

## “The Remarkable Resumé of a Righteous Man”

Job 1:1-5

In January of 2009, the financial world was shocked to hear the tragic news that German billionaire Adolf Merckle, one of the richest men in the world, committed suicide after his business empire got into trouble in the wake of the international financial crisis. Merckle was number 94 on the Forbes list of the world's richest people, with a business empire that included interests as diverse as cement-making and pharmaceuticals. But he lost hundreds of millions of dollars in the stock market crash of 2008.

Shortly before 5pm on Monday night, January 5, Adolf Merckle quietly put on his coat, told his wife that he had to go to the office for a while, and drove to a railway embankment near his home, where he lay on the frozen tracks and waited patiently for death.

The suicide note which Merckle left for his wife, Ruth, and four grown children provided no clues to the motive for his suicide. It simply said, “I’m sorry.” He had seen his wealth ebbing away as the global recession took hold, leaving him a “broken” man, according to his family.

Someone has well said that pain is the universal human experience. No matter who you are or how wealthy you become, you will experience pain at some point in your human existence. It is often during these seasons of pain that we ask the question, “Why?”

Viktor Frankl was an Austrian psychologist and Holocaust survivor who endured the horrors of the infamous concentration camp at Auschwitz. His best-selling book, “Man’s Search for Meaning,” chronicles his experiences. After enduring the suffering in these camps, Frankl came to the conclusion that even in the most absurd, painful, and dehumanized situation, life has potential meaning and that, therefore, even suffering is meaningful.

**Viktor Frankl** - *“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms —to choose one’s attitudes in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”*

What he says is true—we can’t control what happens to us, but we can control our response.

This is the lesson we learn from the life of Job.

Most scholars believe Job to be the oldest book in the Bible, and its author remains unknown. Some have argued that Moses is its author, while others claim that it was Solomon. Regardless

of its human author, one thing is certain—the Holy Spirit has given us this book to encourage, comfort, and strengthen our faith. Suffering is a part of the human experience, and we often have questions as to why this is so.

Job is the first of five books in the Old Testament that are known as the Wisdom literature, the others being Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. These books are referred to as the Wisdom books because of what they reveal about the wisdom of God as it relates to the deepest of our human experiences.

**Ray Stedman** - *“These books reflect the sorrow and the joy of our lives and our relationship with God. In these books, you'll find every emotion of the human experience.”*

These are books that teach us to worship God no matter what our circumstances in life may be like. We learn that:

- Job teaches us to worship with pain
- Psalms teaches us to worship with praise
- Proverbs teaches us to worship with perception
- Ecclesiastes teaches us to worship with purpose
- Song of Solomon teaches us to worship with passion

Job shows us how to view suffering from heaven’s vantage point. The feelings in the book of Job are primarily those of affliction, distress, grief, misery, and doubt. What we find in these 42 chapters is the cry of man’s wounded spirit, the deep groaning of a man who desperately struggles to trust in God even though everything in his life is crumbling.

A verse from Isaiah is very fitting when we consider Job’s life:

**Isaiah 50:10 - “Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of His servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.”**

Though Job doesn’t understand the reason behind his suffering in life, though in the midst of personal darkness he walks by the light of faith.

**Job 23:8-10 - “Behold, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive Him; on the left hand when He is working, I do not behold Him; He turns to the right hand, but I do not see Him. But He knows the way that I take; when He has tried me, I shall come out as gold.”**

You and I have been made in God’s image and have been given the purpose of knowing and trusting in Him. Thus, when our pain and suffering reaches such a degree that life seems senseless, our only hope is to cling to Him in confident faith.

Though most of the book is poetic, its beginning and ending is in prose. If you've ever read the book of Job, you will notice that most of it, more than 90%, is a conversation Job has with his three friends. A simple outline of the book is:

- Prologue—(1-3)
- Dialogue—(4-41)
- Epilogue—(42)

We will look at four areas of Job’s life from this chapter:

- the truth that characterized his life (v. 1-5)
- the test that entered his life (v. 6-12)
- the tragedies that affected his life (v. 13-19)
- the testimony that surrounded his life (v. 20-22)

The first five verses of the book serve as an introductory prologue in which we are introduced to Job. Three things in particular stand out about his life—Job was a man of integrity, influence, and insight.

### **1. Job was a man of INTEGRITY (1:1)**

*“There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.”*

The opening lines of verse 1 tell us that Job was a real man who lived in the land of Uz, a real place in the southern region around the Dead Sea that later became known as Edom. Many

scholars believe Job to be the oldest book in the Bible, and perhaps even the oldest book in the world. Job lived in the days of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or perhaps even earlier. We know that he lived some time before the Law of Moses because he offered sacrifices for himself and his family, something that only the priests could do once the law was given.

I find it interesting that the oldest book in the Bible, if not the oldest in the world, deals with a subject that every contemporary man or woman still wants to know about—suffering. If there is one place that can provide us with the answers we long for, it is surely this book.

Job is a real man who lived in a real place. The first verse of the book also introduces us to Job as being a man of great character and integrity. Job was known as a man of righteousness and faith. In fact, he is upheld in Scripture as one of a few examples of true righteousness:

**Ezekiel 14:14 - “...even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord God.”**

**James 3:11 - “Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.”**

Herein is the mystery that surrounded Job’s life. He was a righteous man who had integrity, and yet he experienced profound loss and pain in life. So in a sense, not only do we learn from Job that life is hard; we also learn that life is unfair.

This flies in the face of what a lot of us want to believe.

We want to believe that if we work hard enough, we will always be successful. If we live righteous enough, we will never experience suffering. Those who walk with God ought to be exempt from difficulty in life, for this is how we have our “best life now.”

**Eugene Peterson** - *“It is not only because Job suffered that he is important to us. It is because he suffered in the same ways we suffer—in the vital areas of family, personal health, and material things. Job is also important to us because he searchingly questioned and boldly protested his suffering. Indeed, he went to the top with his questions. It is not the suffering that troubles us. It is undeserved suffering. Almost all of us in our years of growing up have the experience of disobeying our parents and getting punished for it. When that discipline was*

*connected with wrongdoing, it had a certain sense of justice to it: When we do wrong, we get punished. One of the surprises as we get older, however, is that we come to see that there is no real correlation between the amount of wrong we commit and the amount of pain we experience. An even larger surprise is that very often there is something quite the opposite: We do right and get knocked down. We do the best we are capable of doing, and just as we are reaching out to receive our reward we are hit from the blind side and sent reeling.”*

It is in this sense that life as we know is unfair. Think of it:

- a young teenager in the prime of life, whose life sparkles with the joy of the Lord, is cut short in a tragic car accident
- a woman who has always been faithful to Christ and involved in her church gets word that she has months to live
- a man who has always been the model of an honest businessman loses all that he has because of someone else’s bad decisions

Life is not just hard—life is unfair, and nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the life of Job. He was a man of unparalleled integrity. He was a prosperous man, a man who was extremely wealthy and possessed a beautiful family. He is the ultimate portrait of a faithful father, a fine husband, and a true man of honesty who worshiped God.

But in a matter of 39 seconds, less than a minute, four messengers nearly tripped over themselves to deliver to him the news that he had lost everything, thereby reducing him to a twisted mass of brokenness and grief.

**Charles Swindoll** - *“Job is left bankrupt, homeless, helpless, and childless. He’s left standing beside ten fresh graves of his now-dead children on a windswept hill. His wife is heaving deep sobs of grief as she kneels beside him, having just heard him say, ‘Whether our God gives to us or takes everything from us, we will follow Him.’ She leans over and secretly whispers, ‘Just curse God and die.’ Pause and ponder their grief—and remember the man had done nothing to deserve such unbearable pain.”*

Welcome to Job’s world, a world where the righteous suffer, a world where the pain is real, and a world with no easy explanations.

Four things about Job's integrity are mentioned in verse 1:

He was blameless

This does not refer to sinless perfection, but rather speaks of Job's genuineness and authenticity. The word used speaks of someone "whose within was like his without."

**Psalm 119:1 - "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!"**

When you saw Job at work, when you heard his words, when you watched his actions, you were given a glimpse that was an accurate reflection what actually went on in his heart.

He was upright

The word used to describe him speaks of the way that he treated other people. It means that his personal integrity was demonstrated in his personal relationships.

Who he was on the inside determined what he did on the outside. He was not a superficial man of appearances only.

He feared God

This doesn't mean that he had a sense of dread in which he avoided God. It means that he held God in reverential awe and worship. He bowed down before God as Creator, Savior, and Ruler.

**Proverbs 1:7 - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."**

**Psalm 111:10- "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those practice it have a good understanding."**

To fear God is to worship and obey. It is to have a sensitive heart toward God and a receptiveness toward His truth. It is not a cavalier attitude, but a humble and trembling spirit before His presence.

He shunned evil

This speaks of a lifestyle of repentance and pursuit of true righteousness. He desperately avoided sin at all costs, hating that which God hates, and loving that which God loves. It means that Job was a man of virtue and morality. The sad and unfortunate truth is that morality has fallen upon hard times in our nation today. Moral men are no longer the men who are sought after. What once was considered immorality is now celebrated, and true morality is now condemned. The only sin by today's standard is the social sin of intolerance.

## **2. Job was a man of INFLUENCE (1:2-3)**

*“There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.”*

Verses 2-3 tell us that Job was not simply a man of great integrity, but that he was also a man of tremendous influence. He was a very wealthy man who had no doubt worked hard for what he had.

### His family

Job was a blessed man indeed, for the text says that he had seven sons and three daughters—ten children in all.

**Psalm 127:3-5 - “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”**

The picture we are given here of Job's family was that it was the ideal family. No one had sons who were more handsome than Job's sons, and no one had daughters who were more beautiful than Job's three daughters. His children no doubt were serving God, something that they learned while growing up under Job's roof. They were a family that loved God and loved being with one another. It was a perfect family situation if ever there was one.

### His fortune

Verse 3 says that Job possessed 7000 sheep which provided him wool for clothing, 3000 camels which served as a caravan train for transporting goods, 500 yoke of oxen used for

plowing acres upon acres of farm land, and 500 female donkeys from which came milk, a middle eastern delicacy.

We are given the picture of immense wealth and power, and by today's standards there is no doubt that Job would have been a billionaire.

### His fame

When you consider all that we have been told about Job, there is no wonder that verse 3 refers to him as the greatest man in the east. This tells us that he was a man of great notoriety, a man that every one in his day would have heard about.

Job was a man of influence with a great family, immense fortune, and well-known fame. Here is an important question to ask at this point:

*Are we to believe that Job's material successes were the direct result of his spiritual faithfulness? To believe that spiritual faithfulness leads to material gain is the essence of the prosperity gospel. It looks good on paper, sounds good oozing from the lips of smiling televangelists, but it doesn't play out real well in real life.*

### **3. Job was a man of INSIGHT (1:4-5)**

*"His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did continually."*

Job was involved in the lives of his children. The text says that his sons would hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, which is more than likely a reference to a birthday celebration.

Job would send for his children and consecrate them, meaning that he would worship God with his children and encourage them to live devoted lives. He made it his regular practice to get up early and intercede for his children before God. Job was a prayerful man.

Job is an example and challenge to every father who reads this passage. Our generation has much to learn from the parental responsibility that he displays in this passage. We have handed

our children off to youth leaders, Christian schools, camp directors, pastors, and Sunday school teachers with this attitude, ‘Here, you teach them. You instill godly values in them. That’s what we pay you for, anyway!’

Job didn’t outsource the spirituality of his children to the professionals. He ensured that his children knew God. Job had spiritual insight whereby he taught his sons and daughters to walk with God.

Verse 1 says, “There was a man,” and here you and I are introduced to Job and his remarkable resumé—a man of impeccable integrity, tremendous influence, and spiritual insight.

Verse 6 says, “There was a day.” There was a man—and there was a day. The day came in which all that Job possessed was taken from him, like sand that slips through the grasp of our fingers. The truth staring us in the face is that, sooner or later, every man will have his day when pain and loss comes calling.

Application for my life:

1—A righteous life is commended by God, so pursue it

2—A righteous life is targeted by the enemy, so recognize it

3—A righteous life is no guarantee against hardship, so believe it

British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge became a Christian after living most of his life as an atheist. He once made the observation:

**Malcolm Muggeridge** - *“Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the time seemed especially desolating and painful with particular satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my seventy-five years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my existence, has been through affliction and not through happiness.”*

Job teaches us that we are refined only through the fire. Yes, we hurt. Yes, we experience profound pain and loss.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** - **“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light and momentary affliction is**

**preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”**

We cannot fully understand the life of Job without an understanding of Christ. Job and his suffering foreshadows the suffering of Jesus. In a much greater way than Job, the life of Jesus was impeccable. No one ever lived like Jesus lived. And yet the Bible says that He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

**Isaiah 53:4-6 - “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds are we healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”**

And imagine this—“Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush Him.” The pain and suffering that Jesus experienced was the will of the Father, for it was only through suffering that He could bring many sons to glory!

The sufferings of Job merely point us to the sufferings of Jesus.