

Job 1:1-22  
**Curse of Bless?**  
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Sometimes bad things happen to good people with no explanation at all. Maybe some of you have heard all the bad things that happened to an orphan from Kansas. This girl had a lot of bad things happened to her. One day a tornado destroyed her home and carried her and her dog away. The storm takes her to enchanted land where she immediately commits accidental homicide.

She is then given a pair of shoes enchanted with witchcraft and sent on a suicide mission. She makes friends with a Scarecrow, a Tin-man and a lion. One doesn't have a brain, the other is missing his heart, and the third is missing his courage. The girl and her friends are then attacked by killer baboons, winkies, and a homicidal witch. She accidentally kills that witch too by splashing water on her. That's right, I'm talking about Dorothy and The Wizard of Oz.

Through it all Dorothy seems like a good person. She is kind, loving, patient and courageous. But still bad things happen to her. This is the problem of evil. Why do bad things happen to good people? If God were so great and so powerful, why doesn't he stop evil? Why does Dorothy have to go through all these horrible things? Why do we also have to go through bad things if God exists? Our Bible passage is not a fictional story like Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz. Our story today is about a man named Job and the bad things that happened to him. Let's read the first part of Job's story in chapter one, verses 1-5

**Job is a Godly man who loves his family and worships God. (1:1-5)**

Job is a Godly man. (1:1) Job is from the land of Uz—not Oz—near Palestine. He lived around the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2100-1700 B.C.). Verse one says Job is “blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.” When the verse says Job is “blameless and upright,” it doesn't mean he was without sin. Job is called “blameless” or “pure” because he tries to please and obey God. Job is called “upright” because he tries to treat other people the right way. We get the picture of a good guy who treats others well. Job is like someone who never lies, always treats others fairly, and never speeds. But what separates Job from being just another “good guy,” is that he loves God. When the text says he “feared God” it means he trusted God. And when it says he “turned away from evil” it's saying he has a repentant heart. He was someone who was not only good, but turned away from sin and to God. Job is a Godly man.

Job is a Godly man who loves his family and worships God. (1:2-5) Verse two says Job had seven sons and three daughters. Seven and three were two numbers that symbolized perfection or completeness. The story is telling us Job had the “ideal” or “perfectly sized” family. You're free to disagree with that number if your family is the perfect size. I personally am glad I only had three older brothers and not six. But the point is that Job was a blessed man who had it all. He had a great family and great wealth. Possessions and livestock are what gave you status back then. He's not as rich as a king but he's what we would call a multi-millionaire.

So he has a great family, and great wealth, and they all love each other. His children enjoy each other's company so much they're always eating together. But even though Job has it all, he still acknowledges the source of all these blessings. When Job's children finish their feasts, he consecrates them and offers

sacrifices. Probably about once a month Job sacrifices 10 of his livestock on their behalf. Even though he has thousands of livestock, this still would have cost him. But he never complains because he loves his family and loves God. Job is a Godly man who loves his family and worships God.

I really wanted to compare one or two of you who go to this church to Job. But after much thought I realized none of you have 3,000 camels. I do know that Andrew and Amanda want Alpacas. I also thought Matt has a Harley Davidson Hog. But after I spoke with his wife I learned he has a Honda. Maybe some of you parents feel like you're raising a herd, but that doesn't count. The point is Job wasn't so different from those around us here this morning. Job is a godly man who loves his family and worships God. But even though he is religious and good, bad things still happen to him. Let's read why this trial happens to Job in verses 6-12.

### **Satan wants to turn Job's blessings into curses. (1:6-12)**

The villain of our story is Satan himself. (1:6-8) One day Satan comes into the presence of God. Satan was originally an angel of light but he chose to rebel against God. The word "Satan" actually means "adversary, opponent, and enemy." Notice that he doesn't belong in heaven with God, but came in "among them." Satan is the source of evil, and he doesn't belong in the presence of God. But God sovereignly allows Satan to come into his presence for a reason. God asks Satan where he has come from to begin to expose his character. Satan answers, "From going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down on it." The picture we get of Satan is like that of the violent lion in 1st Peter 5:8. "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

Then God brings Job into the picture, "Have you considered my servant Job...?" If I were Job, I probably would have preferred God not bring me up to Satan. But God already knows Job is on Satan's heart when he asks, "Have you considered?" A more literal translation is, "Have you set your heart on my servant Job?" God is not only praising the goodness in Job, but unveiling the evil in Satan. Evil doesn't originate in the heart of God, it originates in the heart of Satan.

According to the internet, the Wicked Witch of the West is one of the greatest villains of all time. She is an evil, green, cackling witch who rides a broomstick. My wife and I recently watched Oz the Great and Powerful. It offers a possible backstory to how everything came to be. The Wicked Witch of the West used to be an innocent girl named Theodora. But she fell in love with Oz and soon jealousy began to grow in her heart. Her heart became so jealous she ate a magic apple to get rid of her heartache. But what she discovers is that she can't cure her heart with a magic apple. Instead she turns into a heartless green witch bent on revenge. Theodora's heart was where her sin began. Evil doesn't originate in God's heart, but in Satan's.

But Satan is not the only one with a heart problem. The heart is where wickedness begins for all of us. Our hearts are just as prone to wickedness as Theodora's heart. Without God's grace, our hearts are broken. But God offers a new heart to those who seek him. Maybe you feel your heart hardening to this message. You don't want to know God or what he wants of you. That's a symptom of needing a new heart. Do you want the heart of God or your own broken heart? Satan asks God to test Job to see what lies in his heart.

Satan wants to turn Job's blessings into curses. (1:9-12) Satan challenges God to take away all of Job's blessings. He says the only reason Job loves God is because of all the good things Job has. Satan says in verses 10-11, "You have *blessed* the work of his hands... But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will *curse* you to your face." Here the word "bless" is the same word used for "curse" in the Hebrew.

Satan is taking a good word and perverting it into its opposite meaning. He's saying that without blessings, Job's praises will turn into curses. This is the central conflict of the story. When everything goes wrong, will Job bless God or curse God? If Job is the hero of the story, and Satan is the villain, God is the author. It's going to be hard for Job to not ultimately blame God for what's coming next. Satan tells God to strike Job but God refuses. However, God does give Satan permission to take everything Job has. So if God is the author of this story, is God also evil?

Our favorite stories are those that have the worst villains and the best heroes. We all have those stories of conflict and redemption that we love. We're amazed by the perseverance of the good hero. And we're horrified by the evilness of the villain. But when we read these stories, do we call the author evil because he wrote the story? Did you ever think L. Frank Baum was evil for writing the Wonderful Wizard of Oz? We know that when we watch or read a story we need conflict for it to be any good. Without evil there can't be victory and the hero can't change for the better. Without our struggles, we can't become the people God wants us to become. Without suffering we could never learn patience. Without trouble we could never learn perseverance. Without pain we could never truly appreciate peace. We're a part of this story. And just like Job we're presented with a similar choice. When everything goes wrong, will we bless God or curse him? Job loses his wealth and family in verses 13-19.

### **Job losses everything and it seems like it's God's fault. (1:13-19)**

Job loses everything. (1:13-17) Job loses his wealth and possessions. (v. 13-17) The Sabeans killed his servants and took his cattle and donkeys. Then fire fell from heaven and burned up his sheep and servants. And then the Chaldeans took his camels and killed the rest of his servants. Only three men, one from each camp, survive to tell him. Job has lost all of his wealth and possessions. He's probably lost all of friends as well. But this is nothing compared to what he loses next. Job loses his children. In verse 19 a wind comes and collapses the firstborn's house. His seven sons and three daughters were all inside when it collapsed. The firstborn was supposed to inherit a double portion of Job's wealth. But in one moment Job's whole family and future is gone. Those children he laid his hands on to consecrate are no more.

Job losses everything and it seems like it's God's fault. Notice that Satan makes it appear as if God has sent all these calamities upon Job. The Sabeans were normally peaceful traders who lived a thousand miles away. The Chaldeans also didn't live close by Job. So it seems as if only an act of God could bring them all that way. And if that isn't enough, Satan actually sends two "acts of God" to harm Job. In verse 16 the lone survivor says "The fire of God fell from heaven..." I don't think it was a mistake that the servant attributed this calamity to God. Satan would use anyone to get Job to curse God. Verse 19 tells us a great wind came and struck the house—another act of God. If you or I experienced all these things, I think we'd be pretty quick to blame God. Remember that Job didn't write the story we're reading today; he lived it. This means he wouldn't have known about Satan going into God's presence. He didn't get a divine explanation just like we don't know why bad things happen now. So the big question is, how will Job respond to what has happened? Will Job bless God or curse God in verses 20-22?

### **When everything goes wrong, Job praises God. (1:20-22)**

When everything goes wrong, Job praises God. (1:20-21) Job stands up, tears his robes, and shaves his head. The tearing of robes and the shaving of his head are signs of grief. They are public symbols of the pain and loss he's experiencing. The closest thing we have to it today is wearing black clothes to funerals. What Job

does after his initial signs of grief is what separates him from others. Instead of curling up his fist in anger against God he falls down and worships. The original Hebrew literally says he “bows down.” Job prostrates himself before God.

He says in verse 21, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Instead of blaming God, Job declares that God has exposed him for who he is. Job recognizes that without God he is nothing. God has created him and has every right to take everything away. When everything goes wrong for Job, Job praises God. We can learn this same lesson—when everything goes wrong, praise God with your everything.

If this same thing happened to you, how would you respond? Would you turn to God and bless him or curse him? Would you admit your utter dependence on him or turn away in shame? Are you dependent on God for what you’re going through right now? When everything goes wrong, praise God with your everything. This is what Job did—he praised God with his everything. When everything goes wrong, praise God with your everything. When Job responds in praise, Satan loses. Verse 22 says, “In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.” Somehow at the end of all these terrible things, something good happens. Job is found to be faultless before God. Somehow God has taken Job’s bad story and made it good.

Only our God can take something that bad and make it good. As we experience life’s troubles now, they are indeed bad. But if you trust in Christ, God promises that somehow he’ll work a miracle. He will take all of life’s losses and disappointments and change them into good. This is why we can praise God even when we don’t yet understand. When everything goes wrong, praise God with your everything. How do we know God can truly turn evil into good?

God turns evil into good through his Son Christ Jesus. (1:22) In our text we see Job is a “suffering servant.” He loves and serves God faithfully, but for some reason he is called to suffer. And one of the reasons I believe God called him to suffering is because he foreshadows Jesus. In other words, Job’s sufferings in the past point forward to Jesus’ sufferings. The book of Isaiah calls the coming redeemer the “Suffering Servant.” This is a messianic term that Jesus fulfilled when he suffered on the cross. God doesn’t answer the problem of evil, but he does solve it. God solves the problem of evil by providing a way to eternal life.

John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

Bad things don’t happen to good people because nobody is good. There was only one good person and we killed him on a cross. On the cross Jesus did what Job couldn’t do through his suffering. Through his suffering Jesus conquered Satan and death. He provided a way of salvation for all who trust in him. God turns evil into good through his Son Christ Jesus.

When Dorothy first meets the Wizard of Oz he is a scary face in a column of smoke. But with the help of Toto she quickly realizes Oz is just a man like her. The curtain is removed and we see Oz for who he is—a man. The Apologist Greg Koukl points out the Wizard of Oz’s similarity to God. For some of us God is an angry face in the middle of smokey clouds. We feel as if God is dead and if he’s around he doesn’t understand us. But just like the Wizard of Oz, God became a man like us. The son of God was born as the baby Christ Jesus. Jesus grew up to become a man who suffered and hurt. God didn’t abandon us to evil but came to experience the hurt with us. We can relate with the man behind the curtain. As Greg says, “God has

entered into our experience.” Christ Jesus has experienced the worst of suffering on our behalf. Doesn’t that make you want to worship God like Job did? When bad things happen, we can bless God or curse him. When tough times come, focus on how Christ suffered for us. When everything goes wrong, praise God with your everything.