

## The God of Job and Our Adversary<sup>1</sup>

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God is for us and never against us! And if God is for us, who can be against us? Satan tries hard through his many inventions to separate us from God, but he is totally unsuccessful with his various activities if we stay in a close, intimate, and personal trust relationship with the Lord. Paul assures us that nothing and nobody on earth or in the whole universe can separate us from the love of God (Rom 8:35-39). In order to demonstrate this truth, I want to explore the Old Testament book that was most probably written first (along with Genesis<sup>2</sup>), and thus provides a preface to the whole of God's revelation, introduces the Pentateuch, and gives significant insight into the great controversy issue. I want to examine with you the drama of the life of Job.

First of all, let me stress that the book of Job is not primarily about Job, but about the God of Job, about who He is. It reveals the characters of the three main protagonists pictured in the book, namely, God, Satan, and Job (even though it is true that the three friends of Job—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, as well as Elihu—are also described and characterized in the book), but let's bear in mind that the book is first of all a revelation about our God.

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<sup>1</sup>Sermon presented on Sabbath, July 24, 2004, at the Sixth South American Biblical-Theological Symposium, on the theme "Pentateuch—Going Back to the Origins," held at Peruvian Union University in Lima, Peru. For additional details, references, and study material, see my article "Issues in the Cosmic Controversy Between God and Satan According to the Prologue of the Book of Job," in *The Cosmic Battle for Planet Earth: Essays in Honor of Norman R. Gulley*, ed. Ron du Preez and Jiri Moskala (Berrien Springs: Old Testament Department, Theological Seminary, 2003), 47-67.

<sup>2</sup>See Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View: Pacific, 1903, 1952), 159; *idem*, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View: Pacific, 1958), 251. For further discussion regarding the authorship of the book of Job, consult Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 505–511; Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 200–201; Roy B. Zuck, *Job* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 8–9.

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### A. Setting

The book opens with a prologue (Job 1:1-2:13) which describes two heavenly scenes of intense controversy between God and Satan (1:6-12; and 2:1-7a). We are informed that there was a heavenly assembly before a Sovereign Ruler of the whole universe when the sons of God (*b<sup>e</sup>nê hā'elohim*) gathered before Him. Satan, the Adversary, “also came among them” (Job 1:6; 2:1). The word “also” (*gam*) suggests that he was not a regular member of that group, but in addition to them. The text itself does not state the reason for it; however, the immediate context gives the impression that he behaves like the one to whom the earth belongs: he was “roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it” (Job 1:7). From intertextuality of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, one can deduce even more about his antagonistic activities (see texts like Gen 3:1-10; Isa 14:12-15; Ezek 28:11-19; Zech 3:1-7; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 10:18; John 8:44; 2 Cor 11:14; Rev 12:7-12, 17). Satan is, therefore, presented here as an intruder; he is playing the role of the accuser and the possessor of planet earth, although he is not the Creator and this territory was not given to him. In the background of the story might be a tradition that considers Satan among the sons of God as a representative of the earth. Significantly, Jesus calls Satan “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11), as he defeated Adam and seduced him into sin (Gen 3), thus usurping his position as the head of humanity.<sup>3</sup>

According to Job 1:8 and 2:3, God justifies Job in front of the solemn assembly gathered before Him. God Himself declares Job right, i.e., blameless (*tām*), upright (*yāšār*), fearing God (*y<sup>e</sup>re' 'elohim*) and shunning evil (*sār merā'*)—twice in the first two chapters.<sup>4</sup> His character is without a spot, but not because he is sinless. Job knows he is a sinner (Job 7:21; 10:6; 14:17); he can be blameless only by God's transforming grace. In these two encounters, which God initiates, God directs His words to Satan, and He engages with him in heightened dialogue.

From the very beginning of this biblical book, God is presented as the One who is passionately and wholeheartedly standing up for Job. He stands on his side. However, Satan does not share God's loving affection for Job; he does not like it. In reality, he tries very hard to prove God is incorrect. He does not bow before God and applaud His decision! On the contrary, in order to win his case, he involves Job in his acute argument against God, and his evil devices go to the very root of his dispute with Him.

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<sup>3</sup>Jesus Christ is called “the second Adam” (1 Cor 15:45, 47) because He took upon Himself the position of Adam as the head of humanity after He defeated Satan in His life and death. The cross is the unforgettable mark of His decisive victory because it was there that Satan totally lost face. Jesus Christ was obedient to His Father and defeated Satan, thus becoming our true representative after His death and resurrection. His victory on the cross gives us hope and a new life (see especially Rev 12:7-12).

<sup>4</sup>Besides these two declarations of God, there is an identical statement about Job's integrity in the very introduction of the book by the narrator (Job 1:2).

**B. The Issue in the Great Controversy: For Nothing, Disinterestedly?**

Satan does not agree with God pronouncing Job righteous; he opposes His standing on Job's behalf and tackles Him with a frightful, subtle, and seemingly innocent question: "Does Job serve God for nothing?" (Job 1:9). This cynical question introduces the theme and the whole plot of the book. At first glance, it is directed against Job, but in reality it is Satan's backstabbing attack on God by attempting to disprove His statement about Job. Thus the main theme of the book of Job is the justice of God. The real drama turns about the fact that He is for us and proclaims us just.

Is God just when He is justifying us? Satan's question demonstrates his hidden thoughts. To understand Satan's point, it is necessary to study the keyword in the question that reveals the heart of the whole book, namely, the expression FOR NOTHING. The Hebrew term "*ḥinnām*" which occurs four times in the book (1:9; 2:3; 9:17; 22:6; literally "out of favor") can be translated also as "gratis," "gratuitously," "without a reason," "for nought," "freely," "disinterestedly," "for no purpose," "in vain," "without cause." Satan's question can be stated, thus, in the following way: Does Job serve God disinterestedly? Is his piety unselfish and devotion wholehearted? Or expressed differently: Does he serve God out of love, i.e., for nothing? To follow God from love is really to serve Him without interest, gratis.

**C. Motives**

Why is Satan's question—whether Job serves God out of love (or let us state it existentially, whether we serve God out of love)—so evil? Why is it so bad if somebody attacks our motives? Because in such situations we cannot defend ourselves. We can try to present facts for our defense, but who will believe us when the shadow of doubt lies over us? Only time (and very often a quite long period of time) and difficulties of life (problems, persecution, suffering) will reveal who is correct—us or our accuser. The problems of life reveal our motives, what is truly in us. Every time people attack (not discern!)<sup>5</sup> the motives of other people, they put themselves on the side of Satan. If somebody would like to hurt you and hurt you badly, the "best" way they can do it is by attacking your motives, because in such a situation you are immediately defenseless.

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<sup>5</sup>It is not easy to discern right motives. Let's imagine that a rich girl has two boyfriends. Both are telling her, "I love you." Both are bringing flowers, taking her to lovely restaurants, but one loves her for the money and position he would get after marrying her, and the other loves her for her personality and inner values. How can she know the true motives of these two young, attractive, and charming young men? How she can discern who really loves her unselfishly? It is impossible to know it right away, instantly. Only time, pressures, and problems of life will reveal the inner attitude of the two gentlemen.

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**D. Satan's Claim**

Satan has nothing in his hand against Job's actual behavior, but he claims that there is something wrong with Job's attitude toward God. He claims that no one serves God unselfishly because, according to him, that is impossible. He declares that God is surrounded only by hypocritical sycophants who confess their love to the Lord, but in reality serve Him only because He blesses them. Satan asserts that created beings are not following God because of His goodness, kindness, beauty of character, and personality, but for the many benefits and abundant privileges, they are receiving from Him. They are religiously devoted to Him because He is bribing them. They are loyal to Him because they are afraid of losing His favor. God is not only blessing them now, but even promises them eternal life. Why not then serve Him for all these wonderful things?

Satan thus presses God to "face reality" and not speculate about something that does not exist, namely, that people really love Him. Humans do not worship the Lord for nothing, even if they claim to, but for gain—for selfish reasons. Satan is depicted here in his restless activities as someone who constantly discovers holes in people's characters. Satan will never accept the possibility that someone can serve God for His loving kindness, for His sake, for just God being God. He denies the existence of unselfish service to God.

**E. Satan's Request**

Satan argues that God is encircled by good actors and actresses! To prove his argument, he boldly demands that God take everything from Job, because only in this way will God see Job's facade fall down and see revealed his real attitude toward Him—"He will curse you into your face" (Job 1:11)! Satan requests that God remove His blessings from humans because in this manner, God will see their masks torn off. God will experience great disappointment because they will spit into His face. When humans are naked before Him, their real selves will be revealed. When God will not bless them any more, then humans' praises and faithfulness will vaporize as mist over boiling pots or water on one's fingers. When people lose everything, they will not be good nor behave well, because they are only using God for their own interests.

Satan, therefore, shoots against God: "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land" (Job 1:10). It is as if Satan were saying: "Of course it is easy for Job to serve you, because you give him everything he wants—wealth, reputation, position, a nice family. He has all that humans desire!" It is highly interesting to observe that even Satan has to admit that our God blesses His followers, cares for them, loves them, gives them prosperity, and protects them. But of course, he now turns it upside down and tries to use the goodness of God against Him.

Will Job serve God when he loses everything? In such circumstances, will he still maintain his integrity or will he reject God?

**F. The Scandal of the Book**

When Satan attacks Job's integrity, stating that Job serves God hypocritically, God allows Satan to harm Job! He permits him to try Job: "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands" (Job 1:12). What a horrible and incredible statement! This is more than a simple puzzle or a riddle.

Each time I read this verse I am irritated, upset, and even angry. I am sure that this scenario disturbs all of us (if we really understand what is going on behind such a statement), and we naturally revolt against it! We do not like this scene. Those who believe in a good, loving, just, and all-powerful God have an immense problem with this picture of God! With God there is no sin, pain, problems, or suffering. Believers confess that the Creator and the King of the Universe is the Protector of life, Giver of happiness, Prince of peace, Intervener into human affairs, and Friend of humans; however, they are caught by tragic and unexplainable realities of life. It seems that the God of Job is a different kind of God than they know from other parts of biblical revelation. Faith makes no sense and to some extent it makes the situation even worse.

Why didn't the Omnipotent God protect His servant and defend him? Instead He placed him into the powerful destroying hands of Satan. Couldn't He silence Satan by one stroke or even just a sentence? But He chose not to do it, and this is the real scandal in the experience of Job. This is what is so hard to understand, and we do not want to accept it. We rebel against such divine benevolence! Shame on God! We would like to see the Omnipotent God intervene and immediately silence Satan's accusations and prevent him from harming Job. We wish that God would stop at once the abuse of children, rape of women, concentration camps, murders, suffering, car accidents, plane crashes, collapse of towers, pain, violence, tsunamis, and many other tragic events (compare with Jer 14:8-9).

People are asking poignant questions in times of tragedies, loss, and war: "Where is God? Where was He when my son was killed? Where was He when my wife died because of cancer? Where was He when my daughter was raped and murdered? Why does He not intervene when I am in desperate need of His help and deliverance?" How often we wonder why God allows these tragedies.

The book of Job starts with a tension. On the one hand, God is putting a hedge around Job, protecting him from any harm, caring for his prosperity, blessing him so generously that Job becomes the Bill Gates of his time; on the other hand, he is abandoned (for some time) by God (*Deus absconditus!*) and left in the hands of Satan. There is no logic behind this paradox. This situation seems contradictory. We live in a world where evil reigns and evil is irrational; therefore, let us not try to find a logical answer to the problem of evil. We need to learn how to live with our unanswered questions! From that angle, the book of Job is really a quest for God's visible presence in life.

How is it that our good and omnipotent God is leaving us (sometimes, not always) in the hands of the evil Satan? And you know very well that nothing

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good can occur when we are left in his bad hands. Let me recount the tragedies of Job from a contemporary point of view in modern terms. Imagine on your way home from church worship someone stops you and reports that your children were involved in a car accident, and, unfortunately, all of them died on the spot. Then arriving home, instead of seeing your house, you see only a cloud of smoke going up. After such tragedies you cannot concentrate well at your work; therefore, after several weeks, your boss comes to you and says: "You cannot work for me like that; I also need to feed my family. I am sorry, but you are fired." Then you go to your physician for help and after examining you he says: "I am very sorry, but I have to tell you that you have cancer!"

In a situation like that, when you lose the most vital "things" in your life, when you are "naked" before Him, when you have lost His external blessing and when you are seemingly abandoned by Him, what would be your attitude toward Him? Will you serve or curse Him? And if you stay with Him, from what motives would you follow Him? Out of fear of losing eternal life, being punished even more if you do not, or out of gaining His favor or special awards?

When I was in Ruanda, I was in places where our brothers and sisters were killed only because they were from a different tribe. Hutus were murdering Tutsis. In one of our churches, our Tutsi members and their families were invited to the church, where they were promised safety and security. Then militiamen were "invited," and our brothers and sisters in Christ were massacred with machetes. They were crying to God for help, but God was silent. He left them in the hands of a mad mob. All of them were brutally murdered. Today there is in this place a memorial in their honor.

When I was a pastor in the former Czechoslovakia, Communists were laughing at me, saying: "Mr. Moskala, you are a fool. You believe in God, and you say that He is a good God. Why then is He allowing concentration camps, the abuse of children, torture, rape, exploitation, killing, floods, earthquakes and diseases? Why does He not intervene and stop it all?"

When I was a pastor in Europe, an eight-year-old girl from my congregation was killed in a car accident. She was hit by a drunk driver while crossing the street at the crosswalk. It was not easy for me to speak at the funeral service—not only because the parents of this girl were our good friends, but mainly because we do not have a simple answer as to why such tragedies occur.

Many parents are desperately asking: "Where was God when our son was killed? Where was God when our daughter was murdered? There is a vast array of different tragedies that cannot be even enumerated. The only answer to all these pertinent questions and tragic situations is: "God was exactly in the same place where He was when His son was murdered at the cross!"

God is always on the side of the oppressed, suffering person. In our suffering, He suffers. Isaiah emphasizes it very eloquently: "In all their distress he too was distressed . . . In his love and mercy he redeemed them" (Isa 63:9)!

**G. How Can Satan Be Defeated?**

All these pertinent, disturbing inquiries go back to the core of the problem: How can Satan be defeated? And with what weapons? These questions need to be answered in order to shed greater light on the whole conflict of the book of Job and the standpoint of God.

Can Satan be defeated by arguments? Can he be defeated by logic or proclamations? No, because against each argument is a counterargument, and to corner somebody only with facts has no lasting results. If Satan could be defeated by arguing, God would have done it a long time ago, for He is the Truth (Exod 34:6; Deut 7:9; 32:4; 2 Sam 7:28; 1 Kgs 17:24; 2 Chr 15:3; Ps 31:6; Jer 10:10; John 17:17).

Can Satan be defeated by force? Nothing would please him more than to face force in whatever form. This is exactly what he wants to prove about God. He wants to accuse Him of using force, but he lacks evidence; he cannot demonstrate it. Of course, Satan could be silenced by God's power if He chose to do so, because the Omnipotent Creator is also the Mighty Warrior (Exod 15:3; Judg 6:12; Isa 42:13; Jer 20:11). However, in that case God would be accused of not playing fair and thus having an advantage over Satan. The great controversy needs to be won, but in a different way.

The best way we can understand this is by a story my father told me when I was a small boy that made a great impact on my mind. Two boys were fighting; the one who was older, taller, and more muscular won over his opponent. It was obvious that the other didn't have a chance. After his victory he was boasting: "I am stronger; I won!" A bystander approached the haughty boy and asked: "Who won?" "I won," the bigger boy boasted. "Who is stronger?" asked the elderly man; "I am," the boy replied proudly. The elderly man then asked him: "Are you not ashamed to beat someone who is weaker than you?"

If God were to use force to gain the victory, Satan would be the first to confront the Lord and smash into His face the sharp words of defiance: "God, are you not ashamed to beat me who is weaker than you? You won because of power, not because of truth."

Satan and his allies draw evil weapons from an ugly arsenal to use against God—ambition, pride, selfishness, lies, deceit, violence, anger, hatred, prejudice, racism, terrorism, low passion, addictions, and manipulation. God would never employ these! Satan can be overcome only by love, truth, justice, freedom, and order. God uses only these clean and pure weapons. Satan, however, exercises any means and any strategy necessary—including fear, pain, torture, suffering, abuse, false wonders, unsound teaching, and murder.

How often we marvel why our Almighty God is silent and allows tragedies to happen in the lives of good people, not knowing or forgetting that Satan can be defeated only by someone who is weaker than he is.

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**H. Victory Through Weakness**

This is the reason for the incarnation. The God of the whole universe had to become weak in order to defeat evil. Only with the frailties of humanity could He defeat Satan. On the cross of Calvary, the Creator God demonstrated His love, truth, and justice. The suffering God, hanging on the cross, is a victorious God! Only the Lamb can overcome the dragon and wild beasts paraded before the readers in the book of Revelation. What a paradox! Sin started with pride, but was overcome by humility (Phil 2:5-11; Isa 14:12-15).

In the story of Job, only Job himself, who is weaker than the devil, can refute Satan's argument, defeat him, and thus prove that God is right when He is justifying him and standing on his side. Job overcame the devil not because he was so good or strong (he knows he is a sinner—Job 7:21; 10:6; 14:17), but because he totally surrendered his life to God. He did this in full confidence and trust in the God who gave him strength and victory (Job 13:15; 19:25-27; 42:5). When he was weak, he was strong. Paul says eloquently: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).

When in our weakness we cling to God, we are strong. This is a true paradox of life. When we realize our complete dependence on God, when we humbly admit and accept our fragility, when we trust God and not ourselves and allow Him to work in our lives, victory is ours because He fights for us! This battle we cannot win unless we stay in a close personal relationship with Him. We need to fight a good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), not against sin, but for a close relationship with Christ, who is the only one who can give us victory. Without Christ we are not able to overcome temptations and bear good fruit to eternity (John 15:5). It is like darkness in a room. We cannot fight against it, thinking that by force darkness will be banished; rather, we need to turn on the light and the darkness will be gone. When we are weak in our strength and we totally surrender to God, admitting that we are not able to defeat our enemy, He will fight for us. Because of the relationship with God, we are strong and unbeatable. Only in total submission to God—by the resignation of our own power, strength, achievements, and abilities—is our strength. It is then that we are allowing God to fight for us (Exod 14:14; Isa 30:15). He can give and bring us victory because He is the Victor. He came to earth with a clear purpose—to save us from sin and not in sin (Matt 1:21). In Him and because of Him, we are victors, too (Rev 12:11).

**I. What Was Left to Job When He Lost Everything?**

This is a paradoxical question, but what was left to Job when he lost God's blessing described in the book? Let me briefly point to seven things which remained to him:

1. His life, though a very miserable life. In a sense, it would be easier for Job to die and not to undergo the painful suffering and to live in such troubles.

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God as the Sovereign One sets a boundary for Satan: “But you must spare his life” (Job 2:6; compare with 1:12). The good news is that God promises we will never be tested beyond our ability to cope with the test (1 Cor 10:13). In the controversy between God and Satan, Job’s death was not necessary. His death would not serve any special purpose and would not answer the issue under contention. Jesus Christ had to go through the ultimate test of loyalty. When Jesus died, Satan was defeated, and once and for all it was demonstrated that pure love and obedience do exist and are possible. We overcome Satan only because of Jesus’ victory (Rev 12:10-11).

2. His wife. She advised him: “Curse God and die” because she loved him. Out of love she gives him bad advice, not realizing that by doing so, she is putting herself on the side of Satan.

3. His friends. We usually say harsh words about them. But when they heard about Job’s misery, they immediately came to visit him. When they arrived and saw what kind of tragedy had happened to him, they tore their robes, sat down with him for seven days, and didn’t say one word! What an important series of acts of solidarity!

One man was asked what for him was the best comfort he received when he lost his child. He said: “The best comfort I have received came from a man who visited me, embraced me, held my hand, cried with me, and said not one word. After twenty minutes he left. His silent solidarity was the best comfort I received.”

The three friends of Job were doing the same. When they heard about the calamities in his life, they immediately hurried to visit him. Perfect! Then Job started to speak and “cursed the day of his birth” (Job 4:1). His friends could not bear his bold and open speech. They accused him of self-righteousness. Their false and very simplistic theology burst up on the surface (see especially Job 4:6-9), and they started to rebuke Job (see, for example, Job 8:2-4; 22:3-11). They were miserable comforters (Job 16:2). They were servants of Satan because they only continued the accusations he started. One can say: “Where Satan cannot enter, he sends friends.” Unfortunately, how often this is true in everyday life.

4. His voice. Job spoke openly but honestly with God. He said things we sometimes think devoted Christian should not say. But Job is an example of a man sincerely questing for truth. He wanted to know the truth, the mysteries of life. We need to learn how to dialogue truthfully with God without hiding anything.

At the end of the book, God Himself twice stated that what Job said about Him was correct. His three friends were rebuked (Job 42:7-8). Very often people who say harsh things about God because they have been hurt by the unrighteous, or by the unjust things of life, can be closer to God and to the truth than those who always try to defend God!

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5. His mind, capacity to reason. To think, to be able to analyze, and to evaluate is a very important gift.

6. His God, God's presence in the midst of His silence. Job was longing and searching for God's perceptible presence in his life because God was seemingly hidden and far away.

In one cell in Auschwitz, where thousands of innocent people were tortured and murdered, someone engraved in the wall: "Here was Jesus!" An unknown author in the Warsaw ghetto wrote aptly: "I believe in the sun, even though I do not see it; I believe in love, even though I do not feel it; I believe in God even though He is silent!"

I am quite sure you have heard the story of one man who in his dream saw that he was walking with Jesus, and two sets of footprints always appeared in the sand. Later he was in big trouble, but when he looked at the footprints there was only one set of footprints instead of the two, as before. He felt totally abandoned by God. When the different scenes of his life appeared before him, he noticed that many times there was only one set of footprints, and it was at the lowest and saddest times of his life. In the dream, he finally asked Jesus: "Why did you leave me when I needed you most? I had to face the problems of life alone!" Then Jesus replied: "My son, when you were down and the difficulties of life pressed you, I was always with you. You are right, you saw only one set of footprints, but those footprints in the sand were mine, because at your roughest time, I carried you in my arms!" God never forsakes His people, even though sometimes it seems that they have to walk without His visible blessings.

Paradoxically, God's invisible Presence helped people in Rwanda to die a martyr's death, to die in dignity. God's presence helps us go through all the difficulties of life. The great news is that God is with us in our problems and carries us through them. He suffers with us in our sufferings (Isa 63:9)! He never abandons us, even though it seems very often that He is a far-away God! He gives victory over all kinds of temptations, struggles, problems, and suffering. He is always with His people giving them power to overcome and persevere. Paul correctly states: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil 4:13).

7. His personal trust in the personal God. Job, with full confidence toward his God, whose actions he did not understand, confessed: "Even though you would kill me, still I will hope in you" (see Job 13:15). He knew that He is the best. This is why he proclaimed: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27). Note how often he used "I," "me," and "my." His personal faith in a personal God triumphed.

Job's relationship with God was severely tested, but by faith, he clung to God with all his strength. He trusted Him and served unselfishly. Nothing, even

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pain, suffering, or unanswered questions, could separate him from God. His integrity was vindicated.

Because Job had cultivated a trusting relationship with God in the past and was relying on His promises, he could victoriously go through the present crisis. Past experience with God helped him to survive this current intense attack from Satan, which did not make sense.

Troubles of life, suffering, and persecution have no power to create faith in us, but instead they reveal our faith. Difficulties of life help us to discover what really is inside us, and they may also further develop and strengthen faith (Rom 8:28). Job himself declares that his relationship with the Lord was deepened, even though he was in the fire of life without a specific personal reason: “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (42:5). Even though he did not understand his existing situation, he completely trusted His God. Job retained his faith in Him, even though he lost everything, because his confidence was anchored in God, not in the prosperity of life. He preferred to fulfill God’s will before his own; he was willing even to die for Him, to lose everything. Job’s obedience and faithfulness to God was stronger than his desire to preserve his well-being and happiness. He served God even though God’s promises apparently failed.

**J. Final Outcome—God Is Just and Always on Our Side**

In the darkest situation of life, God reveals Himself to Job as the Creator (Job 38–41). This was His answer to Job’s questions, frustrations, problems, and suffering. Strangely enough, God answered his hard questions with His divine questions. How can this picture of God as the Creator provide a solution? It looks like a puzzle, and even though we cannot explore this issue in this study,<sup>6</sup> let me stress that God, by presenting Himself to Job as the Creator, declared that He is above all, He is in control, He is the Source of life, He is able to recreate. Thus He showed that He is the Re-Creator, Omni-powerful God, transcendent, and full of ultimate wisdom. He is not a Destroyer! He is able out of nothing, even chaos, to create something new, valuable, and permanent. Job saw that nature as well as his life was full of mysteries that could not be explained, but an insightful look into God’s creation activities provided him with the assurance that he lay in the mighty hands of the Creator.

When Job demonstrated that he loved God above all, even in the very desperate situations of life, God’s standing for him was vindicated. His justice prevailed. God is just while justifying us because His grace and presence, even though very often unseen and silent, sustains His people. God demonstrates that

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<sup>6</sup>See an excellent study on this particular point in Henry M. Morris, *The Remarkable Record of Job: The Ancient Wisdom, Scientific Accuracy, and Life-Changing Message of an Amazing Book* (Green Forest: Master, 2000).

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He rules in justice. Satan's slander, jibes, and taunts are openly proven to be without any substance. Evidences of Job's life eloquently cry against Satan!

Paradoxically, Job became even stronger as a result of the bitter crisis he went through; his agony of life made him more firm. According to the narrator of the book of Job, God Himself said: "He [Job] still maintains his integrity" (2:3). "The stem (Hifil) of the verb 'maintains' indicates a strengthening of the grip he already had."<sup>7</sup> Instead of cursing God, he was praising Him (1:21).<sup>8</sup>

The book of Job demonstrates that it is possible to serve God for Himself and not for a certain reward. Devotion to God and human integrity are an expression of love and gratitude to Him for who He is. This devotion and integrity can endure even in times when disasters come and tragedies of life strike and raise questions that cannot be easily answered. Faith triumphs despite the problems of life. It is possible to follow God for nothing, i.e., out of love. It is possible to give preference to God before our own life or skin. A person with faith in God can triumph over suffering. Atkinson states it well: "Faith is learning to trust God in the dark, in unknowing, in apparent failure. Faith is what God gives us to help us live with uncertainties."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, Job gives a penetrating insight into the key issue of the great controversy between God and Satan, and we need to ask ourselves: Why do we serve God? What are our motives? What is our reason? Everything in our lives depends on our motives, and every deed is judged according to them. Ellen G. White also stresses that God judges us according to our motives: "Not by their wealth, their education, or their position does God estimate men. He estimates them by their purity of motives and their beauty of character."<sup>10</sup>

At the end, God rewarded Job even more than in the beginning (Job 42:10-16). Does it prove, therefore, that he nevertheless served God for a final reward? Not at all! God gives rewards; it is His nature. As our good Friend, He blesses us not in order to buy our love, but because He loves us. His faithful followers do not serve Him because of these gifts. This point was demonstrated clearly in Job's afflictions. After it was proven that he loved God disinterestedly, he received double blessings. God is good; He wants us to know that He will never leave us empty. Because I love my wife and my children, I always come home from a trip with gifts for them as a token of my love, as a demonstration I was thinking about them while I was in a foreign country. But my love for them is

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<sup>7</sup>Elmer B. Smick, "Job," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 4:884.

<sup>8</sup>Job used the same word (*barah*) that Satan used in v. 11, but with the opposite meaning (an example of euphemism)—he was blessing God! It was proven that Job's faithfulness was genuine. He did not fall into desperation, resignation, or bitterness after losing his family, health, and wealth. He endured the test with flying colors. Job's theocentric orientation and attitude proved Satan wrong.

<sup>9</sup>David J. Atkinson, *The Message of Job: Suffering and Grace*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 27.

<sup>10</sup>Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, Boise: Pacific, 1905, 477.

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not limited to these physical expressions of my love, but based upon deep bonds that have been built between us. I am convinced that they do not love me because of these gifts, but because they have experienced my loving relationship with them. Life would certainly be less enjoyable and empty without tangible presents of love.

**K. Conclusion**

The experience of Job is a principal case in which God unfolds mysteries and perplexities of our own existence. Job's case is a model which each of us must go through. His experience is our experience in principle. Situations of life will be different, but the issues will always be, in principle, the same. Everyone has to endure trials of life (for some prosperity, positions, luxury, leisure, and/or the comfort of life can be a worse trial than suffering) just like Job! Satan tries, and unfortunately often very successfully, to separate us from the love of God through his many inventions. In the battle between good and evil, we are all on the stage. No one stands outside being only a spectator, somehow in a neutral position. We are all playing an active role whether we want to or not.

Job knew his identity; he knew that he was a son of God! Let me, therefore, close our reflections on the message of Job with a modern parable. A hen found an egg, and she understandably thought that it was an egg just like all of the others of her own. She took this egg as her own, and after some time a small chicken was born. Or so she thought. In fact, the little chick was not a chicken at all. It was an eagle. She looked at him and was very disappointed, because her other chicks were very different: different beaks, claws, wings, etc. It did not even behave like the others. Everybody in the courtyard was laughing at him; cocks were even beating him. One day he noticed that everybody was hiding; therefore, he also hid himself. Everyone was looking up, so he looked up as well, and there he saw a beautiful bird flying so nicely. "Mom, look at that bird over there!" he whispered. What kind of a bird is that?" "That is an eagle, the king of all the birds." "Mom, I would also like to fly like this eagle." His mom looked at him and finally in a very disapproving voice said: "You, you never will, you are only a chicken, and besides a very bizarre chicken." The little eagle put down his head and said: "Mom, I know I am only a chicken, and a very bizarre chicken." The author of this parable ended the story with a sad note. "It happened that this little eagle lived for several years in this courtyard always thinking that he was a chicken, until he finally died." What a sad story.

I wish the parable had a different ending, that one day a man came to this little eagle and said to him: "Do not believe what others are saying about you. You are not a chicken; you are an eagle! And because you are an eagle, you can also fly like an eagle!" I wish the parable told us that the little eagle believed in this good news and behaved accordingly. Because he knew his new identity, he tried to fly.

*MOSKALA: THE GOD OF JOB AND OUR ADVERSARY*

In the beginning it was not easy, but later on he soared so high, with so much grace, that all the chickens in the courtyard gazed at him with admiration and said: “Now we know who you are! You are an eagle, a king among birds!”

In God’s hands, we are absolutely safe and no one can remove us out of His caring arms! We are His sons and daughters. Our identity lies in Him. He is always for us and never against us. Paul rightly states in Romans 8:35-39 that absolutely nothing and no one on earth or in the whole universe can separate us from the love of God, even though Satan is a master in his attempts and intrigues and tries very hard! Neither persecution, tragedy, suffering, or death, nor prosperity, wealth, or a good position in life can do it! Of course, this can be true only on the condition that we stay in a close, intimate, and trusting relationship with our loving, holy, and awesome Lord. Glory be to our great, loving, mighty, and incomparable God! Victory is His! Therefore, if someone boasts, let him boast in the Lord (Jer 9:23-24)! The Lamb of God has the final word in the cosmic controversy between good and evil: “They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev 17:14). Our God is God of love, truth, and justice.

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