

## Job

My name is Job and I need to tell you about the worst year of my life – which also turned out to be the best year of my life. But I had better summarize. A complete account of the conversations I had with a group of friends (yes, they really are my friends) has been written down but I suspect you do not have the patience for it. I have noted in my brief observations of your society that people no longer have discussions of substance but communicate in brief written messages, mostly about inconsequential matters, often without even looking into each other's faces. I grew up in a talking and thinking culture but in deference to yours, I will be brief.

I was a model citizen of my day. The few of us whom God had entrusted with wealth understood that it was a stewardship and therefore used it to help the helpless and feed the hungry. I honored my Maker and taught my children the same. He blessed me with health and prosperity although I did not actually ask for either. Everything was going fine and I expected to finish a long life in that same situation.

What I did not know until much later is that there was a deeper story being written with a plot I could not have even suspected and a plotter whose evil intent was turned by God into something magnificent. In a series of rapidly successive crises, everything was taken from me, my wealth, my children, my health, the love and encouragement of my wife and finally the respect of my friends.

Reasoning from the general principle that God is just, my friends, after a suitable period of respectful silence (something I also find lacking in your society), proceeded to encourage me to confess the secret sin that obviously brought this just punishment upon me and my house. Naturally I focused on the injustice of it all since there was no secret sin and in fact, if graded on a curve, I should get an A++. The argument got nowhere.

Finally the youngster of the group spoke up with a similar story but a slightly different twist – starting from the justice of God, he pointed out that no one deserves anything from Him and, as one of the later writers said (yes, they let me read ahead) “our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”

Then God spoke. How can I explain it to you? I will not even try. Of course he is sovereign! Nothing happens without his permission and He used these tragedies to bring me to a higher level of devotion. I love and serve Him not because of the benefits but because it is right. And it is right because this is the reason I was created and the only way I can be complete. And there ARE rewards, deeper and richer than I had imagined.

Then God gave me back double what I lost. Oh, you remember that I had 10 children and only got 10 more? Well, as you ought to know, I still had the first 10; they had preceded me into the presence of the Creator. And God told me to pray for my friends – who you might say had become my enemies – after they had properly repented. I have to admit to a brief thought of calling down all my plagues

upon them (for their own spiritual edification, of course) did flit across my mind. But do you know that forgiving those who spitefully use you is incredibly liberating!

My story has been recorded for the benefit of the generations that followed me. Do you see any lessons for yourself?

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