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“JUST ASK JOB”
Job 1, 2, 42

📖 Defined in objective terms security is safety: freedom from risk or danger. Subjectively speaking it is confidence: freedom from doubt, anxiety, or fear. Security is, arguably, our most basic need and longing.

It has always been a hot topic, but it is an especially urgent matter in these days of floods, fires, recession, terrorism, {Mt 24:6} “**wars and rumors of wars.**” So for the next few months we will explore what the living God says about security in his Word.

☑ Consider: you are walking along, enjoying life, doing the best you can when, “Bam!” **someone pulls the rug out from under your feet:**

Two aircraft crash into the World Trade Center, a 3rd into the Pentagon, a 4th into a Pennsylvania field; or,

Your best friend since Kindergarten turns on you, telling your secrets to everyone at school; or,

The company that has employed you for the last 25 years downsizes and you are out of work; or,

Your bank refuses to renegotiate the terms of your mortgage and you lose your home; or,

An F-5 tornado roars through your neighborhood, annihilating everything in its path; or,

The doctor coldly informs you that the tests have come back positive and the prognosis is poor; or,

Your husband abandons you and the kids and runs off with his secret lover.

The thing is the list of possible disasters is virtually endless, *and* these scenarios I have cited are all from the real world, *and* you never know whom tragedy will strike next: a stranger, colleague, friend, family member, even a brother or sister in this sanctuary.

Accident, disease, trouble, conflict, grief, violence and death rattle the lives of even the most intelligent, forward-thinking, law-abiding, morally upright, godly people.

☐ Just ask Job. Please turn to the book that is named after him. It reads like a theatrical script. The imagery and language are vivid, and the narrative unfolds like a well-crafted drama.

■ The narrator kicks things off with a glowing introduction. Job 1:1: “**In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. [He] was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.**”

Verses 2-3 reveal that Job “**had seven sons and three daughters... 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen... 500 donkeys, and ...a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.**” This is not merely an inventory of achievement: it is offered as proof that Holy God thoroughly approves of our protagonist.

Verses 4-5 are for the skeptics in the audience who think that Job sounds too good to be true. The narrator says that every time Job’s kids threw a party he got up “**early,**” sent someone over to purify them, and “[sacrificed] **a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and**

cursed God in their hearts.’ This was Job’s regular custom.” Job was the real deal.

★ If ever a person *positioned* himself for financial, physical, emotional and relational security, it was Job. If ever a mortal human being *deserved* security on the basis of wisdom, hard-work, solid values, ethical conduct and true religion, Job did. But if Job assumed that he was safe from pain and loss he was sorely mistaken.

■ Things get rolling in Job 1:6-12 (which is Scene 1). **“The angels... present themselves before the LORD”** on his throne, **“and Satan”** (whose name literally means **“The Accuser”**) comes **“with them,”** evidently for the purpose of persuading God to condemn sinners.

The LORD talks about Job like a proud father: **“Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”**

Satan scoffs {NLT}: **“Yes, Job fears God! You have always protected him and his home and his property... You have made him prosperous in everything he does.But take [it all] away..., and he will surely curse you to your face!”**

God’s reply is unexpected {NLT/NIV}: **“All right, you may test him. Do whatever you want to everything he possesses, but” “do not lay a finger” “on the man himself.”**

At Satan’s command bandits steal Job’s oxen and donkeys, fire consumes Job’s sheep, marauders carry off Job’s camels, and many of Job’s hired hands are murdered in the process; most horribly, a tornado wipes out all ten of

Job’s children. It all happens without warning, all at the same time.

Talk about the rug being pulled out from under you feet! Actually, it sounds more like an earthquake.

☑ I lived in Odawara, Japan for two years. The city is situated on two fault lines. Small temblors are a regular event, and I learned to take them in stride.

But it wasn’t always business as usual. For 2 ½ weeks in July and August 1989 the ground shook constantly. Local seismographs recorded 20,000 tremors, hundreds in the 3’s and 4’s and at least a dozen in the 5 point range on the Richter Scale. Two people were killed.

Imagine the sensation: the earth is supposed to be reliably solid, yet it is moving beneath you. Depending on the location of the epicenter it is either jumping up and down or (what is worse) rolling like waves on the ocean.

Scientists are researching ways to predict them, but then what? It costs a great deal of time and money to construct quake-resistant buildings. When a tremor hits the only thing you can do is stand in the doorway or crawl under a sturdy table – and pray that someone will pull you out of the wreckage, if your house collapses.

★ There is nothing like an earthquake to expose your basic insecurity. You are at the mercy of powerful forces no mere mortal can predict, contain or control.

In Scene 1 Job endures an earthquake of the soul.

■ It gets worse in Scene 2, which is Job chapter 2. “**The angels ... present themselves before the LORD**” a second time, “**and Satan**” shows up.

“**Have you considered my servant Job?**” says God. “**There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.**”

Satan scoffs {NIV/NLT}: “**Skin for skin! ... A man will give up everything he has to save his life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.**”

God answers {NLT}: “**All right, do with him as you please. But spare his life.**”

Soon poor Job is covered head-to-toe with agonizing, festering boils. He wastes away to skin and bones {19:20}, burns with fever {30:30}, and is plagued by nightmares {7:14}. Adding insult to physical injury the local children mock Job and his siblings loathe him {Job 19:17-19}. Friends who should help Job bear his burden blame him {Job 19:17-19}, and his wife is so repulsed she urges him to “**Curse God and die!**” {Job 2:9}.

Job curses the day of his birth, but he refuses to curse God. He {2:10} “[does] **not sin**” with his words.

■ Job 38:1-42:9 is the climax of the drama. God finally answers Job’s complaints, saying (in essence): “**I am God; you are not.**” He also rebukes Job’s friends for their arrogance.

■ The epilogue follows in 42:10-17. Everyone honors Job. God doubles his previous treasure, and blesses him

with seven new sons and three new daughters. (As an aside the author names the girls but not the boys, and remarks that Job {NLT} “**granted them an inheritance along with their brothers**” – which was unheard of in that patriarchal culture!)

It is a glorious, happy ending. But *did Job’s wealth seem as real or meaningful as before? And did Job ever step out the door without first embracing and praying over his loved ones?* I doubt it.

What does the drama of Job reveal about security in this life?

Keep in mind that we are speaking not of eternal life in the consummated Kingdom of God, but of temporal life in this passing age.

★ 1st, God is able to provide absolute security in every conceivable circumstance, yet he usually does not.

This is a great mystery: God is powerful and compassionate, yet he permits good people to fall into danger. Then again, this may be the deeper mystery: that God is holy and just, yet he frequently preserves sinful people from danger! Whatever God does, whatever God allows, we can trust that he is mighty and wise and full of love. As we read in Job 34:12, “**It is unthinkable that God would do wrong.**”

★ 2nd, no one is guaranteed absolute security in earthly matters.

Not you, not me. Our Father in heaven {Mt 5:45} “**causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**” Sometimes it is the worker with the

best track record who gets fired, the smartest, best-informed investor who loses a fortune, the tri-athlete at ideal weight who dies of heart disease, the kindest person who is rejected by their peers, the most blameless, upright servant of God who suffers the hardest.

✪ 3rd, all this notwithstanding, God is the one and only foundation of true security.

Treasure disappears, knowledge disappoints, power fades, friendships fail, health wanes, and bodies die -- but not God! He is worthy of our trust even when the rug is pulled out from under us, even when the earth rolls like waves beneath our feet.

Just ask Job: in the middle of his ordeal, when he despaired of objective safety and had no reason for subjective confidence, he declared: “**Though [God] slays me, yet I will hope in him**” (Job 13:1).

This is the Word of the LORD.