



The Misery of Job and the Mercy of God

John Piper, Ric Ergenbright (Photographer)

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We have heard the story of Job. His riches destroyed, his family taken, and his own body afflicted. We can only imagine the depth of his loss and pain. Yet as we ponder Job's misery, do we see the threads of God's mercy throughout it?

We will all face suffering at some point in our lives; it is inescapable. But what makes calamity endurable is not that God shares our shock, but that through every flame of pain and flood of fear His sovereign goodness sustains us.

John Piper's interpretive poem and the stunning photography of Ric Ergenbright remind your heart of the unshakable fact that God governs all things for His good purposes. Allow your eyes to see life--to see God--in new and powerful ways. And let your spirit rest, knowing that the Lord is not only sovereign, but sweet.

The Misery of Job and the Mercy of God Details

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Author : John Piper , Ric Ergenbright (Photographer)

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From Reader Review The Misery of Job and the Mercy of God for online ebook

Towens23 says

To me, all of Piper's poems are incredibly moving because of the way he combines theological truth with a narrative that's full of feeling. I always leave feeling closer to the heart of God.

Heather Leipart says

This is more poetry than anything else. It was given as a gift to me during a particularly difficult time in my life, and it was very comforting. There is an enclosed CD that comes along with the book that truly enhances the overall impact. Just the right words at just the right time.

David Gregg says

It's poetry and it comes with beautiful photography. And it deals with the extremely important but rarely-touched issue of suffering. It's good.

Joy Deane says

This very short book is a set of four poems about the book of Job in the Bible, illustrated with some lovely photographs. The poems are narrative, following Job's story, and interpretive, trying to understand his experience. They are thought provoking and moving, though miss out much of his experience (as you might expect when examining 42 of the some of the most complex and puzzling chapters in the Bible).

Kelley says

This wasn't the book I expected but I enjoyed some of Piper's beautiful paraphrasing of key passages in Job. This, for example: "Yet from it I have learned through horrid nights that my Redeemer lives, and when my skin has been destroyed, then from within shall I behold him on my side, and I will live though I have died. "

That said, while I feel confident in Piper's theology, I struggled a little with the elements he imagined for this brief retelling. I didn't so much mind the imagined conversation with his daughter, after his fortunes are restored. It really seemed to capture the conclusion of the book: "Jemimah, what I think is this: The Lord has made me drink the cup of his severity that he might kindly show to me what I would be when only he remains in my calamity. Unkindly he has kindly shown that he was not my hope alone."

But the repeated depictions of his wife were a bump in the road for me. One of the huge questions left in Job is - what of his wife, who we see only in a brief flash of despair? I want her to be the rock Piper depicts, but

we don't really know that she was. And the sketch of her feels like much more of a stretch than the one of his daughter.

Still. This is a beautiful book and worth the few minutes it will take you to read it and think in perhaps a more personalized way about Job's trial and triumph.

Spencer says

We are doing a bible study through the book of Job, so I picked this up to see what John Piper had to say. I thought his poetry was well done and the book is beautifully illustrated. Piper essentially retells the story of Job expanding it in his poetry, which essentially makes this book function much like Hebrew Midrash did. The Midrashim were stories that retold stories to further grasp their logic. In that regard I think he has done commendable work.

While Piper's Calvinistic reading is typical of his tradition, going back to Calvin and perhaps Aquinas before him, I would have to disagree. Piper is right that God never loses control of Satan, so in some way God is in his sovereignty doing this to Job ("you have incited me against him for no reason" God says to Satan 2:3). However, what Piper neglects is that if this is so, Job has been speaking right of him, at least in a phenomenal sense, as Job accuses God of forsaking him and the oppressed in the present. This is not any different than the cries of the forsaken in the Psalms, which Christ supremely embodies. God in both the prologue and epilogue reaffirm that God is doing this to Job for "no reason" and that at the end Job's words, contra his friends, have spoken accurately of God (4:27). Job never in his cries fails to understand God's grandeur. That simply is not the problem.

That brings us to the common misunderstanding that God who answers "out of the whirlwind" is straightforwardly God speaking. The only other mentions of whirlwinds in the book indicate not theophany but judgement (27:20; 36:29-38:5), and Job at one point hopes that God will judge his friends with a whirlwind for their unkind talk (27:20). However, in moments of despair, Job fears God will crush him with a whirlwind (9:16), which is clear foreshadowing. Job's only hope is that he might plead his case with God face to face, that God might listen and correct the friends. However, that does not happen in the whirlwind. The irony and upset of the book is that God does come down and speak out of a whirlwind, but not against Job friends, but against Job, pelting him with rather rigid questions. The questions are not particularly sophisticated and have a condescending tone. Why does God do this to the person who is winning his wager against Satan for him? The typical reading has God blast Job about what he does not know, "Don't ever question me," Job shuts up, and God pats Job on the head as if to say, "Now that's better." It does not make a lot of sense given what we see in the rest of the book and in the cries of the Psalms.

If we understand that Job is a literary book, we see a literary dynamic running through the whole book. Satan seeks to remove all the reasons Job would have to love God, betting with God that at the end, Job will curse God to his face. God is confident in Job that he will not. Satan disappears after chapter two as a supernatural begin, but immediately is resumed as a role in Job's wife, who takes on the accuser role. She tells Job to "curse God and die," which parrots the bet Satan makes. Next the three friends come like three witnesses in an tribunal to accuse Job of wrong doing. Eliphaz is confident that a spirit (Satan?) has told him no mortal can be righteous before God, which is essentially Satan's bet. So the friends embody the Satan/accuser role. Finally, God in the whirlwind appears and starts accusing Job rather than letting him plead his case. Job "cups" his hand to his mouth. Piper presumes this is because Job has been humbled into worship. However, the only other case of Job cupping his hand to his mouth is out of disgust for his friends arguments (21:5).

God has come down out of a whirlwind to remove the last reasons left for Job to love God. God appears as Job's accuser, not his redeemer. God appears as un-God. The question arise then: Will Job curse God now? The bigger surprise is that Job doesn't. In fact, he seems to withdraw his objections and "repent in dust and ashes." He seems to give up rather than curse God. At this moment Satan has lost his bet. He refused to curse God and die. Job would rather just die. After this, God switches from his whirlwind persona and vindicates Job. He states that Job, all this time, not his friends have spoken rightly of him, which includes all his tormented prayers that the friends were offended at.

What John Piper fails to realize is that this book is not about defending the sovereignty of God in the face of suffering (and free will theists, on the other side, neglect the notion that free will does not resolve the mystery of evil either), rather this book is about the possibility of God's faithful ones loving God in the same way how God loves them, for no reason, loving God even if every reason possible was taken away. Job is not about theodicy, says Abraham Joshua Heschel. At the end of the day there is no reason for evil to exist. Rather Job is an "anthropodicy" the defense of the righteousness of God's faithful ones before meaningless, inexplicable evil.

NS says

The only reason I did not assign this 5 stars is that I reserve that rating for the Bible. This poem is neither a summary nor a substitute for the Book of Job, so please don't view it as such. It is exactly what it claims to be: an interpretive poem. Clarifications aside, this is a **deeply** moving poem that is best enjoyed slowly and in one sitting.

Joni Hartman says

This short read is a summary of the book of Job written as a very personal epic-style poem. I found it to be enchanting, illustrative, haunting and thought-provoking. As I read, a whole new perspective on what Job's life and thoughts might have been opened up to me. I loved Piper's interpretations and found both sorrow and joy in revisiting Job's plight in light of God's love as delivered in the five chapters.

Ray Evangelista says

wonderful wit and clearly something that I can listen to again and again

Maarten De vries says

After I heard John Piper read this poem, I liked to read it for myself. The poem is great, in a truly John Piper fashion. The book is even greater, the photography is very fitting and the total feel of the book is just what it needs (hard cover, cover fold, great typeset).

You can read the text online here: <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-1....> There you can also listen to John Piper reading the poem.

As other people said: this is a great resource in varying times of struggle.

Joy says

Great follow-up book to my recent study of Job. The book includes a long narrative poem in the voice of a daughter of Job's 'second' family as Job relates his experience to her. Piper is really creative in his writing.
I came with nothing from the womb,
I go with nothing to the tomb.

Ruth says

the CD is really incredible and moves me everytime

Hopson says

"The Misery of Job" is a lengthy poem written by John Piper retelling the story of Job's suffering and God's sovereign mercy. Piper is a talented poet, and the book has a beautiful cadence as it recounts Job's agony through his trial (I listened to the book, available for free at <http://www.desiringgod.org/poems/job-...>). Piper does take some artistic liberties in retelling the story, although I do not think he does anything to detract from the message of the original story. However, I do wish he spent more time unpacking Job's complaints against God and God's response. Nevertheless, I am incredibly grateful for Piper's commitment to present a big God, majestic and merciful even when we suffer. May I live my life in such a way to prove that lines like these are true:

"He is not poor nor much enticed
Who loses everything but Christ."

For Tim Challies' 2016 Reading Challenge, this was the book of poetry that I read

Randall Hartman says

John Piper weaves an original poetic recounting of the book of Job. Faithful to the Biblical text with poetic interpolation of additional details that are consistent with the scripture, he invites Job to share his faith in God and his response to extreme suffering.

The message of this poem, which is the message of Job in the Bible, is that God is always good AND God is sovereign over all of life. Do not mistakenly apologize for God or demean His power and love when He brings what this world considers to be suffering. The One who purchased the eternal good of His people by bearing God's righteous wrath against our sin is also the God in charge of all of our pain, none of which can rise to the level what Jesus bore, and all of which is His "severe mercy" toward us.

Reflect on this message before suffering inevitably enters your experience. Consider with Job whether you love God more than life itself or, alternatively, whether you only love His blessings. When the cascades of calamity crash over you, I pray your anchor will rest in the unsurpassed, exclusive omnipotence of God who

loves us too much to give us anything other than what He knows will produce our eternal good.

Kristi says

The Guardian has the Book of Job listed as one of the top 100 books of all time. This is a stand alone version by John Piper which I happen to own - no translation or version was specified on the Guardian's list. I enjoyed Piper's work.
