturity. I personally find it easier now to rejoice in God's strength for my weakness, and His excellence with me as an earthen vessel, because I realize that this is helping to develop my love for Him and others. When I see my weaknesses and God's love and greatness in my life, then:

- \* I am seeing the truth,
- \* I receive God's love, so that I love Him more,
- \* I deeply want Him as God more than myself,
- \* I have a stronger desire to obey Him on a long-term basis,
- \* I am protected from many strong long-term corruptors, and
- \* I have a greater empathy with other obviously imperfect people and can love them much better.

In Chapters 4-5 we have seen from Job that God's priority for us to have a healthy relationship with Him produces vital results needed for our life forever. They bring out great New Testament truths about God's unique way of salvation in Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 6

## **JOB: SHOWING GOD’S PRIORITY FOR OUR ETERNAL GOOD**

Should our future eternal life be a primary driving force in our lives now? The New Testament proclaims “Yes”. Job illustrates this and two related priorities of God for our lives on earth: to develop our eternal relationship with Him, in which we are perfected or matured in His love; and to cleanse our hearts. God seeks good actions from a clean heart, not a mere suppression of sinful behavior in our lives now.

These insights from Job can help us to appreciate the real meaning of “good” in Romans 8:28, God’s fantastic promise.

### *Eternal Life Shaping Our Lives Today*

God’s promise for future eternal life should greatly impact our lives now. This is clearly a “New Testament theme” – there are so many Scriptures about it that I simply refer interested readers to two graphic ones: 1Cor. 15:12-20 and Mark 9:42-50. The example of Job demonstrates that we should view God’s decisions for our lives from the perspective of our eternal life in Jesus. Consider this further.

God is precise in what He did and did not say about the timing of Job’s experience, so that Christians can learn what we should from it and not get into irrelevant comparisons of Job’s afflictions with our own. Job’s age in this tribulation is not given. While Job 7:3 and 29:1 hint that Job’s tribulation lasted months, God really does not show how long it lasted. We saw (Chapter 2) that it lasted only as long as it was

needed or doing good for Job, and it was removed as soon as this became really “good” or healthful for Job.

These features in timing are exactly what Christians need in order to receive appropriate instruction from Job. People of any age can have a “Job experience”. And its duration varies for different people, because God is working to produce good results in people instead of meeting some time limit or quota of suffering.

God does tell us specifically how long Job was blessed after his tribulation. Job lived 140 years after it. This amount of time can have a special meaning: if we use the 70-year standard of a lifetime in Psalm 90:10, God gave Job precisely two full lifetimes of blessings on earth after his tribulation. Exactly “two full lifetimes” can remind us about our own eternal life, even though we have much more – God promises His people blessings for all eternity instead of only two full lifetimes after a tribulation. In practice we often forget this truth: any time of suffering on earth is merely a season in our eternity.

We cannot see eternal blessings now, so that we receive them now by faith. We do see suffering now, but by faith believers in Jesus can be confident that God has eternal provisions to more than compensate for any time of intense suffering.

### *God's Priority for Our Healthy Relationship with Him*

In Job we see that a healthy relationship with God is a far higher priority of God for us than our material prosperity or anything else that comes and goes within our lifetimes on earth. This healthy relationship is a state of spiritual maturity and allows further growth and blessings for eternity – providing for our greatest good over our whole eternity.

We considered (Chapter 5) insights from the New Testament and Job into a key ingredient for developing our spiritual maturity: receiving

God's love. The New Testament and Job both show Christians another vital ingredient for personal maturity: suffering (Heb. 5:7-9, 1Peter 2:18-25, and 1Peter 4:1, 12-13).

God's priority for our growth to maturity in Him could include intense temporary suffering. Job's relationship with God could have remained distant; but Job moved into his healthy relationship through suffering, and God freely released all that Job had to Satan to get this benefit for Job. And remember Paul's emphasis in Phil. 3:8-10: he considered all things to be rubbish and welcomed their loss if that would help him to know Christ Jesus better. Indeed, Christian martyrs over the ages – including all of the apostles – welcomed such losses as they walked with our Lord God.

### *Showing What Is Really Good for Us in God's Promises*

We can now better appreciate the meaning of God's great promise for good in Rom. 8:28 when there is great suffering: ***"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*** Believers in Paul's day knew that this word is true because God's nature demands it: even before He made it a Scripture, He would surely fulfill it (p. 12).

Clearly Job loved God as much as his immaturity allowed and was called according to His purpose. Therefore Job qualified for this promise, and we have seen how his drastic experience was truly very good to him: the worst suffering that Satan could produce moved Job from being stuck into being prepared for a healthy relationship with God for all eternity. God did not merely salvage a few good things out of Job's catastrophes, but made all things work for Job's good. In his case his future blessings included restoring material prosperity when this became good for Job again. The material blessings were only a

part of his total blessings and came from God’s loving intentions for Job’s good that were operating throughout his experience.

What is the meaning of “good” in Rom. 8:28? V. 29 applies v. 28 directly to God’s eternal purpose of conforming believers to the image of Christ. Consider Job as an example. Vital permanent improvements are worth far more than any temporary thing on earth. What is our most vital need? The quality of our relationship with God: conforming us to Christ and everything else eternal come out of this. If necessary, God would cause a person to lose something or everything in order to produce changes that he needs for his life forever. The alternative is to leave him lacking for eternity, which is not good for him.

.....  
**WAS IT WORTH IT?**

**APPROACHING AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE**

**A Time Line Representing Job’s Lifetime From Birth Until Now**

- .... represents Job’s lifetime from birth through his time of affliction
- represents Job’s blessed 140-year life on earth after his afflictions
- represents Job’s life with God from physical death until 2000 A.D.

■■-----  
Job’s probable time of affliction is too brief to be seen on the line. (The times other than the 140 years are estimated, but likely variations do not affect the picture.) This line shows only the beginning of Job’s blessings that were greatly enhanced by what God produced through his afflictions. Consider how tiny our own afflictions become when we approach an eternal perspective.

.....  
In another promise, Jesus tells His disciples: *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is **good** to those who ask Him”* (Matt. 7:11). The book of Job again helps us to appreciate that this promise is true, but also that some very tough “temporary” situations may be good.

(To help balance the truth in this section, God also has many creative solutions that produce good permanent changes through the obedience of faith. God may use extreme temporary suffering for our good, but He has many more tools than that to provide what we need, and some tools may quickly cause delight without suffering.)

### *Does God Ever Work Through Sickness?*

Some of my Christian friends believe that because sickness is not from God, we can pray in faith for God to heal any cleansed believer at any time, because it is always God's will to heal us.

The example of Job answers this belief clearly. As we have seen, God's work for Job's good included the terrible sickness that he experienced. Job provides an explicit example in Scripture of how God used a terrible sickness to produce a very good work in Job. He needed his iniquity to surface so that he could see his sin, and then he could discover God's love for him without his deserving it. If Job were healed before this happened – before Job 27-31 – then the physical healing would have been a band-aid that would have interfered with Job's much-needed life and growth in God.

God's top priority for Job or any of us is not our physical health or any other temporary thing, but is our eternal welfare. To the extent that this eternal work is provided for, God delights in giving us healing and good health. His work through Jesus demonstrates this, and the example of Job illustrates this.

### *Job's Experience: A Relevant Example for Believers in Jesus*

Those who believe that God's provision in Jesus includes our healing and health at all times usually dismiss the relevance of Job because he was not under the New Covenant in Jesus. Job was not, but we have many ways to see that Job is an excellent Scriptural

example for believers in Jesus. On p. 34 we saw some ways in order to get into a thorough discussion of Job as a great example for us, but now let us consider this issue more fully.

Consider Elihu's Spirit-inspired intercession (Job 33:23-28, Chapter 3): it was completely fulfilled for Job and amazingly describes what our Mediator Jesus provides for His believers. Job had fallen into sin, but was reconciled to our holy God with His righteousness through the ransom of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, even as we are. Like us, Job received his provisions through his great Mediator Jesus, and this also included Job's healing when this became good for him.

We have also seen that Job's experience fulfilled major New Testament promises and themes. Job received the extraordinary promise for good in Rom. 8:28, received righteousness from our holy God, had fear block his growth in God, and much more. Job merely shatters some of our illusions about the meaning of these promises.

Another powerful way is that believers who have resolved all their sins before God by Jesus' perfect sacrifice on the cross are justly made "*holy and **blameless** before Him*" (Eph. 1:4, Col. 1:22). Almost no one in the Old Testament qualifies as an example for holy and blameless Christians; but God explicitly makes Job an exception, calling him blameless at the beginning of his tribulation and showing this in other ways (Chapters 1, 5).

Moreover, blameless Job greatly needed to grow to maturity in God – another important feature of believers in Jesus.

Such ways show me that Job's experience has not been made obsolete by the New Covenant, but is a very relevant example for believers. Job really needed his experience for his full eternal blessings, and a believer could need something like this at some stage in his growth in Jesus.

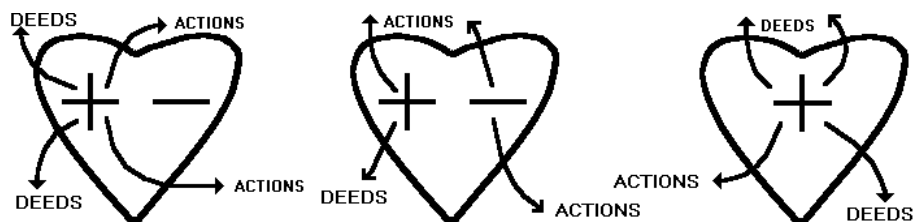


*God's Priority for Our Clean Hearts*

God ultimately wants His people to do more than suppress sinful behavior. God declares our need for clean hearts in the Old Testament, but this is a central theme of the New Testament. For example, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) shows that God looks beyond what we are doing now in order to mature or perfect our hearts, just as He did for Job. Our hearts are “who we are” and provide a foundation for our eternal character, whereas our words and deeds are merely tangible expressions of what is in our hearts at the time.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Job could not see many sins lying dormant in his heart, ready to surface with certain circumstances. This condition is common to mankind. Jer. 17:9-10 shows the condition of any heart that God has not yet purified: *“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”*

Job was blameless but with problems in his heart before his tribulation began, and God used it to give him a clean heart. But when Job's time of tribulation was nearly over in Job 27-31, his heart was no better and his actions worse. Only at the end was Job broken and able to see his sins. This enabled him to confess them to God – to open up to Him the sins that Job saw in his heart, which became clear to him in Job 32-41.



Job's fear of God and hatred of evil in himself caused him to face his sins honestly, so that his heart was cleansed by Jesus' perfect sacrifice from the foundation of the world. Job's briefly described life at the end (Job 42) gives every indication that his heart was changed by his experience and his new relationship with God.

1. Job repented before he received any answers to his questions or healing of his afflictions, and even before he learned about God's love. Suppressed pride, rebellion, and faultfinding of God were not present in Job's response in Job 42:1-6: such heart-sins were gone, and Job was ready to let God be God.
2. Job prayed for his torturers as God directed (Job 42:8, 10). God said that they deserved punishment, and if Job was still judging people who committed wickedness, then in his heart he would have prayed for their just punishment.
3. God continues to refine His people until He accomplishes what is needed. Job's peaceful life after all this shows that God had completed this part of His work in Job: his exposed heart-sins were truly gone.

Was Job's heart cleansed of its former sins? Clearly it was, and Job was also on his way to knowing God and His love for Job like never before. These eternal benefits are priceless.

Job provides a tangible illustration that God's work to give us a clean heart – *"to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1John 1:7-9) – goes beyond repeated washings by the blood of Jesus and includes long-term heart-changes produced through life experiences.

Consider how this may apply to you. As you experience God's work to give you a clean heart, it may look like you are getting worse, not better. If this is true, continue to seek Him, realizing that you are seeing weaknesses in your heart that were always there and waiting to surface in certain situations. God knew these problems before He called you, and they are surfacing now so that you can confess and ultimately have your whole heart cleansed from all unrighteousness.

## Chapter 7

## **NEEDING TO SEE GOD'S NATURE APART FROM HIS POWER**

God loves us, gives us grace, and is good to us. He is faithful, wise, Creator of all, forgiving, kind, compassionate, just, righteous, truthful, and much more. He also is all-powerful, and this feature affects how we see Him more than we want to admit.

Everyone needs to see God's true nature apart from His ability to devastate us. His absolute power does affect our opinions, causing us to want to side with Him or maybe rebel against Him. The staggering consequences of being for Him or against Him disturb our objectivity in considering how He is righteous in complex situations, especially when we continue to hurt badly and not understand what He is doing.

What helps you see God's true nature apart from His total power?

Job needed to see God's righteousness apart from His power. Some verses already examined in another context and some other Scriptures will show us Job's need. Then we shall see how God made a special provision for Job, and see how Jesus is God's special provision to meet this real need of mankind today.

### *Job's Developing Need to See Beyond God's Awesome Power*

Job speaks only good concerning God's decisions about him in Job 1-2. In Job 2:10 he asks his wife, "*Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?*" The question shows Job's sense of justice and his appreciation of God's goodness to him – he was

thankful. Job also tries valiantly to trust God and stay with Him: in Job 6:3 Job says that his words of grief in Job 3 were rash.

But he could not maintain this attitude as his situation becomes literally unbearable while God seems so unjust in it. In Job 7:11 Job decides to restrain what he says no longer: *"Therefore, I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul."* However, Job's awe of God's great power keeps restraining him from speaking freely until Job 27.

Job 9:2-4 and 9:11-24 show the fear of God – including a great respect for His power – that had previously served Job very well:

*If one wished to dispute with God, he could not answer Him once in a thousand times. Wise in heart and **mighty in strength**, who has **defied Him without harm?** (Job 9:3-4).*

*If it is a matter of **power**, behold, **He is the strong one!** And if it is a matter of **justice**, who can summon Him?...**Though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty.** I am guiltless.... (v. 19-21).*

*It is all one; therefore I say, "He destroys the guiltless and the wicked." If the scourge kills suddenly, **He mocks the despair of the innocent.** (v. 22-23).*

In v. 19-23 Job doubts God's justice and righteousness, but fully appreciates His awesome power.

Soon Job shows clearly that his dread of God's power kept him from complaining easily. Job talks about God in Job 9:32-10:3:

*For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both. Let Him remove His rod from me, and **let not dread of Him terrify me. Then I would speak and not fear Him; but I am not like that in myself.** I loathe my own life; I will give full vent to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, "Do not condemn me; let me know why You contend with me. **Is it right** for You to oppress, to reject the labor of Your hands, and to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked?"*

Job grows bolder. In Job 13:3 he says: *"But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue with God."* Job repeats: *"I will argue my ways before Him"* (Job 13:15b). A few verses later (v. 20-22) Job reveals the ongoing restraint on himself – this time speaking to God: *"Only two things do not do to me, then I will not hide from Your face: remove Your hand from me, and **let not the dread of You terrify me.** Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, then reply to me."*

In Job 23 Job's desire intensifies to the point where he would seek out God to argue with Him – if Job could only find Him:

*Even today my complaint is rebellion; His hand is heavy despite my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn the words which He would answer, and perceive what He would say to me. <sup>6</sup>**Would He contend with me by the greatness of His power?** No, surely He would pay attention to me. <sup>7</sup>**There the upright would reason with Him;** and I would be **delivered forever from my Judge** (Job 23:2-7).*

Job is fully convinced that he is right and Almighty God is wrong, and the upright could reason with God and show Him that He made a mistake with Job, who wants to get free from God forever. But Job's hope for justice is clouded by concern about God's power. Job shows his concern by his unprovoked question and longing reply in v. 6. And he knows that this whole scene is merely his wishful imagination: in v. 8-9 he emphasizes again how he cannot find God to present his case.

In v. 10-12\* (p. 59-60) Job shows his case for his righteousness:

<sup>10</sup>*But He [God] knows the way I take; when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. <sup>11</sup>My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.* (Job 23:10-12)

Job thinks he has a clear case for his righteousness and knows he did not sin to create his great tribulation. Job thinks that this trial would

prove that he already is like pure gold. But Job also knows that God has all power and does whatever He pleases. Job continues:

*But He is unique and **who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does.** For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such decrees are with Him. Therefore I would be dismayed at His presence; when I consider, **I am terrified of Him.** It is God who has made my heart faint, and the Almighty who has dismayed me. (Job 23:13-16)*

We see Job's intense longing to consider righteousness and justice by themselves. God's power to be sovereign is not contested, but justice, righteousness, and goodness are; and Job's terror of God's great power is still interfering with considering them freely. But Job resolves that his terror will no longer keep him from speaking what he believes, even though he realizes that his rebellion (v. 2) could cause him even greater problems: "*But I am **not silenced** by the darkness, nor deep gloom which covers me*" (Job 23:17).

Soon Job contrasts his righteousness to God's injustice with him:

*As **God** lives, who **has taken away my right**, and **the Almighty**, who **has embittered my soul**, for as long as life is in me, and the breath of God is in my nostrils, my lips certainly will not speak unjustly, nor will my tongue mutter deceit. Far be it from me that I should declare you right; till I die I will not put away **my integrity** from me. I hold fast to **my righteousness** and will not let it go. **My heart does not reproach any of my days.** (Job 27:2-6)*

Job's contrast of his righteousness and God's injustice gets even bolder in Job 29-31. After Job proclaims his truly great righteousness and honor among men in Job 29, he describes his present horrible condition in Job 30. He accuses God: "**You have become cruel to me; with the might of Your hand You persecute me**" (Job 30:21). In Job's eyes at this point, God is no longer merely making a mistake, but is

cruelly persecuting righteous Job: God has the power to do whatever He wants, and is deliberately cruel in His injustice to Job.

In Job 31, Job asserts his own integrity as evidence of God's failure to treat him fairly or justly, and he challenges God while considering himself at least His equal in justice and righteousness. In v. 35 Job challenges, "**Let the Almighty answer me!**"; and in v. 37 he says about God: "**Like a prince I would approach Him.**" After another statement protesting his innocence, Job's words end (v. 40), and God begins to answer him through the lightly respected Elihu.

In Job 33:4-7 Elihu says:

*The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. Refute me if you can; array yourselves before me, take your stand. Behold, I belong to God **like you; I too** have been formed out of clay. Behold, **no fear of me should terrify you, nor should my pressure weigh heavily upon you.***

Elihu does not claim superiority over Job, but claims to be like Job even while seeing that pitiful Job had become sinful. This is exactly what Job needs: it enables him to see God's righteousness clearly and without terror. Job can consider each statement for what it is without the dreadful threat of God if Elihu's statement is right (Elihu is fallible).

The unterrifying Elihu answers Job's specific challenges to God In Job 32-37. This fulfills Job's need to see God's righteousness apart from His power, and also prepares Job to meet God and hear from Him directly – with humble repentance and without boasting!

Then God Himself answers Job's rebellious challenge in Job 38-41. God shows His awesome sovereignty and understanding of what He is doing, which is just, right, and cannot be rightly judged by ignorant men – which was Job and is everyone whom He has not shown what He truly is doing.

In Job 40:2 and 8, God says what Job really did as the test continued. God calls Job a faultfinder who tried to condemn God in order to justify himself. This confirms Elihu's judgment as he began to speak: that Job justified himself before God (Job 32:2).

Notice how God's direct ministry in Job 38-41 would not have even touched Job's need if Elihu had not shown Job clearly how he had lapsed into sin. In Job 23-31 Job was convinced that he was innocent and – at least in his own situation – was more righteous than God. In this condition God's repeated questions, "*Have you...?*" and "*Can you...?*", would have left Job's heart muttering: "I know You can do anything You want. I cannot escape a thing You put on Me. But I am innocent and You are not treating me justly."

Instead, Job was prepared by Elihu's ministry that clearly showed Job his sins. Then Job realized that he was not able to teach God anything, and that God did not need to search for faults to condemn Job. And when God did not condemn Job in Job 42 and thereafter, Job's heart soon learned that God is not at all a faultfinder, but instead would freely forgive in His love for Job.

Job fully repents in Job 42, and he confesses and retracts his presumptuous statements. Job also shows that his relationship with God has moved into a new dimension: "*I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You*" (Job 42:5). With this breakthrough that gives room for much further growth, Job's fortunes are restored without delay.

### *An Overview of Job's Emerging Need*

The chapters in Job can be given brief summaries that display Job's emerging need to see God's righteousness apart from His great power, and then God's provision for Job's need.



Chapter

Chapter Summary

- 1-2 Job's initial trusting acceptance of God's decisions
- 3,6 Job grieves over his horrible condition without attacking God's decisions.
- 7 Job decides to stop restraining his speech, and so he turns from grieving into firing questions directly to God about why He was afflicting Job. But his restraint continues after this.
- 9 Job disputes God's justice and first speaks his need to see God's justice and righteousness apart from His incontestable power: Job is beginning to remove his ongoing restraint on speaking his opinion about God's decisions.
- 9,13 Job asks God to remove his dread of God so that they can speak freely – especially about justice and righteousness.
- 23 Job describes his desire to argue with God about justice, and explains how His power interferes with doing this.
- 27-31 Job continues to confess God's absolute power and complain about His injustice until this culminates in Job's overt boasting and rebellion in Job 31.
- 32-37 God answers Job through the lightly respected Elihu\*\* (p. 60) to show Job his shortcomings and God's righteousness apart from His majestic power. Elihu speaks by the Holy Spirit: some words convict Job of specific sins while others praise God and His works.
- 36-41 Elihu's praise of God that begins in Job 36 leads into God's direct revelation of Himself to Job in Job 38-41.
- 42 Job 36-41 brings key features of God together for Job and sets up his full repentance and restoration in Job 42.

*God's Provision for Job and for All People Today*

Job was not able to freely consider God's righteousness and justice because of his awe and dread of God's power. Job did not want to fight against God – not only because it was wrong, but also because God had the terrifying power to hurt him worse than ever.

1John 4:18-19 shows that love is not perfected in fear, and that we love because He first loved us. Job greatly needed to move beyond his great fear of God into loving God for who He is. To have a healthy relationship with God for eternity, Job needed God's power

and righteousness to be separated from each other long enough for Job to see his unrighteousness and God's good and righteous nature.

Elihu's ministry\*\* provided this separation: by God's Spirit Elihu spoke God's word clearly. This enabled Job to see his iniquity and God's righteous works without being overwhelmed by a dread of God's ability to harm him further. This separation, plus Elihu's intercession for key provisions by Jesus, enabled Job to receive God's forgiveness and love. Then Job could love God and others better than ever.

Many people need to see God's righteousness separated from His power. Consider all that He can do to you personally forever. Indeed, the fear of His absolute power keeps many people from learning what God is truly like and helps them to accept distortions of what the Bible reveals Him to be. Distorted images of God may seem tolerable, because everyone's heart contains some wrong ideas about Him. But as with Job, a severely distorted image of God may stunt a person's development for all eternity and mess up any relationship with God.

God provides this separation for us all by coming to us as a baby, and then growing naturally and by the Holy Spirit into a physical man, so that we can see God apart from His great power. John 1:1-3 shows that the Word of God created all things with the Father. John 1:14, 17-18 show that the Creator came to mankind in Jesus' physical body. Heb. 1:3, John 14:9, and other Scriptures show that Jesus is exactly like God (implying His finite features), while Heb. 2:17 and 4:15 say that Jesus was like us in all things except sin. His earthly body did not create the whole earth and sun and more, but hid this truth so that we can see God better. For this same reason, Jesus also did not exercise His role as Judge while on earth (John 12:47).

This separation is a vital part of God's unique salvation in Jesus. He is an exact model of God's nature, character, and righteousness

except for His overwhelming qualities. Jesus shows us exactly what God would be like if He were confined to a human body like our own.

How has God met the need of people to see His character and His righteousness apart from His overwhelming power? He came to us as the man Jesus. Almost universally, people do not see Jesus as terrifying or threatening, and they can appreciate His goodness even while many do not realize who He is or whom His nature reveals.

### *Putting God's Righteousness and Power Back Together*

After Job came to realize that he was unable to judge God's righteousness, God's direct revelation to Job convinced him that God has all authority, right, and power to do whatever He wants to do in His creation. This enabled Job to receive a complete corrective ministry to his rebellion, so that he did not lose the healthy part of his strong fear of God: a healthy respect that was a good "beginning of wisdom".

Likewise, anyone who does not see God's total power in addition to the man Jesus is missing an essential part of God's nature. A believer's heart really needs to comprehend God's great love for him in Jesus. Then he needs to stay rooted and grounded in love while he openly receives God's fresh revelation of His sovereign power, authority over all things, and holiness (He is with us in the world, but our hearts should know that He is not a part of it or its corrupt ways).

We need to appreciate God's love (including His grace, mercy, and forgiveness), His absolute sovereignty, His holiness (including His justice and righteousness), and our great need for Him in order to have a good foundation for growth to true maturity.

\* When we were considering Job 23 on p. 53, we saw one of the most famous quotes from Job: ***"When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold"*** (v. 10b). As we considered its context, we saw clearly

that Job was saying something very different from the way that this is usually interpreted. In v. 4-6 Job told how he would present his case before God and the upright, and said in v. 7: *“There the upright would reason with Him; and **I would be delivered forever from my Judge.**”* Job thought that he was already as gold and would be acquitted by merely having his case heard by the upright, for they would reason with God and show Him how He made a mistake with righteous Job. Job expected his own righteousness to vindicate himself against God's work with him, and his goal was to get away from God forever.

But be careful about correcting a believer who says v. 10b: he may have a very good heart-attitude toward God in saying this. A believer often reads into Job's statement that God will continue to refine the sin out of him (the believer) until he comes out purified like refined gold. In this case the statement is valid for him even though it does not represent Job's attitude and what he really was saying.

The emphasis in this footnote is our need to be careful when quoting from Job 3-31 (this footnote is one reference in a brief discussion of this topic in the Appendix).

\*\* Elihu's ministry is remarkable. It seems to be so hard on poor Job that most people do not realize what it is: a prophetic word to Job by the Holy Spirit to provide for Job's need at that time. In this chapter we mentioned a few of the many features in Elihu's ministry to Job that kept it from being as hard as it looks – it is much more gentle than the poisonous ministry of Scriptural themes and words by the comforters.

Indeed, the book of Job is the most extensive illustration of good and bad personal ministry in the Bible: 34 consecutive chapters plus a context with authority. The 34 chapters are 9 chapters of Scripture-like ministry that God totally condemned, 19 chapters of the victim's responses, and 6 chapters of surprisingly great ministry. Insights from Job into personal ministry to an afflicted person form a topic in itself that is built on understanding the book of Job. This and other topics built on understanding Job are contained in a book called *Insights from Job*. See p. 71-72 for more information about the extra topics and how to get a PDF file of that whole book for free.

## Chapter 8

## **GOD'S GOOD AND SATAN'S EVIL CAUSING THE SAME EVENTS**

We have seen the great good that God did for Job in a surprising and often unnoticed way. By cleaning Job's heart and helping him to see himself and God better, God brought their relationship into a whole new dimension that enabled Job to grow toward Him in love. Ultimately this produced blessings for Job that last forever. God also restored all of Job's blessings for his two full lifetimes on earth after his tribulation (p. 44), and in God "restoration" is "better than before". Clearly God brought all things together for good to Job, just as God promises in Rom. 8:28 to anyone who meets its requirements.

Designing attacks to get Job to curse God and die, Satan's motive was opposite to God's in causing Job's situation (Chapter 1, Job 1-2): one to destroy Job and one to bring great good to him. This difference fully agrees with Jesus' contrast of His motives with Satan's: "*The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly*" (John 10:10). These opposite motives come from the totally different natures of God and Satan.

Therefore every harsh circumstance upon Job had two different wills with opposing motives behind them. Satan was trying to eternally maim, kill, and destroy Job with hate that is easily seen when we look at the circumstances, because Satan arranged them to give that effect. God let him use his wildest imaginations and schemes in every area of Job's life and person in order to alienate him from God, but God also

took Satan's craftiest and most vicious schemes against Job and gave Job exactly what he needed through them. God worked in these same circumstances to meet Job's needs as a loving, wise, and all-powerful Father. But this great truth could have been received only by faith, because it was nowhere in sight at the time. Indeed, it was impossible to see God's purpose during the situation.

Let us see all of this in two schemes of Satan against Job.

### *Destroying Job's Possessions, Children, and Health*

Satan's first scheme was to use a barrage of sudden disasters to overwhelm Job with shock, great grief, and anger with God. Satan culminated this scheme by voicing his goal for Job through his grieving wife: "*Curse God and die!*"

Before this scheme began, Job wrongly saw God as a faultfinder who would make Job pay for every sin. We love by first receiving the love God gives us, but Job received little of it and – on his own – would never move out of his respectful but distant relationship with his great Faultfinder. Satan tried to ruin even this little relationship by suddenly overpowering Job with grief, so that he would curse God rashly. But God, knowing Job's heart and what he could and could not handle, was moving him out of being stuck and into a new, healthy relationship with God that Job greatly needed for his eternal future.

### *Satan's Second Scheme: The Ministry of the Three Comforters*

When sudden disasters failed to get Job to curse God, Satan's second scheme was to combine continued physical torture with emotional torture by the comforters to provoke Job to despair, self-pity, depression, and accusations against God, all of which were steps toward provoking Job to curse God. The insensitive comforters were especially useful for this purpose, because they had good intentions

toward Job and spoke Scriptural words. The comforters subtly incited Job against God by supposedly “defending” Him with painful barbs while saying nothing that applied to Job or his situation. After a while, it seemed that God had no defense for this apparent injustice to Job.

Clearly Satan was using the comforters for his goal of getting Job to curse God. Here Satan tried to get far more than a rash curse: he tried to destroy Job by producing a deep, steadfast alienation from God, which would cause Job’s death and total destruction. Satan put together the especially toxic mixture of good intentions, Scriptural words, and a brutal crushing of Job’s hope in God. Satan could do this because the comforters operated apart from God: in Paul’s language, they were “in the flesh” and easily manipulated by unseen Satan. Satan used them to try to destroy Job by tearing open his wounds every time he began to “put up with his fate” without cursing God.

But the comforters were doing God’s work for Job’s good despite themselves. Through their errors and sins, God did not let Job “put up with his fate” too long – a real problem because his extraordinary self-control could tolerate a horrible situation. But the situation needed to become truly intolerable for Job’s eternal needs to be met: anything less would not help Job to really learn God’s forgiveness and love for him. God used the comforters’ ministry to keep Job moving toward his deliverance and restoration, which gave him eternal improvements that allowed much further growth and development. God used Satan’s scheme with the comforters to not let Job stop or delay before getting the breakthrough he needed for his eternal welfare.

### *An Overview of Satan’s Two Basic Schemes Against Job*

Even we could predict Satan’s actions in Job 1-2 from his evil, jealous nature. How much more did God know what “the Adversary”

would do if Job was given into his hands? God also knew that the comforters would operate in the flesh, which made it easy for Satan to manipulate them despite their good intentions toward Job.

God knew that all of them would supply precisely what Job needed to be released into further growth for all eternity: they helped Job to receive God's love and forgiveness like never before, which enabled Job to get to know God better and be set really free for the first time. God quietly sustained Job through his tribulation with hope by the Holy Spirit, who also inspired Elihu to call for Jesus' intercession and ransom for Job. When Job was prepared, God forgave him and brought him into a new and closer relationship to Himself through what Jesus did for Job and all of us. And God stopped Satan's attacks as soon as they stopped being good for Job.

#### *Literally Impossible to See God's Key Purpose During the Situation*

In Job 1:8 and 2:3 God spoke the visible truth about Job by calling him blameless. But God did not tell Satan everything about Job, and specifically about his need to grow from an immature love and fear of God into a mature love for Him (Chapter 5). Job and others also did not appreciate his basic need or how God was providing for it.

Satan – crafty, experienced, and with more information – could not see how God would utterly reverse the effects of his strategies into providing exactly what Job needed. Then how much less could Job understand specifically how God was providing for him in love through Satan's manifestly evil strategies? Indeed, this was impossible!

Therefore Job needed to persevere with God without understanding his situation in order to obtain God's will for good. Hope and faith in God are needed for this perseverance. Without them, Job would have eventually taken the advice of his wife in Job 2:9 – to curse



God and Satan Causing the Same Events for Opposite Goals 65  
God and die – which would have fulfilled Satan's goal in these attacks.

*Why God Gave Satan So Much Freedom to Afflict Job*

We are now prepared to consider a point postponed since Chapter 1. We have seen that Rom. 8:28 reveals an amazing truth for those who love God and are called according to His purpose: He lets nothing happen to them unless He can make it to be good to them. But God's work with His loving, obedient people includes purposes in addition to His will for good to them and to those who receive their ministry. Indeed, His promise in Rom. 8:28 does not explain why He gave evil Satan so much freedom to choose any way to afflict Job. But the war between God and Satan shows a major reason.

With presumptuous pride Satan willfully grasped to be like God (Isa. 14:13-14 and discussed in *Insights* on p. 71-72). This helps us to appreciate how humiliating and crushing it was for Satan to be given such freedom to act with his stated goal, and then to see his actions become exactly what Job needed and produce the very opposite of what Satan had clearly intended for Job. Consider this further.

Before Satan started his work, there was a barrier between God and Job because of his wrong view of God. Job saw God as a faultfinder watching closely to see if he would sin: if so, God would not acquit him. How long does anyone try to stay near a faultfinder who finds and punishes every sin? Therefore Job was content with a distant relationship with God while diligently keeping blameless. This situation would continue unless something happened to help Job discover the blessed truth and draw near to God. At this point in Job 1-2, all of the sons of God in heaven (Job 1:6, 2:1) could clearly see the total freedom given to Satan to produce his goal of a better barrier between God and Job.

But Satan's best strategies and greatest efforts to create a better barrier served only to get rid of the existing one. As Satan kept trying to put up his barrier by multiple schemes, he not only failed – he unwittingly tore down the barrier that was preventing Job's further growth and keeping him from a great eternal blessing. What a display of incompetence by the rebel who tried to exalt himself to be like the sovereign Lord God (Isa. 14:14)! All of the sons of God who witness this whole situation can see Satan's incompetence when his skills are directly compared with God's skills.

Job obtained what he needed: a great new kind of relationship with God. And through events that Satan devises for evil, God perfects His people, fulfills His promises for good to every believer who meets their requirements, and utterly humiliates a proud and skillful rebel – skillful if compared to anyone except God. Only God could do all this!

We have seen Satan's will for Job's destruction and God's will for Job's eternal good. Each of these pictures is true and provides a basis for understanding real causes of Job's circumstances. For example, God did not compromise His will for Job's good one tiny bit in order to win a battle against Satan – God is not a user!

But in order to fully understand Job's situation, we must go beyond both of these pictures: we have just seen that both together do not provide the whole truth. They focus on Job and his battles – centered around Job – whereas the whole truth is not centered on a person. It is easy to have an egocentric view of “good” in Rom. 8:28, but that distorts the whole truth. The book of Job helps us to see that v. 28 is fully true personally in amazing ways, and a further examination opens up more life-giving truth. Those who realize God's unseen work for Job's real benefit are well prepared for this further examination. See p. 71-72 to obtain my discussion of this for free.

## Appendix

## READING THE BOOK OF JOB

The book of Job is surveyed here in order to help people read it with a good practical understanding. Job can be one of the easiest books of the Bible to understand and a major source of powerful, practical, New Testament lessons. But we can get distracted unless we realize the authority behind the five speakers in Job 3-37: Who spoke only from his human wisdom and limited revelation? Who, if anyone, spoke purely by the Spirit of God?

God shows us most of His answer explicitly, so that we do not need to guess. Job 42:1-8 shows that Job and the three comforters all spoke in error. Twice in v. 7-8 the Lord tells them and us: *“You have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.”* God’s statement that Job had spoken what is right comes immediately after Job says in v. 6: *“Therefore **I retract**, and I repent in dust and ashes.”*

Job was retracting his words, because he and God clearly agree that he spoke without knowledge in Job 3-31. In Job 38:2 the Lord asks Job: *“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”* In Job 42:3 Job repeats God’s question with an answer:

*“Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have declared that which I did **not understand**, things too wonderful for me, which I did **not know**.*

Job’s “right speaking” was only the few words in Job 42:3-6.

The fifth speaker is Elihu in Job 32-37. God makes no comment about Elihu’s statements, but the Bible offers much evidence that Elihu spoke a prophetic word to Job that he needed to hear before he could

receive God's direct word to him in Job 38-41. Chapters 3 and 7 are only a small part of the available evidence that Elihu spoke a prophetic word to Job by God's Spirit. We can see that Elihu's words are full of meaningful revelation from God and exactly right for Job at that time.

Therefore the authority behind the statements in each part of Job is easy to identify: Job and the three comforters all spoke without God's authority in Job 3-31; and in Job 32-37 Elihu spoke a prophetic word to Job by God's Spirit, which set up the Lord's direct revelation of Himself to Job in Job 38-41. Both Job 1-2 and 42 are Scriptures, not opinions recorded in Scripture. Scriptures speak for God and give His ultimately confirmed word about an issue.

### *The Nature of Each of Five Divisions of Job*

The book of Job can be divided naturally into five sections, each with certain kinds of insights and with an easily defined authority from God in its statements.

Job 1-2 is a Scriptural revelation about the nature of proceedings in heaven that cause such huge consequences on earth. Surely no other chapters in the Bible provide as much explicit, detailed insight into Satan's working relationship with and rebellious war against God, plus how this war directly affects people so drastically. This section also emphasizes the good response that blameless Job made to God throughout the initial stages of his tribulation.

Job 3-31 reveals the beliefs of the four speakers as it shows Job's progressive development toward his manifest rebellion against God. By examining the rest of the Bible, we see that the beliefs of all four are a mixture of Scriptural truth and error. All four had much insight into God's workings before Job's afflictions began, so that the lack of authority in the comforters' statements could be debated if God did not say it in Job 42. For example, the comforters urged Job to seek God

and spoke many major themes given in the Psalms, the next book in the Bible. The comforters show us how we can ruin Scriptural truths, so that we can avoid following their example (this is not discussed in this book, but is available for free at Lulu – see p. 71-72).

In Job 3-31 the three comforters spoke apart from God, and Job was experiencing a temporary supernatural darkness that hindered his communication with God. All four speakers made some eloquent true statements from their previous enlightenment and human wisdom, but they were in error and often not speaking the truth about God or Job's dark circumstances.

Therefore we must be careful about claiming that a word in this section represents God's word on an issue. For years I have found it revealing to consider how Scriptures from Job 3-31 are used to support a proposed Scriptural truth or principle: sometimes a principle is valid even though this part of the Scriptural foundation is not valid (the quote is an eloquent way to say what other Scriptures show); and sometimes the foundation breaks down and the principle should be rejected. The discussion of Job 23:10 in Chapter 7, including the footnote at the end, illustrates some of the problems in quoting from Job 3-31. The discussions of Job 13:15 in Chapter 2 and Job 28:28 in Chapter 5 are other examples for us.

All four speakers in Job 3-31 did not recognize Job's actual sins even when they had surfaced. When God inspired Elihu in Job 32-37 to point out the sins that Job committed in Job 3-31, Job could clearly see his sins and their roots.

Job 32-37 is God's prophetic word to Job through Elihu. He was a young man without the natural authority and honor of the other four speakers, but the Spirit of God inspired him to speak for God. This was perfect for Job. Chapter 7 shows that Job needed to see God's

righteousness without being intimidated by His manifest power and authority (He directly ministered to Job's rebellion later – in Job 38-41). By providing clear and convicting words through the lightly respected Elihu, God answered Job's belief that His righteousness and justice are best only because no one can contend with His power.

In this section Elihu gives a Spirit-inspired intercession for Job in Job 33:23-28, which shows clearly – within the limits of Old Testament language – that Job's deliverance came through Jesus and His great ransom for man (Chapter 3).

The section ends with Elihu's Spirit-inspired praise of God's power, greatness, and glory that are manifested in His creation. This praise flows into the Lord's direct statements to Job that follow.

Job 38-41 is God's direct word to Job that ends his rebellion. The Lord forcefully told Job from a whirlwind: *"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me!"* (Job 38:2-3). God was about to give Job a test – a series of questions – that utterly humbled him. Briefly, in this test God shows that He knows what He is doing: He can accomplish many intricate, marvelous, and majestic works without Job's input of ignorance and powerlessness.

The fifth section is Job 42, which authoritatively shows the outcome of great good to Job through this whole experience. The key development was a new, more intimate relationship with God: Job said that he had *"heard of"* God, *"but now my eye sees You"* (Job 42:5). Job had also become prepared to be blessed with prosperity throughout his 140 years on earth after this tribulation.

Realizing these divisions in Job enable us to read it without being diverted with questions like, "Is this comment really God's view of the issue, or is this merely the speaker's opinion at that time?"

## MORE FROM THE BOOK OF JOB

Readers of this book – who appreciate that God was doing great good for Job even through traumas and the comforters – are especially well equipped to learn more from the book of Job. Your book has only begun to bring out the truth that is not centered on Job or a believer. The book *Insights from Job* includes your whole book plus other topics that are built on a good understanding of Job. At this time the PDF files for each whole book on Job can be seen or downloaded for free from [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com): put “James Tarter” in their “search” box.

The book of Job is the most extensive teaching and illustration in the Bible about ministering to someone who is hurting: 34 consecutive chapters plus a very helpful context. The second footnote on p. 60 describes the 34 chapters in Job. The context is 3 chapters that show the truth about Job’s situation and his early responses to it, 4 chapters of God’s direct ministry to Job, and a final chapter that shows the outcome of all this for Job. The volume of this word compels us to regard “personal ministry” as a major secondary theme of Job – a conclusion confirmed by the many practical insights supplied in Job.

*Insights from Job* includes a 5-chapter examination of personal ministry and counseling, an insightful chapter about self-pity from Job 19, a vitally important chapter contrasting true and false repentance and confession from Job 40 and 42 and other revealing Scriptures, and 2 chapters on an appropriate response to disasters in the light of God’s word in Job and the rest of the Bible. These topics were left out of your book in order to focus on the foundational truths in Job.

One truth in *Insights* is too helpful to omit entirely from your book, but is discussed more fully in Chapter 17 and Apx. 5. God put Job next to the Psalms in the Christian Bible to help us to not misuse His

Psalms. Psalm 1 is a great example. Understanding Job helps us notice the great truth in the tiny phrase in v. 3: “*which yields its fruit in its season.*” Even in the tropics, trees have seasons without fruit that set up the seasons of producing fruit. In Job 1-41, Job was in a season of his eternity for setting up his fruit, but his friends wrongly used his situation and the truths in the rest of Psalm 1 to judge him as wicked.

The Table of Contents of *Insights from Job* is copied below.

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## About the Author (Jim Tarter)

I met God in 1972 when I was 27, a Ph.D. physicist and an agnostic. He quickly started showing me that Jesus authentically represented God, and that the Bible was His word. I started reading the Bible thinking that it was full of contradictions, but I got surprised. The Bible's contents provided much evidence to show that the Lord had inspired and then protected these contents to say precisely what He wanted them to say.

Having missed God so completely in my life and in the world, I read the Bible with a deep hunger to learn more about this One who knew my thoughts and who numbers the hairs on each person's head. I also joined a church in Pittsburgh, PA. The pastor was Joseph Garlington, who provided a rich spiritual foundation. This congregation had many other believers who had met Jesus and sought to put His word into practice. When I moved to Roanoke, VA, in 1978, I actively participated in another congregation that was "alive in Jesus". Such experiences helped me to learn more about God and His ways, and have provided many perspectives about His calling for the Church in the Bible, what we have done in reality, and what we need to do to fulfill His word concerning us.

I am an elder at Grace Covenant Church in Roanoke and taught in public schools since 1976. I wrote two books in the 1990s: *God's Word to the United States* (from Obadiah and the Minor Prophets) and *Why, God?* (the first version from the book of Job). Updates of both books plus 12 other books about the Bible are available at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) (see below). In summers my wife Nita and I have taken extensive trips to southern Sudan, the Congo, and elsewhere. Her heart for Jesus and sensitivity to His leadings have blessed me mightily.

Years after I first met God through Jesus, He started opening up whole books of the Bible, which provide life-giving perspectives that the vast majority of the Church has not yet appreciated. The book of Job was the first one opened up (in 1977) and is one of these perspectives that I believe can help many people now.

At the time I write this, *God's Great Good to Job* is available online at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com). Type in "James Tarter" in their "Search" space at the top. A copy of this book costs \$7.21 plus \$3.99 S&H, and discounts for extra copies have varied (\$1.25 S&H for each extra copy). Downloading a PDF file of the whole book from Lulu is free, and a free preview contains the whole book.