

Michael McGowan

Job 42:7-17 – **The Sure Pledge**

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I'm not a movie buff.

But I do like to watch movies.

It's one of my favorite things to do...

Get lost in a good movie.

Now for me, in order for a movie to be good, it has to end well.

There needs to be resolution to the story...

Don't leave me in the tension wondering what happens.

I know some people like these kind of movies...

But the spiritual side of me needs to know that everything worked out...

I need to see restoration.

If you've been with us through Lent, we've been in the book of Job...

Looking at Job's suffering and our own suffering.

And today we're going to be looking at the ending...

And judge if it's good or not.

To catch you up to speed, here's what's been happening in Job's life:

Job is a man who had a lot going for him:

He had 7 sons and 3 daughters;

Thousands of sheep and camels;

Hundreds of oxen and donkeys;

And a lot of servants.

He was prosperous.

You could say that Job had it all.

He even had a respect and fear of the Lord:

He was blameless and upright.

But then we're privy to a conversation between the Lord and Satan (the Accuser).

The Accuser says, "Job *only* trusts you because you've blessed and protected him..."

"Take all of this away and he'll curse you to your face."

So the Lord permits Satan to wreck his life:

All of his children are killed;

All of his wealth is taken from him;

His body is afflicted with a skin disease...

Sores all over his body;

And all of his closest friends and relatives turn away from him...

In fact, his friends (comforters!) try convincing Job that he did something to deserve all of this!

That he must have some unrepented sin in his life.

Job is wrecked...

So he cries out to God.

Job knows that he didn't do anything wrong...

So he pleads with God to declare his innocence...

To come to him and tell him why he's suffering.

God does eventually come to him...

After nearly 40 chapters of Job pleading his innocence.

But God doesn't give a satisfying answer...

He says, "Job, did *you* make the heavens and the earth?"

"Does the eagle soar at *your* command?"

"Have *you* walked the ocean floor?"

No???

Okay then, this wisdom is beyond your understanding too...

It's too wonderful for you.

So Job is left in the dust and the ashes.

Now we come to the end of the book.

Job 42:7-17.

<sup>7</sup> After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. <sup>8</sup> So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.” <sup>9</sup> So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job’s prayer.

<sup>10</sup> After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. <sup>11</sup> All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

<sup>12</sup> The Lord blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. <sup>13</sup> And he also had seven sons and three daughters. <sup>14</sup> The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. <sup>15</sup> Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job’s daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

<sup>16</sup> After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. <sup>17</sup> And so Job died, an old man and full of years.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

And Job lived happily ever after.

That’s good, isn’t it?

A lot of people don’t like this ending to Job...

It seems to be a little too sweet...

Like the kind of too-much-sweet that makes your belly sour.

After 30+ chapters of pain, suffering and misery for Job—

Job calling out to God from the dust and ashes with no answer—

Suddenly things turn back around...

The mess of Job’s life is tidied up...

Job is restored...

And there's even a little bow on top:

“Job live 140 years; he saw his children and their children to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation. And so he died, old and full of years.” (42:17)

This ending doesn't match our reality.

How many people's lives do you see turn out like this?

We could relate with Job through all of his suffering...

But this turn of fortune doesn't resonate with real life.

Our wealth doesn't come back two-fold.

Maybe we've lost a good job because of the struggling economy...

But we don't anticipate being hired back with double the salary.

We know what it's like to have rocky relationships with family or friends—

We know what it's like to feel abandoned by them in our time of need...

But we don't anticipate these relationships being restored anytime soon—

There's just too much baggage there to have it cleared up...

Too much mess.

We know what it's like to lose loved ones.

People have been taken from us too early—we've seen them experience a lot of pain.

But there's nothing that can bring them back to us...

Nothing will replace their loss.

We watch the evening news or read online articles:

Scandals, plane crashes, a tanking economy, measles outbreaks, famine, shootings, etc.

We're very familiar with the sting of reality.

Hollywood is even picking up on this trend...

Making movies that are more “believable.”

I'll be in the middle of what feels like a really great movie, true story or fiction—

Getting ready for the ending—

For an ending that will tie up all of the loose ends:

The guy and the girl will get back together;

The killer will be caught and pay for their crime;

The sick person will get better...

And the family is going to get back together...

Yes, this is going to be a great movie...

But then the screen, way too early, fades to black or slowly pans out leaving things unfinished/broken—

Vince Vaughn and Jennifer Anniston don't get back together in "the Breakup";

The killer isn't caught in the movie about the Zodiac killer;

And Jack dies every time at the end of "Titanic".

It used to be the trend for Hollywood to package everything up in a neat little box at the end of a movie—

Answer all of the questions...

Nothing left wanting...

Happily ever after—

But this is real life...

And we know how that goes.

So when we read the end of Job...

We may want to toss the book aside and say, "Psshhh, yeah, I wish."

But could you imagine if Job's story ended after Job's repentance:

"God, I'm sorry I spoke about things that were beyond my understanding."

And we can imagine God patting Job on the head—

Just like the Grinch pats Cindy Loo Who on the head—

"There there, Job..."

And sends him away to live the rest of his life...

Covered in boils, estranged from family and friends, a poor man who lost his wealth and honor.

Could you imagine if Jesus' story ended in the tomb?

"And they took his lifeless, bloody body down from the cross and laid him in a cave...never to be seen again." (in the voice of James Earl Jones)

No way!

We know that endings not right...

Because it's not consistent with God's character.

In the book of Job we're given a remarkable picture of who God is.

When we look at this book and try to draw out its main theme...

We may want to look only at Job:

“Here's an example of a man with patience...”

“This is how we too can endure suffering and pain faithfully.”

And while it does talk about this—

And we can rightly make that conclusion and apply it to life—

This book is not so much about Job, as it is about God.

This book is about the sovereignty of God...

The freedom of God to act in this world however he sees fit.

And, like every book of the Bible, the book of Job reveals something of God's character to us.

What the ending of Job's story tells us is that **God gives life**.

Against all odds in Job's story, **God gives life**, and he gives it in abundance.

God doesn't just restore Job to where he once was...

He doubles it:

7,000 sheep become 14,000.

3,000 sheep become 6,000.

500 oxen and donkey become 1,000.

God restores the relationships that were broken in his life:

His brothers, sisters, and people from his past come back to him.

They don't just say “I'm sorry Job, please forgive me.”

No, they sit down with Job and comfort and console him.

“Job, I'm so sorry for what you had to go through, that must be so tough.”

“What was it like for you? What was your experience like?”

(How great would it be to hear those words from family?)

Then they each give him money and a gold ring...

Which no doubt help Job in rebuilding his life.

The book of Job tells us that when all is said and done—

That when all of the cards are on the table—

**God is a gracious giver of life**, and he gives it in abundance. (cf. John 10:10)

Now we may think that Job deserves this...

That somehow God owed all of this to Job for letting bad things happen to him.

But this book has made clear that God acts in freedom.

Just as Job wasn't suffering because he did something wrong...

Neither is he rewarded for doing something right.

Job doesn't earn God's favor or blessings...

God blesses him out of his divine freedom.

The life he gives Job is an act of grace...

Or undeserved favor.

It's an amazing thing if you look at it from the perspective of ANE history.

Scholars think the book was written about a man who lived sometime around 2,000-1,000BC.

They think the book itself was written somewhere around the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC.

During this early time in Israel's history, they didn't have a fleshed-out theory of resurrection.

When loved ones died...that was it.

They thought *everyone* went to the land of the dead (Sheol).

“They didn't know that family members would get a resurrection one day.” (Goldingay)

So for this book to speak so powerfully of a God who gives life—

A God who restores and symbolically resurrects would have been remarkable for them.

This book tells us something about the character of God...

That **God gives life**.

This is something we need to hear because too often we're surrounded by death:

The death of our dreams;

The death of our bodies as they age;  
 The death of our sanity as we are constantly overwhelmed by life;  
 The death of our loved ones;  
 The death of our mental capacities;  
 And the death of our sense of self as we slip deeper and deeper into sin.

We know death...

We know that story all too well...it's what we're familiar with.

Our world is drawn to movies and stories that end with the suffering and brokenness of life—

And we might be attracted to these stories that resonate with our pain—

But ultimately we know that these endings don't satisfy—

They're not the endings we long for—

Because we're people who desire restoration!

We were created for life!

And this is exactly what we see in the resurrection of Christ.

We see life flowing into us from Christ's resurrection in 3 ways according to the catechism (Q&A 45):

First, it makes the death of Christ effective for us.

As humans we sinned against God.

Our sin against God was so great that we could never pay the debt down.

So God the Son gave up his life for us...

He took the punishment—

He was nailed to the cross, instead of us—

Bearing God's wrath that was meant for us.

And now in his resurrection he defeats sin and he defeats death.

Christ's payment becomes ours and we are declared clean before God.

Because of Christ's death and resurrection we are stamped "NOT GUILTY"  
 before God.

We are able to enter back into that relationship that gives our life meaning...

That relationship with our Triune God we were always meant to live in.

The second way life comes to us in Christ's resurrection is that our ending is set.

Because Christ was raised from the dead...

We know that our ending is going to be full of abundant life.

We will see our Creator God face to face...

And he will restore our damaged lives just as he restored Job's.

When we're resurrected to life along with Christ we'll know the restoration of our bodies...

In the NT Paul says that we'll be given new/eternal bodies made by God (2 Cor 5)...

No more back pain;

No more arthritis or sore joints;

No more depression or anxiety or cancer or disease.

When we're resurrected to life along with Christ we'll be gathered together with all of God's people.

We'll sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt 8:11) and all of the saints who have gone before us.

We'll see them in their restored state and know that God gives life.

Christ's resurrection is a pledge of our resurrection.

Finally, because of Christ's resurrection we are raised to new life now.

This is not something we have to wait for.

Although we still live in a world that's full of suffering, pain and death—

And although we have the future hope of resurrection—

We're given new life today.

When we believe on Christ as our Savior...

We are united to him in such a way that his death becomes our death...

And his resurrection becomes our resurrection.

The beautiful ending to the story has already begun for us.

And so this is where I want to leave it today...

I want to challenge us...

To live as people of the resurrection...

To live as if all of this were true...

Because it is.

We have neighbors, co-workers, family members, friends, and strangers out there who are dying...

They're living in a story where the only thing that's promised is suffering and death.

They're separated from the God who loves them and it hurts.

Who is that person for you?

Who just came to mind?

I challenge you to bring that person before the Lord in prayer for the next week.

Ask God, the giver of life, to open up their heart to his love.

Pray that he would give you an opportunity to share this life with them.

We know that the end of the story turns out really good for us who believe...

We know that the Spirit of God is working in us now...

So what else have we to do then live as people who have been given a sure pledge of life?