

Blessed Be The Name Of The Lord, Part 2

July 29, 2018 - Job 2:1-10

Satan Attacks Job's Health

2 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." 3 And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." 4 Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. 5 But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." 6 And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life."

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." 10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"[a] In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

2. job's second test (2:1-10)

a. Satan's second accusation (2:1-6)

2:1-4. In Satan's second test he again indicted God's words and impugned Job's motives and character (cf. 1:6-8). The Hebrew for **without any reason is** *hinnām*, the same word **Satan** had used in 1:9. Though **Satan** accused **Job** of having an ulterior motive in his worship, **God** threw this back at the accuser, saying that Satan had *no* reason to incite God against the patriarch. In this third scene, back in heaven, **Satan** implied that Job was still worshipping God because he had not yet given up his life. **Skin for skin! A man will give all he has—possessions and children—for his own life.** "Skin for skin" was a proverbial saying, possibly about bartering or trading animal skins. Satan insinuated that Job had

willingly traded the skins (lives) of his own children because in return God had given him his own skin (life). This again implied that Job was selfish.

2:5–6. **Satan** suggested that if Job were made to suffer physically, he would **curse** God to His **face** (cf. 1:11) for Job would have no reason for worship. He would see that God was against him. Surprisingly **the Lord** permitted Satan to afflict Job but not to kill him. God knew that Job would not deny Him.

b. Satan's second assault (2:7)

2:7. The first test involved Job's wealth, children, and nearly all his servants; the second one involved his health. **Satan** immediately caused **Job** to have **painful sores** over all his body.

The two Hebrew words translated "painful sores" were used of the plagues of "festering boils" in Egypt (Ex. 9:8–11; Deut. 28:27) and of Hezekiah's illness (2 Kings 20:7, "boil"). Some scholars say the disease may have been smallpox; others say it was elephantiasis. It was apparently some skin condition with scabs or scales, such as pemphigus foliaceus (cf. Rupert Hallam, "Pemphigus Foliaceus," in *The British Encyclopaedia of Medical Practice*. 2nd ed. 12 vols. London: Butterworth, 1950–52, 9:490–2).

This disease, as attested by physicians today, matches the symptoms of Job's afflictions—inflamed, ulcerous sores (Job 2:7), itching (v. 8), degenerative changes in facial skin (vv. 7, 12), loss of appetite (3:24), depression (3:24–25), loss of strength (6:11), worms in the boils (7:5), running sores (7:5), difficulty in breathing (9:18), darkness under the eyes (16:16), foul breath (19:17), loss of weight (19:20; 33:21), continual pain (30:17), restlessness (30:27), blackened skin (30:30), peeling skin (30:30), and fever (30:30).

c. Job's reaction to the second test (2:8–10)

2:8. **Job ... sat among the ashes**, on or near a pile of dung ashes and garbage outside the city. Missionaries in primitive cultures have reported that pemphigus foliaceus patients have soothed their sores with ashes. How humiliating for Job! He who had sat at the city gate as a local judge (29:7) was now outside the city with beggars, scraping his itching, running sores with **a piece of broken pottery**.

2:9–10a. When Job's **wife** urged **him** to forget his **integrity** (related to the word "blameless" in 1:1), **curse God and** (as a result) **die**, **he** called her a **foolish** (*nābāl*, "spiritually ignorant or nondiscerning") **woman**. Unknown to her, this advice that he curse God was exactly what Satan had twice predicted Job would do (1:11; 2:5). When Job needed comfort from her, he received another terrible blow—evidence of her bitterness toward God. In calm confidence in God's ways Job pointed out that **trouble** (*rā'*, "evil, calamity") as well as **good** comes **from God** (cf. Ecc. 7:14; Lam. 3:38). This contrasts starkly with most

peoples' view that trouble means God's very existence is questionable! Later Job affirmed to his friends that he would retain his integrity till death (Job 27:5).

2:10b. The affirmation, **In all this, Job did not sin in what he said**, proved wrong Satan's predictions that Job would curse God, and it vindicated God's words (cf. 1:22).¹

C. Satan's Second Challenge (2:1-6)

The time lapse between the first and second assaults on Job cannot be determined. Jewish tradition assigns a year to the interval. On another day when the angelic hosts assembled before the Lord "Satan came also among them to station himself before Yahweh." These words suggest a distinction between Satan and those other spirit beings who were accustomed to report to the Lord (2:1).

The conversation between Yahweh and Satan follows the same pattern as in the first encounter. In response to a query by the Lord, Satan explained that he had been roaming about on the earth. Again Yahweh directed Satan's attention to the excellent character of Job. In spite of all that had happened to him the patriarch was holding fast to his integrity. Satan had incited Yahweh against this godly man "to destroy him without cause." Though Satan had instigated the experiment, Yahweh accepts responsibility for what happened to Job. The Lord seems indignant that Job should have been put through such torment (2:2-3).

Satan responded: "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." Obviously this is some ancient proverb, but there is no agreement as to what it means. Sometimes in Job the term "skin" means body (cf. 19:26). Perhaps the meaning here is "skin (or body) of others for one's own." In any case Satan was sure that if God touched this pious patriarch in his bone and flesh Job would curse the Lord to his face. Again Yahweh unleashed Satan. Job was placed in Satan's hands. The only restriction is that Job's life must be spared (2:4-6).

D. Job's Second Trial (2:7-13)

Immediately upon leaving the presence of Yahweh, Satan smote Job with "sore boils" from the sole of his feet unto the crown of his head. These skin ulcers must have itched, for Job scraped himself with a piece of broken pottery. He sat in the ashes, probably at the city garbage dump (2:7-8).

Job's malady has received several diagnoses. The term "boils" (*shechin*) is connected with Egypt in Deut 28:27. For this reason Job's disease has been diagnosed as the leprosy called elephantiasis. The disease got its name from the swollen limbs and the black,

¹ Zuck, R. B. (1985). Job. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 721-722). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

corrugated skin which resembled that of an elephant. Ancient writers connected this disease with Egypt.

The book describes Job's affliction in some detail, but the language is that of the poet, not the pathologist. The ulcers broke out within the body as well as without, making the breath loathsome (19:17). The sores bred worms (7:5). They alternately closed, having the appearance of clods of earth, and opened and ran. This means that the body was alternately swollen and emaciated (16:8). Job was haunted with horrible dreams (7:14), and unearthly terrors (3:25). He was harassed by a sensation of choking (7:15) which made his nights restless and frightful (7:4). His incessant pains made his days weary (7:1-4). His skin was black, his bones were filled with gnawing pains, as if a fire burned in them (30:30).

Job's wife broke under the strain of seeing her husband's suffering. She could not believe that her husband could "retain his integrity" in the face of such adversity. She urged Job to "curse God and die." Perhaps her actions here explain why Satan spared her in the first assault. Just as Eve in the garden became Satan's ally, so now Job's wife unknowingly is urging her husband to do the Devil's bidding. Her religion is represented as precisely the kind which Satan ascribed to Job (2:9).

Did Job's wife anticipate that renouncing God would bring an immediate and deadly stroke from heaven? Perhaps she only meant to suggest that one experiencing a terminal disease might as well give vent to his personal feelings and animosity toward God.

Job rebuked his wife for her audacity. She was speaking as "foolish women," speak. He avoids calling his wife a "fool," i.e., godless person. Yet he implies that she had fallen into the snare of the Devil, and was attempting to use her influence to draw her husband after her. He pointed out that for many years they had received good things from the hand of God. Should they not expect from time to time to experience calamity?

Again Job passed the test. Satan was proved wrong. "In all this Job did not sin with his lips," i.e., he said nothing inappropriate about the justice of God. Some have taken the phrase "with his lips" to suggest that Job had inappropriate thoughts toward God but did not give voice to them. But thinking and speaking hardly differ in the East. The lips reveal what is in the heart (2:10).²

Job's Second Test and Its Outcome

Job 2:1-10

² Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms* (Job 2:1-13). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

Job 2:1–8

Using almost the same words, the narrator now invites us to envision a second encounter between God and *hassatan* in the divine council chamber. As we might have anticipated, this is the occasion for God to say, “I told you so!” in at least a mildly gloating tone of voice: “He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason.” (Note how the narrator here enshrouds God’s responsibility for Job’s suffering in another fold of ambiguity. Again, it is on the alien initiative of a “third party,” not as a result of God’s own attitude toward Job, that Job’s testing has come.)

It comes as a well-designed shock to the reader to discover that *hassatan* still refuses to concede defeat. The crude phrase “Skin for skin!” is now thrown into God’s face with an unmistakable tone of defiance. Again, I do not believe the story presents *hassatan* to us as the personal embodiment of all evil, but the “satanic” aspect of his accusations against Job here takes on an anti-godly dimension. The phrase “skin for skin” remains somewhat obscure (was it used in marketplace haggling to indicate something like “value given for value received”?), but its meaning becomes clear enough in what follows. As long as Job’s own physical well-being is intact, he has something worth bargaining for. Take that away, says *hassatan*, and the test will yield the predicted results. Once again, God acquiesces in the “satanic” plan; once again, God assigns its execution to *hassatan*; and once again, God sets a limit beyond which the test may not go: “Only spare his life.”

One can argue (as Job does in chapter 3) that mere existence is no blessing, not for one who lives in a state of total wretchedness. But like the limit set by God in 1:12, this ultimate limit suggests that God is not willing to let Job’s suffering have the last word about Job’s superb life or about the mutual relationship between Job and God on which that life is based. When Job has passed this ultimate test, as God is confident he will, the way still lies open for a “blessed” relationship between them, one that can no longer be slandered as a conspiracy of mutual self-interest.

Job 2:9–10

Once again, Job vindicates both his own selfless integrity and God’s confidence in him. One can think that Job’s wife is motivated by sheer compassion when she urges him to “curse God and die.” Suicide in the modern sense never emerges as an option in Job, but the deliberate and public cursing of God was apparently understood to be a sure means of summoning death. If Job’s wife is pleading with Job to end it all, even for compassionate reasons, she is nevertheless planting in Job’s mind a delicious seduction to take the course predicted by *hassatan*: When relationship with God no longer pays off, *end it!*

Job rejects this exquisite temptation as foolish: Relationship with God must not and cannot hinge on whether one receives good things or bad things in the course of God’s providence (v. 10). Once again, the narrator drives home the point that Job has passed the

test to perfection. Job has refused to rebel against God by thought, deed, or word as a result of this wholly undeserved and incomprehensible suffering. Everything else in Job’s world has been altered beyond recognition, but his “integrity” (that is, his heart toward God and people) remains constant.

On hearing the story for the first time, the listener is ready now for a third scene in the heavenly council chamber. Surely, now *hassatan* must concede defeat. Surely, now God may celebrate Job’s breathtaking vindication of God’s own estimate of his character. And surely, now it is time to end the deadly charade of Job’s suffering, to let Job hear the good news that, through it all, God had always taken Job’s side and trusted him to win through.

Instead, the story takes a wholly unexpected turn. For reasons we cannot fathom Job’s suffering continues, as if no victory had been won, as if *hassatan* had lost a skirmish or two in the divine council but the war is still on. The narrator apparently is not content to leave us with so simple and idyllic a picture of Job the innocent sufferer, whose legendary patience is “an example for us all.” If there ever was a widespread folktale that carried such a moral, the narrator of Job now demands that we plunge beneath its surface—that we face the titanic human struggles, in real life, by which alone such human integrity might be accomplished.³

A. *Renewal of the Battle—2:1-8*

1. *God’s challenge—vv. 1-3*

Clearly God initiated the inquiry, perhaps to taunt Satan with news of Job’s persistent integrity. Several things are worthy of note: (1) God repeats and reaffirms the four-fold description of Job’s moral excellency (1:1, 8). This proves that Job neither sinned in such a way to deserve suffering nor sinned as a result of his suffering. (2) The word translated “incited” means to stir or to allure someone to a course of action they otherwise would not take. In other words, what God did in allowing Satan to afflict Job was *not a normal course of action for Him*. God’s treatment of Job was *the exception, not the rule*. (3) Still, though, God accepts full responsibility for Job’s sufferings. Whereas Satan is the *immediate* cause, God is the *ultimate* cause of what happened. (4) The phrase “without any reason” or “without a cause” (v. 3) reaffirms that Job had himself done nothing to merit such treatment. Satan certainly had a

³ Wharton, J. A. (1999). *Job*. (P. D. Miller & D. L. Bartlett, Eds.) (pp. 20–22). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

reason for afflicting him (namely, to discredit both Job and God). God also had a reason for allowing it to happen (namely, to prove Job's integrity and His own worthiness). But *Job* had done nothing to provoke such calamities as befell him.

2. *Satan's charge*—vv. 4–5

Undaunted, Satan responds without conceding God's assessment of Job. He persists in his skepticism about Job's sincerity. "It really wasn't much of a test," says Satan. "It was superficial at best. There are still too many restrictions." Satan's argument is that the experiment, cruel though it was, has not yielded a conclusive result because the terms on which it was carried out were not rigorous enough. "I still don't believe Job serves you for nothing," says Satan. "As long as you give him health and life he remains loyal. Let me touch his *body* and we'll see how long he loves you!"

The phrase translated "skin for skin" has been variously understood: (a) Some argue that it was a bartering term in the ancient world. Satan's point would be that Job was willing to endure the loss of his possessions, even his children, if it meant he could save his own life. As long as Job knows he can save his own neck, he'll sacrifice anything. Appeal is made to v. 4b ("a man will give all he has for his own life") which seems to be an interpretation of v. 4a. (b) Others suggest that the idea of a "double skin" is in view. I.e., only Job's "outer" skin has been touched, his material possessions. His "inner" skin, that is to say, his own body and soul, remain unscathed. (c) Some say this is equivalent to the idea behind "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." Satan says, "God, if you will strike at his skin he will strike back at yours." In other words, Satan is arguing that if God will let him go after Job's health, Job will retaliate against God. It appears to me that view (1) is most likely the correct one.

3. *God's concession*—v. 6

God accepts the challenge. However, he refuses to let Satan take Job's life.

4. *Satan's cruelty*—vv. 7–8

The enemy doesn't waste a moment's time. As Job, no doubt, sat in sorrow trying to cope with his indescribable loss, Satan strikes with vicious cruelty.

* By the way, this (v. 7) is the last time that Satan is mentioned in the book.

The extent of Satan's attack on Job is revealed not only here but elsewhere in the book. Some suggest Job suffered from leprosy. Whatever "painful sores" or "sore boils" means, you can be certain it was agonizing. The disease covered his body (2:7) and led to intolerable itching (2:8; he was probably scraping pus from the sores). His appearance was disfigured (2:12; 19:19). He suffered from loss of appetite (3:24a), depression (3:24b–26; 7:16), and sleeplessness (7:4). When he did sleep he had

recurring nightmares (7:14). He suffered from festering sores and broken skin (7:5), scabs that blackened and peeled (30:30), high fevers (30:30), excessive weeping and burning of the eyes (16:16), putrid smelling breath (19:17), an emaciated body (17:7; 19:20), and chronic pain (30:17). It seems only appropriate that he would take up residence on a dung heap or ash heap where dogs scavenged for food among the corpses and refuse. Mike Mason comments:

“As the dialogue between Job and his friends unfolds, we will do well to bear in mind this horrific picture of a reeking dump as the setting in which the long and rather abstract theological debate takes place. These men are not sitting in some elaborate conference room in a multi-million dollar church complex, nor even around the kitchen table, but rather amidst heaps of ashes, smoldering fires, stench, buzzing flies, scampering rats and jackals, piles of rubble, and all the other ruins of civilization—not least of which were the human ruins, the broken men and women gibbering like ghosts in the smoky murk. All in all, is the stage not set for an apocalyptic drama?” (44)

B. *Reactions from Family and Friends—2:9–13*

1. *Family—vv. 9–10*

Job’s wife is the first to respond. Some have named her “Dinah” because of the woman in Genesis 34:1–10 by that name who also acted foolishly.

When severe trials come, often the only thing that keeps you going is your spouse. Hard times drive you closer to one another as you cling to each other. If no one else will help, surely one’s husband or wife will. But Satan succeeds in sowing discord and division between Job and his wife. You can almost here her say, “I know I said, ‘For better, for worse,’ but I had no idea *this* would happen!”

How should we evaluate Job’s wife? Many have called her “the devil’s assistant” or “Satan’s tool”. Aquinas insisted the only reason Satan didn’t kill her along with the children was so that he might later use her against Job. But we must remember that, aside from the bodily diseases, she had suffered as much loss as Job had. They were her children too! They were her possessions too! They were her servants too! And it couldn’t have been easy for her then to watch her husband suffer bodily as he was. Perhaps we should grieve for her as well. Few of us will ever be touched by her depth of loss.

Still, though, her response is hard to defend. It is as if she says, “I’ll serve God, but only to a point.” Her counsel would have been especially painful to Job. She gave voice to the temptation he no doubt struggled to resist. According to Mrs. Job, “to compromise one’s faith in God in order to ease an intolerable burden is the wisest course to follow” (Hartley, 84). After all, it is always easier to lower your concept of God than it is to

elevate the quality of your faith. One more point: perhaps she responded poorly when bad times came because she had taken for granted all the good times. When we presume upon God's gifts, we complain when they are taken away.

Job rejects her counsel (v. 10), but is patient with her anyway. He doesn't directly call her foolish, but says she speaks "as if" she were. The implication is that under the stress of the circumstances she has reacted beneath herself.

Two important theological points are made in v. 10.

- "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"
- "In all this Job did not sin in what he said."⁴

Hostilities resumed

(Job 2:1–10)

In spite of the obvious similarities between this section and the one just considered, it would be a great mistake to regard it as no more than a repetition of what had already taken place. It records a resumption of hostilities—one that results in a significant extension of the front over which the war was to be fought. It is important to remember that, while there was no respite between the blows that fell successively in Satan's first assault, there was some intermission between them and what is now about to start up all over again.

This passage will be considered in two parts, namely verses 1–6 and 7–10.

The conversation (2:1–6)

Another glimpse is provided into the heavenly court and another conversation (if we may call it that) between Jehovah and Satan with respect to Job is overheard. As the same state of affairs continues, comment will not be made about the aspects which have already been noted. Instead, attention will be focused on the significant differences that are now introduced. These are found in verses 3 and 4 and we shall follow the course of the dialogue.

1. *Jehovah to Satan* (2:1–3)

⁴ Storms, S. (2016). *Biblical Studies: Job* (Job 2:1–10). Edmond, OK: Sam Storms.

2:3. And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.’

Jehovah again takes the initiative and the second part of verse 3 is richly significant. The important words in it are **‘still’** and **‘though’**. The first indicates Jehovah’s delight at Job’s steadfastness, and by inference Satan’s failure; the second is Jehovah’s censure of Satan’s malignity. These will now be considered in turn.

I. The pleasure of Jehovah

By means of the addition of the word **‘still’**, Jehovah exults in Job’s continuing sincerity and righteousness, and he does so before the angelic host and ‘the Satan’. In spite of the many losses Job has sustained, he has not forsaken his **‘integrity’**. He has maintained his ‘blamelessness’ before God and man. God does not use his people for his own glory and praise in the earth without delighting in them. Although his people are not to boast in themselves, he boasts in them—especially when they glorify him. He is ‘not ashamed to be called their God’ (Heb. 11:16).

II. The failure of Satan

But **‘still’** also means that Satan’s attacks have not succeeded and his prediction has not come to pass. Indeed, the exact reverse has taken place. Instead of cursing, Job has blessed. He turned his face towards God, instead of turning his back on him. Jehovah here derides Satan’s failure to overcome his servant (cf. Ps. 2:4).

III. The censure of Satan

Job’s afflictions are here put down entirely to Satan’s malignity. This is reminiscent of Jehovah’s charge to the serpent in Eden: ‘Because you have done this ...’ (Gen. 3:14). God is not the author of sin, and even calamity is only to be traced mediately to him (see Isa. 45:7). Satan is therefore held responsible for all the afflictions that Job has suffered, and Jehovah’s permission does not amount to any complicity on his part. It is Satan’s intent **‘to destroy’** Job, not God’s, although Satan has tried to make it look as if it is. But it is all to no avail—so far.

2. Satan to Jehovah (2:4–5)

2:4–5. Then Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.’

The Lord has been delighted by Job's perseverance, but Satan has learned nothing from it at all. One might have thought that, after being proved so wrong and defeated so soundly, any adversary would have left the field. But he is 'the' Satan and is not only malicious but also incorrigible. His reply to Jehovah shows that his ignorance is invincible and his hatred of godliness is implacable. He is convinced that with greater leeway he can achieve his purpose. But of course he has to appear again before the Sovereign for permission to extend his activity.

To do this he uses the expression, **'Skin for skin!'** There is no parallel use of this cryptic expression in the Old Testament, and so its meaning has to be sought in the immediate context. Jehovah has just spoken to Satan about Job's consistency, and these words are therefore Satan's immediate outburst by way of negative reaction. They express a very different view of Job, which Satan backs up by saying that Job still has **'his life'** (2:4). He still has something valuable although he has lost so much. There is therefore a connection between 'skin' and 'life'. Bearing that in mind, there are two ways in which this saying and the preposition **'for'** can be understood, and both are so typical of Satan.

I. Others' skin on behalf of one's own skin

Understood in this way, the sense is that Job can adjust to the loss of his servants, and even that of his sons and daughters, because he himself is still alive. His own life is more valuable to him than theirs and that is why he 'still holds fast his integrity'. This means that Job is selfish and serves God because he realizes it still pays him to do so, although to a lesser extent than before. Satan is therefore 'holding fast' to his own distorted analysis of Job's piety and also of Jehovah's praise of him.

II. Skin behind skin

It is noteworthy that the word **'skin'** is introduced here soon after Job's use of the word 'naked' in 1:21. Those two words come from the same root. Satan is therefore parodying Job's confession of faith by saying that, though 'naked', he still has 'skin'—by which he means 'life'—**'bone [frame] and ... flesh'** and is so full of health and vigour. Rendered in this way, the meaning is that the removal of one layer of skin after another will soon leave Job with absolutely nothing, and so he will have no reason to maintain his adherence to God. It is as if Satan were the first to think that health and wealth equalled piety! In his view, if health can be removed as well as wealth, then so will piety!

3. Jehovah to Satan (2:6)

2:6. And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.'

Again Jehovah refuses to act personally against Job, but he does act permissively. The word **'Behold'** is used to draw attention to the fact that it is God who puts Job in Satan's **'hand'**—that is, his power. Greater latitude is given to Satan with regard to Job's body, but

still Job's life, his real self, is sacrosanct. That belongs to the great Jehovah. Job must live to give the lie to Satan by giving honour to Jehovah (and to be further blessed by him). What an obligation! What an opportunity! But Job is as unaware of all that as he is of what is about to restart on a much more intense and demanding level.

The consequence (2:7–10)

Armed with divine permission, Satan immediately leaves the court and without delay, it seems, assaults Job with a disease that is painful, extensive and loathsome. Its exact nature has been a subject of investigation and the favoured view is that it was something akin to leprosy or elephantiasis. Descriptions of it can be gleaned from statements that Job makes later in the book—for example, he refers to being unable to sleep (7:4), to having crusted sores (7:5) and nightmares (7:14) and suffering from depression (7:16). Here in Job 2:7–10 we have a picture of agony and ostracism. Job's only relief (2:8) causes him more anguish, and all the while he sits on the rubbish heap. The most honoured citizen has become the most offensive and rejected.

2:9–10. Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.' But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?'

It is while he is in this condition that his wife speaks to him. Comments have already been made about this incident, but from the perspective of Job. Now we look at it from the standpoint of his wife and of Satan. There is no doubt that, just as he spared four servants to be unwitting messengers in his employ, so Satan has done the same with regard to Job's wife. This is borne out by what she says to Job. It is in two parts and both are echoes of things that have already been said. The first part, **'Do you still hold fast your integrity?'** (2:9), is an echo of Jehovah's words to Satan about Job, but now they are distorted because they are no longer in the form of a statement but a question. The second is a loud expression of Satan's design.

What she says is therefore an extension of Satan's activity. Previously he had pursued his aim by battering Job, but now he insinuates a question into his mind and follows it up by a proposed action—all put into the mouth of Job's wife!

What does this say about Job's wife? In the history of interpretation she has suffered much by being described as negatively as Job is described positively at the beginning of the book. However, just as it is important to make a distinction between Job's words and his real standing before God, and also between those of his friends and their original intention, so we should not take the worst possible view of Job's wife. After all, the only other negative thing that is explicitly said about her describes an understandable reaction to Job's

physical repulsiveness (see 19:17), but it seems from what is said at the end of the book about Job’s restoration that she had not left him.

It should also be remembered that the children that had died were not only Job’s but hers too! A mother’s grief and a wife’s sorrow are therefore present in these intemperate and unwise words. In addition, we need to realize that Job held out only a little longer than she did (see chapter 3). Frailty, and not folly, is what is evidenced here. This is borne out by Job’s reply, which described her words—not her personally—as resembling those of **‘the foolish women’**. He does not charge her with being one of these women, but invites and encourages her to join with him in receiving calamity from the hand of God just as they had together received so many good gifts from him.

Job was still the same gracious and godly man without health as he had been without wealth. He did not speak perversely against God, but controlled ‘his lips’ (see James 3:6–10). The ‘tongue’ is here used only to praise God and benefit the one made in his image (Job’s wife), and not to renounce the former or denounce the latter.⁵

⁵ Jones, H. R. (2007). *A Study Commentary on Job* (pp. 62–68). Darlington, England; Webster, New York: Evangelical Press.