

## Is God Punishing Me

At some point in time, we have all either asked or known someone who asked the question “Why me, God?” This question arises out of a situation that could be as troubling as catching a red light when we’re in a hurry all the way to the loss of a loved one. Often, the question is vocalized without really expecting an answer. However, there are times when we really want to know why God has exacted retribution.

I know a man, a personal friend, who lost his daughter in a traffic accident. Just a short time later, his son died due to a massive heart attack. He wanted to know what he had done to make God so angry that he would have to suffer such tragic events.

Somewhere along the way, many of us have adopted the belief that God is a god of retribution. When we sin, the hand of God will reach out and slap us. We suffer misfortunes because we did something wrong. We may not even know what that wrong is, but that must be the reason God punished us through the tragic event. For Christians, suffering this “retribution” for an unknown reason, could cause some to lose their faith and turn away from God.

Non-Christians may be very philosophic and decide that got what they deserved. Again, the idea that God is a god of retribution. The idea of retribution places God in a position where He is measuring our good deeds and our bad deeds to determine if we are getting out of balance with His scales. It also ignores all of the evil deeds that are done by many who are prospering in this life.

We read in the Bible about a good man who suffered great loss. He is the poster boy for bad things happening to good people. Of course, I am speaking of Job. In this book, we get to peak behind the scenes of tragedy visiting a godly man.

As the book opens, we are introduced to Job in the following manner:

**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. (Job 1:1 NASB)**

We find that he is a prosperous man who owned much livestock. He also had seven sons and three daughters who seemed to be blessed as well. They enjoyed sharing meals together.

Job was dedicated to serving God. He even offered sacrifices to God on behalf of his children, in case one of them had done something to offend God. We see that Job enjoyed the blessings of God and did not forget from whom those blessings came. In the 9<sup>th</sup> verse, we find Satan talking with God. In this passage, please notice who initiated the chain of events that rapidly occurred.

**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.” (Job 1:9-11 NASB)**

Catch Satan’s sneaky way of twisting the picture to frame his intent. Satan uses this tool often to trick us into following his lead rather than remaining faithful to God. Satan tells God that the

reason Job served Him was because he enjoyed his family and wealth. Satan challenged God by telling Him that if Job lost it all, then he would curse God.

We are well aware of what happened next. God allowed Satan to test Job. God placed the restriction that Satan could not take Job's life (Job 1:12).

Wave after wave of bad news came to Job. He lost all of his livestock, children and even the servants who were tending the flocks.

**Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said,**

**“Naked I came from my mother's womb,**

**And naked I shall return there.**

**The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.**

**Blessed be the name of the LORD.”**

**Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God. (Job 1:20-22 NASB)**

We could stop right here and build a lesson on the fact that Job did not blame God, while many of us quickly reach out to blame Him. We are hurting and frustrated. We become angry and rail out about the injustice that has brought tragedy into our life. Job realized that when he was born, he had nothing and when he dies, he will have nothing. Job also knew that it was in the power of God to give or take whatever things that were present in Job's life. Through it all, Job still praised God.

Job had some friends. When Job experienced the tragic loss, those friends came to visit Job. Today, we may go through rough times and our friends may come to console us in our time of grief.

Job's friends were not much help in bringing comfort to Job. Each of them seemed certain that assure Job that he must have done something to bring on God's wrath. Job finds little comfort and tells them as much:

**Then Job answered, “I have heard many such things; sorry comforters are you all. “Is there *no* limit to windy words? Or what plagues you that you answer? “I too could speak like you, if I were in your place. I could compose words against you and shake my head at you. “I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips could lessen *your pain*. (Job 16:1-5 NASB)**

After Job and his three friends debate about Job's sins that brought about the tragic chain of events, God answers.

**Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,**

**“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!**

**“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?**

**Tell Me, if you have understanding,**

**Who set its measurements? Since you know.**

**Or who stretched the line on it?**

**“On what were its bases sunk?**

**Or who laid its cornerstone,  
When the morning stars sang together  
And all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 36:1-7 NASB)**

God has had enough of their flawed reasoning. God asked them where were they when He made the world. He asked them to explain what and how the world was framed and built.

As God is asking a series of questions for Job and his friends to answer, God shares this:

**“Who has cleft a channel for the flood, or a way for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a land without people, *on* a desert without a man in it, to satisfy the waste and desolate land and to make the seeds of grass to sprout? (Job 36:25-26 NASB)**

God is asking them to explain how the things that happen are a result of behavior when it rains and grass grows even in places where there are no inhabitants to enjoy the blessings.

This reminds me of the word of Jesus when He tells us not to seek retribution on someone who has done wrong to us.

**But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. (Matthew 5:44-45 NASB)**

God has told Job that the natural order of the universe was not established on the principle of retribution. Then, as we get to the 40<sup>th</sup> chapter, God asked Job to devise a system where retribution would take care of only those who should receive it.

**“Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity, and clothe yourself with honor and majesty.  
“Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud, and make him low.**

**“Look on everyone who is proud, *and* humble him, and tread down the wicked where they stand.**

**“Hide them in the dust together; bind them in the hidden *place*.**

**“Then I will also confess to you, that your own right hand can save you. (Job 40:10-14 NASB)**

God continues to ask questions that Job cannot answer. Job is human and not able to achieve the same level as God. Job cannot see things from God’s perspective. Finally, Job is ready to accept that God is able to instruct while he and his friends are not.

**Then Job answered the LORD and said, “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 42:1-6 NASB)**

The book of Job ends with Job being blessed with more wealth than he had before and by having more sons and daughters. The life of Job might teach us many lessons. We often hear of the patience of Job. Yes, he patiently waited for God rather than cursing God. However, there is another lesson we might take with us.

When things go wrong, as they certainly will, it is not to be viewed as God exacting retribution on us. He is not punishing us over some wrong we may or may not have done. Bad things happen and they happen to the good as well as the bad.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, their sin brought death and disease into this world. From that point on, we have had to deal with bad things happening. These things happen to all mankind and are not limited to those who sin against God. So, when we face those bad things, when we find ourselves in situations like Job, we need to rely on God's strength to see us through those trying times. We need to know that God loves us and is not punishing us.

We may never understand why these things happen to us but we have the assurance that God is always there for us. He will sustain us during those bleak days.