

encouraged him to die. (Job 2:9). Let's suppose that Job had lived in *this* day and age. Isn't it quite possible that modern medicine might have used Job as an example to support euthanasia — after all, he *was* in great pain? But — *God* knew all along that it was only a test and that Job would not only survive, but He would be blessed with much *more* than he had previously enjoyed. Suppose Job had decided to take his *own* life while in the depths of his misery? Wouldn't that have seriously altered God's "big picture" plan for Job and all of those in his future? Job just didn't have the advantage of having the "big picture" to work with. He could *only* place his *trust* in God to see him through the terrible suffering.

So we've seen that God is sovereign and will do as He pleases. But let us not overlook the power of prayer. In Gen 18:20-32, we learn that Abraham was able to "bargain" with God and convince God that if he could find even ten righteous people in Sodom, He would spare it. In Exodus 32:7-14, Moses was able to convince God to not destroy the Israelites for worshiping the golden calf. In Jonah, chapter 3, the people of Nineveh sincerely repented and God "*had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.*" James 5:17 and 18 tells us that Elijah's earnest prayers stopped the rain and started it again. Acts 12:1-7 tells us that the church prayed for Peter and the chains fell off his wrists and he walked out of prison. In II Kings 20:1-11, the prayers and tears of Hezekiah caused the Lord to give him 15 more years of life.

Chapters 38 through 41 of Job were pretty much God's way of saying to Job, "I'm responsible, any questions?" Job finally "got it." He said —

*"I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you. You asked, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?' It is I — and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me."* (Job 42:2-3 NLT)

What do we learn about prayer from Job? — that God is sovereign — that He doesn't have to explain life to *us* — that *we* don't have the "big picture" — that God is *always completely* in control of whatever we are facing — no matter how severe our misery. And most importantly, that God *always* hears our prayers. The answer we *want* just *may* not always fit God's "big picture." In Job's case, calamity "fit" God's plan but the big picture was different for those other instances we listed above. Our lesson? — God is capable of handling *our* big picture. Trust Him.



*Please note — there will not be a December 15<sup>th</sup> or January 1<sup>st</sup> issue of Diligence. We will resume publication on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Have a joyous holiday season.*



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# DILIGENCE

*"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." — Hebrews 6:11*

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## Job and Understanding Prayer

We have heard the argument presented that if God is already in control of our lives and knows everything that's going to happen in the future then there is no reason for us to pray — everything's already decided anyway. Right? Wrong!

The previous issue of *Diligence* dealt with a discussion of calamities in our lives and the lives of others. We noted that Job was the epitome of calamities. Virtually *no one* has experienced as many calamities in their lives as did Job. Remember that Job experienced tremendous pain and suffering — both physically and emotionally. His family was taken from him as well as his cattle and health — everything he had, was taken from him by God.

Wasn't it *Satan* who did all of these terrible things to Job? In the last *Diligence* we read some Scriptures that say God is responsible for the good *and* the bad. Check it out on line if you missed that issue. But let's refresh our memory a bit about Job.

*"Then the Lord said to Satan, '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.' 'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied. 'Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.' The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger...'"* (Job 1:8-12 NIV)

God did indeed "turn Satan loose" on Job — sort of. God *did* make it clear to Satan that he couldn't "*lay a finger*" on Job himself. Other than that, Satan could do as he wished with Job. So — isn't this saying that without *permission* from God, Satan couldn't do *anything* to Job?

As the story progresses, we learn that Satan came back to God for permission to go a bit further with his torment of Job.

*"'Skin for skin!' Satan replied. 'A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out Your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse You to Your face.' The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.' So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head."* (Job 2:4-7 NIV)

So God gave permission for Satan to go a bit further — but God did *not* grant permission for Satan to kill Job. God *still* held full and complete control over the *power* granted to Satan. Satan could *only* do those things that God granted him *permission* to do.

We must remember that the Scriptures make it clear that *God* was the one *in charge* of what happened to Job. Let's take a few verses away from their context for the sake of space to solidify that point.

*"...Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble...?" (Job 2:10 NIV)*

*"...you (Satan) incited Me (God) ... to ruin him without any reason." (Job 2:3 NIV)*

*"Why do you persecute me as God does?..." (Job 19:22 NASB)*

*"...Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these." (Isaiah 45:7 NASB)*

*"The Lord said to him, 'Who...makes (man) deaf or mute? Who...makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?'" (Exodus 4:11 NIV)*

*"...stretch out Your (God) hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face." (Job 1:11 NIV)*

How does all of this help *us* to have a better understanding of prayer? Well, first of all, let's look at just a few verses about prayer.

*"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8 NASB)*

*"...Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you." (John 16:23 NASB)*

*"Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you." (Mark 11:23-24 NASB)*

*"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them." (Rom. 8:28 NIV)*

Most of us are very familiar with these and *many* other verses concerning prayer in the Scriptures. We sometimes have a problem however when we read verses such as these and yet endure calamities in our lives even though we have prayed for their removal. There are those whose faith is weakened because of questioning the validity of verses like these during difficult times. Throughout the Scriptures, we are told that God loves us and is interested in our well being. We know that is true since He sent His only Son to die for us. So why then does He let painful

things happen in the world and to us? Why did He let such painful things happen to his servant Job? *We* know it was because of His conversation with Satan but Job didn't know that. He just knew that it was at the hand of God and he said *"...Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble...?"* He nevertheless was very distressed and expressed extreme frustration with God several times throughout the book *because* he understood that the calamities were from the hand of God — even though he didn't understand why. There were times that Job even wondered where God was since He didn't seem to be listening to his pleas.

*"Then Job replied: 'Even today my complaint is bitter; His hand is heavy in spite of my groaning. If only I knew where to find Him; if only I could go to His dwelling! I would state my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what He would answer me, and consider what He would say. Would He oppose me with great power? No, He would not press charges against me. There an upright man could present his case before Him, and I would be delivered forever from my Judge. But if I go to the east, He is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find Him. When He is at work in the north, I do not see Him; when He turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of Him.'" (Job 23:1-9 NIV)*

But then Job recognized that, even though *he* didn't seem to be able to find God, God knew where *he* was. Job was certain that if he only had the opportunity, he could pass God's test for faithfulness.

*"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold. My feet have closely followed His steps; I have kept to His way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread." (Job 23:10-12 NIV)*

But Job also recognized that he was in no position to argue with God.

*"But He stands alone, and who can oppose Him? He does whatever He pleases. He carries out His decree against me, and many such plans He still has in store. That is why I am terrified before Him; when I think of all this, I fear Him. God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me." (Job 23:13-16 NIV)*

All of these verses demonstrate to us that Job reacted in very much the same way we do to calamity. The only difference between the world today and Job was that Job *never* charged God with wrongdoing. He accepted the fact that God was sovereign and could do *whatever* He pleased.

*"In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing." (Job 1:22 NIV)*

Now let's tie some of this together. *We* know that God and Satan had a conversation about Job and that their discussion was the reason for all of Job's calamities. We also know that *Job* did *not* know about that conversation. So let's consider a few things. First of all, Job's suffering was *so* severe that his wife actually