

WALKING THROUGH SUFFERING WITH JOB

YET
I WILL
HOPE
IN HIM

ANDREW M. DAVIS

“Andy Davis has provided a treasure trove of truths for walking through suffering in this wearying world. Beautifully biblical, deeply emotional, gently pastoral, and refreshingly practical, this book won’t just teach you lessons from Job—it will lead you to life and joy in Jesus.”

David Platt, McLean Bible Church

“The book of Job is foundational for a biblical understanding of suffering and the sovereignty of God. Dr. Andy Davis not only models a thoughtful analysis of the text but also provides pastoral application through the lens of the gospel, especially the connection to the work and life of Jesus. It’s a wonderful resource on suffering and how to see the issue with a biblical perspective.”

Mark Vroegop, President, The Gospel Coalition;
author of *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*

“Using the book of Job as his primary text, Andy Davis tackles the pain and confusion of suffering head-on. His treatment of this topic is theologically rich and biblically faithful. Ultimately, Andy points us not so much to principles (as helpful as they can be) but to a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is where our hope must be and where our healing is found. This is a book you will want to read and keep close by when you’re hurting.”

Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist
Theological Seminary

“Andy Davis serves as an able guide to the book of Job, opening its riches of wisdom and insight to readers. This book goes beneath the surface of this ancient poetic account to uncover its message of the need for Christ to bear and make sense of suffering and to showcase the solid hope we have that Jesus has overcome (and will one day eradicate) suffering.”

Nancy Guthrie, Author; Bible teacher

“Dr. Andy Davis provides the church with a rich and practical theology of suffering anchored in gospel hope. With pastoral care, he addresses the tensions and fears that often surround affliction and draws wisely from the book of Job to encourage believers to endure hardship with steadfast hope in our trustworthy God.”

Tony Merida, Founding Pastor, Imago Dei Church

“Your hour will come—perhaps it already has. None of us in this present age escapes suffering. The book of Job was written to give us hope in the middle of the struggle. Andy Davis is an experienced traveler and faithful guide to help you not only walk through suffering with Job but even experience it with joy.”

David Mathis, Senior Teacher, desiringGod.org; pastor, Cities Church, Saint Paul, MN; author of *Habits of Grace*

“Andy Davis has provided a Scripture-soaked, Christ-centered, and realistic meditation on the great principle that in this life, we face great woes. In them, our Lord promises, ‘I will be with you.’ Davis offers sufferers an honest and theological account of affliction and the hope of endurance through Christ.”

Daniel Doriani, Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Covenant Seminary; author of *Work*

“*Yet I Will Hope in Him* is pastorally rich and exegetically rigorous. Davis guides readers through the book of Job, illuminating its theological depth and poetic beauty. This is an excellent resource for pastors and church members who desire a deeper exploration of suffering and the hope we have in Christ.”

Andrew Spencer, Associate Editor, The Gospel Coalition; author of *Hope for God's Creation*

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Andrew M. Davis



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To Andy Winn.

*It has been one of the greatest joys of my life
to shepherd FBC with you for more than twenty-five years.
I have never seen anyone better at rejoicing with those
who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn.*

Contents

<i>Chapter 1. Raising Timeless Questions</i>	
Only Christ Can Answer	1
<i>Chapter 2. Realism: Expecting Suffering, Not Fear</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Chapter 3. Contentment: Holy Delight, Not Idolatry</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Chapter 4. Security: God's Protection Blocks</i>	
Satan's Attacks	39
<i>Chapter 5. Perseverance: Imitating Job's Response</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Chapter 6. Compassion: Counseling Sufferers</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Chapter 7. Repentance: Suffering Exposes Deep Sin</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>Chapter 8. Reverence: Our Response to God's Majesty</i>	<i>89</i>
<i>Chapter 9. Submission: Clinging to God's Nature</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>Chapter 10. Acceptance: Trusting God's</i>	
Secret Purposes	111
<i>Chapter 11. Faith: Christ, Our Ultimate Comforter</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Chapter 12. Hope: Suffering by a Better Assurance</i>	<i>137</i>
<i>Chapter 13. Glory: Setting Our Hearts on Heaven</i>	<i>153</i>
<i>Endnotes</i>	<i>161</i>

Chapter 1

Raising Timeless Questions Only Christ Can Answer

AT SOME POINT in your pilgrimage to heaven, you will need the book of Job. Jesus, the greatest friend your soul has ever had, testifies solemnly, “In this world, you will have trouble” (John 16:33 NIV). That is guaranteed. As you sail through the turbulent storms of this world, your ship will most certainly be slammed and buffeted by wave upon wave. Rogue waves fifty feet high will come, threatening to capsize your soul in an abyss of despair. You will be gulping water desperate for air. No one on earth makes it through this world of sorrow unscathed.

God knows all this. So in his kindness, he has given you the book of Job. He did this so you would know you’re not passing through the storm alone. The book of Job is a beautiful fulfillment of God’s magnificent pledge in Isaiah 43:2: “When you pass through the waters, *I will be with you*; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you” (emphasis added). This promise is the greatest commitment God could ever make to his storm-tossed children. The storm rages—the loving God is with you. The storm

rages more—the omnipotent God is with you. The storm rages unabated for a seemingly intolerable duration—the wise God is with you. The storm does not disprove his existence. Rather, when it finally subsides, the child of God is more convinced of God’s existence and his perfections than before the storm began because God was with you every moment and revealed himself to you through it.

But the book of Job is only one example of the Lord’s commitment to be with his people in their suffering, and not even the best example. The words *I will be with you* are incarnate in Jesus’s precious name, Immanuel. Jesus is the Man of Sorrows and familiar with suffering. Jesus is the Word who became flesh and made his dwelling with us. Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. Jesus drank to the bottom the cup of God’s wrath and cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?,” dying in our place so that we would never be forsaken by God.

Hope Is Our Anchor

By Jesus’s death and resurrection, God has forged hope as an unbreakable anchor for our souls in every storm (Hebrews 6:19). While suffering of all kinds often feels like experiencing shipwreck on a stormy sea, for the apostle Paul, this was not a metaphor. Paul endured a terrifying storm of epic proportions on his journey to Rome (Acts 27). It was a storm that raged for days on end, the effects of which he still felt after fourteen days. During the storm, the sky was so dark that neither sun nor stars appeared for many days.

On one of those nights, God sent an angel to stand beside Paul, speak to him, and give him specific words of promise, which Paul then relayed to the entire ship: “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you” (Acts 27:24).

The angel's presence beside Paul on that heaving deck was a fulfillment of God's promise: "I will be with you." His words were even more so. That angel and his mission are similar to the book of Job. When our souls are buffeted by a raging storm, when neither sun nor stars appear for many days, suddenly a heavenly messenger—in the form of Scripture—appears to stand beside us and speak words of wisdom. The book of Job gives us a sense of God's purpose and power in the midst of that storm, escorting us to timeless lessons that we will certainly need before we leave this world behind.

God's goal is to teach us in our suffering to trust him, and to put his glories on display to a watching world. Unbelievers are enduring the same kinds of sufferings as the people of God, but they are walking in darkness while they do. If we as God's people will draw near to him in our sufferings—trusting in him, hoping in him, and worshipping him—we will be fulfilling Jesus's beautiful image of his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14–16).

This call can be surpassingly difficult when trials of the highest order overwhelm us. As a father myself, I am acutely aware of how great a trial it would be to lose one of my children. Job lost all ten of his in a single day! The sorrows that roll over us like sea billows can seem insurmountable, and God can seem distant and confusing, if not harsh and uncaring. Job walked through those same things and verbalized many of his darkest thoughts as he did. By God choosing to record them for all time in his perfect Bible, he is inviting us into a journey of healing and discovery unlike any other.

Job's Story

The book of Job is best read as actual history written perfectly, but in poetic form. It loses its power if we think it is just a fictitious allegory or a moral play that never happened. We are living physical lives in a physical world, and the suffering of a make-believe man in some make-believe land has little power to help us. But there is no doubt that the language of this long book is that of Hebrew poetry. It's like Job (or some other author) came back years later to reflect on what happened in poetic form.

The drama opens with Job being introduced to us as a uniquely righteous man. The text calls him “blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (Job 1:1). His wealth consisted in huge quantities of livestock—sheep, camels, oxen, and donkeys. The pride and joy of his life were his children—seven sons and three daughters. Job's piety was remarkable. Not content with outward shows alone, he knew true godliness consists in the heart, especially in loving and worshipping God.

But trouble came when Satan appeared before the heavenly throne of God, and God praised Job saying, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” (2:3). But Satan claimed that Job only loved God for what God gave him, not for who God is.

God allowed Satan to attack Job viciously, taking all his worldly wealth and killing his ten children in one terrifying day. Wave upon wave of sorrow came that day as one messenger after another brought him the devastating news.

Job responded with amazing faith and loyalty to God saying, “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (1:21). He refused to charge God

with wrongdoing. God's goal in giving us the book of Job is that we would respond with such faith and patience, as well—and even more through the gospel of Jesus Christ!

But Job's sorrows were not over. Satan came back to God a second time and asserted that people will lose all faith if their bodies are savagely attacked by pain. God allowed Satan to do this very thing, and Job was afflicted with terrible sores from his scalp to the soles of his feet. But even then, Job refused to charge God with any wrongdoing.

Words Without Knowledge

The next portion of the lengthy book of Job consists in three cycles of dialogues between Job and his three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—who had come to comfort him (chapters 3–25). Taken as a whole, they comprise what God calls “words without knowledge” (38:2). This is what we humans do when we suffer, if we are not better trained by Scripture.

Job's words reflected his inner agonies—mental, emotional, spiritual—brought on by his physical sufferings. In some sense, he represents the human race as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death—bewildered by what is happening to us, looking up to God, our wise and loving heavenly Father, and trying to understand his nature and purposes in all this suffering.

Whereas many of us do in fact suffer greatly as a direct result of our own sinfulness, Job's sufferings were not the result of his own evil ways. His case eliminates the easy explanation for human suffering that Job's friends all advocated, the law of sowing and reaping: “Job, you are suffering as a direct result of your own sinfulness. If you will repent and reform, God will restore.” When Job rejected their easy explanation with the facts of his own life, they each doubled down. It got so

bad that Eliphaz actually said to Job, “Isn’t your wickedness abundant and aren’t your iniquities endless?” (22:5 CSB). This accusation was groundless, pure evil speculation, because it simply was not true of Job. In some sense, Job accepted this same ethical formula of sowing and reaping, but he knew for a fact that their charges against him were complete fabrications. So Job chose to lift the charge back up to God and accused him of injustice.

The darkest part of Job’s dialogues is his own increasingly twisted view of God’s nature and purposes, and his limited view of both this life and the next. He did not have a clear understanding of the resurrection from the dead, and that this present evil age characterized by suffering, loss, pain, and death will someday be obsolete, swallowed up in the victory of Christ’s resurrection, a victory Christ gives to all who believe in him. Job’s grasp of this was limited, similar to all who lived before Christ opened up the grave for us by his mighty resurrection victory.

God Speaks from a Whirlwind

The climax of the book of Job comes when God appeared in a mighty whirlwind to confront Job with a manifestation of his majesty and power. He put Job in his place with a series of questions, that overwhelmed him, and indeed, the suffering human race, with clear evidence of his power, wisdom, and love as displayed in creation. Job responded in humble faith saying, “I am so insignificant. How can I answer you? I place my hand over my mouth” (40:4 CSB).

After his first mighty speech to Job, God was not done. He spoke of two creatures, Behemoth and Leviathan, that I believe represent our supernatural adversaries—Satan and his demons, who hide and masquerade as beasts in the physical realm, but who deliver so much suffering to the human race.

The book of Job makes it plain that the problem of human suffering cannot be addressed properly without understanding Satan's role. God is saying to us, "These are adversaries far too great for you to defeat, but I control them with bit and bridle, and will slay them for you in the end." Leviathan is the fire-breathing dragon (Job 41:21); Christ is the Dragonslayer!

The book of Job ends with God restoring Job to his prior prominence. He began by restoring Job's reputation before his accusing friends. Then God healed Job and completely replaced—and even doubled—Job's earthly wealth. God also gave him ten children after his earlier children had passed away. Job lived many years after that and died an old man, full of years. Happy ending! But deep questions remain.

Christ Answers Timeless Questions

The book of Job is designed by God to raise the timeless questions that sin and suffering have brought us to. But it does not answer many of them. In the wisdom of God, the Bible is written as progressive revelation, with his mysterious purposes made more and more clear as the eras of redemptive history unfold.

As Christians, we know that the New Testament follows and completes the Old Testament, superseding it and making aspects of it obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). What the Old Testament offers as types and shadows of greater things to come, the New Testament perfectly fulfills in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As we will see, Job yearned for a mediator (Job 9:33), intercessor (16:19–21), and redeemer (19:25). Jesus Christ fulfills these roles, and he does so infinitely more gloriously than Job could have possibly imagined.

In this book, I will argue that Job was a better person than we will ever be, but we have a better hope than Job ever had. Job raised questions that were never answered. That is vital for

how we read the book of Job. The best answers to the problem of pain and suffering are found in Jesus Christ—his sinless life, his atoning death, his mighty resurrection victory, and the promises he has made to all sinners who repent and believe in him.

So as we walk with Job through suffering, we will listen to him and his friends as they thrash around with their limited perspective, just as we thrash around with ours. We will speak “words without knowledge” and might be tempted to accuse God of injustice. But the searing questions that pain and suffering raise in our hearts cannot be answered completely with the words of this Old Testament book. It is brilliant at raising the questions and capturing the pain, but the best answers are found in Christ.

So, my dear friend, as you venture into this book, I ask you to set your expectations properly. If your agonies are extremely fresh and you are reeling with the news of your losses, just as Job was when servants came to him with waves of devastation, the comforts you so desperately seek might well be found in another place.

Read the promises of Jesus Christ, such as, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:25–26). Sit at the feet of fellow Christians who have learned to see their sufferings in light of the heavenly glories Christ has bought for us at the cross and the empty tomb. As 2 Corinthians 4:17–18 says, “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

In your hour of greatest need, these will be the promises that most directly stop the wound from being fatal to your faith and hope. But if you have walked in a specific sorrow for some time and have some lingering questions, doubts, and fears about what it all means, no book in the Bible is as profound at asking those questions with a directness and honesty that only inspired Scripture can achieve. The book of Job will raise those questions, and Christ will answer them.

My purpose in this book is to help you (and me) to walk through suffering with hope in God, not allowing Satan to trick us into withdrawing from God or accusing God of wrong. I hope this book helps us all to draw near to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our hour of need (Hebrews 4:16). Such examples of faith-filled suffering like the true story of Job are what this dying world needs as it looks to us to give a reason for the hope we have in Christ. And by faith in Christ's resurrection, we will be able to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (Job 13:15 NIV).