

**What Job might have said concerning  
the principle of Romans 8:28**

In what is arguably the oldest book of the Bible, we meet a man named Job. His remarkable story of riches to rags and then back to riches evokes in us an uneasy combination of admiration and pity, a sense of awe and yet a sub-conscious prayer that we will never have to face the sort of suffering he endured.

About 1500 years after Job, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians living at Rome. In one of the best-known verses of the NT, [Rom 8:28] he wrote: “*...we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose.*”

Now, while this verse was written to Christians in the era of Grace, have you ever wondered how Job would have viewed that verse, in light of his circumstances?

I have, and I thought it might be a profitable exercise to attempt to answer the question, “**Can the principle of Rom 8:28 be applied to what the Bible shows to be the most difficult of personal circumstances ever faced by a servant of God** [*apart from Jesus*].

**And why do this exercise? Because if this principle applied even then, its promise has already been tested to the extreme... and found to be true!**

In order to carry out this exercise, we will use words from the original story combined with my own thoughts... sanctified imagination if you will.

What follows is an attempt to give voice to Job after his trial was over and his fortune and health were restored. The following is to be read as if it were Job’s auto-biography. It is titled What Job might have said concerning the principle of Romans 8:28

When I began what I call my time of anguish and misery, like many others, my understanding of how God works in the lives of men, was far from accurate. Even now, in the aftermath of my experiences, **I can see that God cannot be confined by the limits of human knowledge and understanding.**

I had been a very wealthy person, highly respected as a member of the city council, and as a man who did everything I could to help those around me with their problems. People viewed me as kind, fair, generous and wise and they sought me out for counsel.

As a husband, I was faithful and had *made a covenant with my eyes not to lust after other women (31:1).*

I had 10 wonderful children whose **relationship with God was always in my prayers** and concerns. Even after they would feast together, I would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them *in case, somehow, they had sinned (1:5).*

**God was foremost in my life and I loved and served him as faithfully as I knew how.**

**But my prosperous and peaceful life changed completely in just one terrible day!**

- **First, Sabeans stole my oxen and donkeys killing my servants.**
- **Then, something like fire coming down from God burned up my sheep and killed the shepherds watching over them.**
- **This was immediately followed by raiding parties of Chaldeans who stole all the camels (1:14-17).**
- **And just as I was trying to understand so many disasters at once, the worst possible news was brought to me.**

A servant came and said, *[Job 1:18-19] "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house.*

*It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!*

I was devastated by this terrible news but my deep faith in God's sovereign hand and goodness over my life, allowed me, in my depth of grief, to fall to my knees and declare, *[Job 1:21] "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."*

As the days passed, I suffered in silence, feeling the numbness of deep loss, yet maintaining my integrity and faith.

Just when I thought my suffering could not get any worse, I noticed my skin was starting to feel hot and itchy and lumpy and soon sores started erupting, first on my legs and then on my arms, my face and even to the soles of my feet. The sores were red, oozing pus and causing incredible pain all over my body (2:7)

**Night after night, I could hardly sleep and longed for the nights to be over** and for dawn to arise. Indeed after a couple of weeks I just wanted to die (**Job 3**).

Three of my friends came to visit and when they saw me, they could hardly believe their eyes. **They wept and tore their robes and then sat speechless** for a whole week, aghast at how great my suffering was (**2:12-13**).

**Would I have said at that point that God was working all things for my good?**

No, it certainly didn't feel that way! In fact, I felt like God was attacking me, hounding me, punishing me, when I had done nothing wrong.

To make matters worse, before long my three friends then **started accusing me of sinning before God**, saying I was getting what I deserved. **That really cut deep because I knew that their accusations were neither true nor just**.

How I suffered through “*months of futility; my soul was poured out because of my plight (7:3 NKJV); days of affliction took hold of me (30:16)*”. I found myself **questioning God and demanding He allow me to present myself before him so I could argue my case.**

I asked so many questions, nearly 300 of them often asking “**Why? Why is this happening to me?**”

The frustrating taunts of my so-called friends continued through seemingly endless conversations and pain was a constant companion, **yet deep down in my heart, I still trusted God!** Indeed, often at my darkest times, **something deep within me told me that ultimately everything would work out, if not in this life, then beyond this life.**

But still I longed for the **restoration of fellowship with God.** I found myself musing, “***if only there was someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both,***

***someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more” (9:33-35)***

One day, Zophar, one of my friends, spoke patronisingly to me saying, ***[Job 11:13-17] “... if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him, if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear. You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by. Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning.”***

**It seems that people always come with their simplistic arguments when they don't understand; when they're not the one going through the trial!** But such platitudes made me even more determined to take my case before God directly. So I determinedly told Zophar, “***though he slay me, yet will I hope in him”.***

Even if God took my life away, I believed I would eventually be vindicated.

**And from somewhere about that time, though the trial continued, God started to stir my heart.** Though I could not speak to God face-to-face, *as desperately as I wanted to... I longed for someone to plead my cause for me.*

And as if in answer to my longing, new insights started to come to me and I found myself declaring, ***[Job 16:19-21 NLT] Even now my witness is in heaven. My advocate is there on high. My friends scorn me, but I pour out my tears to God. I need someone to mediate between God and me, as a person mediates between friends.***

And as the sense of one **pleading for me** opened further, I was soon able to declare with confidence, ***[Job 19:25-27] I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;***

***I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!***

This brought some comfort and renewed confidence as I realised, ***[Job 23:10] ... He knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.***

The pain was still great, the torment continued, but my future somehow now seemed to carry assurance. **In the end, God indeed would bring good out of my anguish and misery**; indeed he had already shown me wonderful things, though I couldn't fully appreciate them at the time.

It was only as my trial drew to a close that the greatest revelation of all was given to me and **I learned the truth of what had been going on.** **Storm clouds gathered on that day as I pondered my future**, and the Lord Himself spoke out of the storm. **I had longed to hear from Him, but I never could have expected what would happen in my heart!**

***[Job 38:2-7] The Lord said, "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? And, as He continued, the Lord said [Job 40:2] "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!"***

It was as if he were asking me, ***"Why do you not trust me? Do you think I do not have the power and ability to see your circumstance?"***

***As I listened to the voice of God, I felt the pain and suffering, the self-pity, questioning and anguish somehow being put into a new perspective.***

Suddenly it did not seem as great or as important any longer. Through stammering lips I said, ***[Job 40:4-5] "I am unworthy--how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer-- twice, but I will say no more."***

**But the Lord had not yet finished.** Again he questioned me with words that went deep: ***Job 40:8 "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?"*** And then He spoke about the wonder of His power and the huge creatures of the land and sea and other things I did not understand.

**By the time he had finished, it was as if all the problems and suffering of the last few months were gone...** and broken and humbled, I bowed before him and said, ***[Job 42:2-6] "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?'***

***Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.***

***"You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.'***

***My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."***

**And with that the trial was over!**

Soon **God vindicated me before my friends**, He restored my **siblings and other friends** to me, and he gave me **great riches and children and blessings far beyond anything I ever had before**. It was only then that I could understand that in all things God was indeed working for the good. And even more I understood that I was one ***"called according to His purpose"***.

It was only then that I learned of the **spiritual battle going on behind the scenes** and how **God was using me to demonstrate to Satan**

**that a person of deep faith could overcome great adversity**. Satan had abandoned *his worship* of God for his own pride, but now a man had withstood the greatest trial and still trusted God. **There was a point to my suffering: it was to God's GLORY!**

**What Job might have said ends there.**

As one writer (Robert Morgan, *The Promise*) comments, **"In the end, everything did work out for Job, as it will for all God-lovers. Amid his multiple miseries, Job didn't abandon his faith, and he emerged from the valley of pain stronger and happier..., capable of ministering hope to people even now, thousands of years later.**

**So, what can we take from this remarkable story?**

- 1. The overwhelming evidence is that the principle of Rom 8:28 was true even for Job. The promise has already been tested to the extreme... and found to be true!**

2. We can say, **God does work all things together for the good of those who love Him, even though we may only understand it in retrospect, if at all!**

**We also learn that:**

1. **Our knowledge and worship of God must be based on His Character and revelation, not on our own expectations.**
2. **When all else in life is stripped away, only heart-faith will get us through.**
3. **In times of testing, God often reveals deeper truths to us.**
4. **For the Christian, in this era of grace, there is still a spiritual battle going on.  
*(Eph 3:10-11) God's ... "intent was that now, THROUGH THE CHURCH, THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN TO THE RULERS AND AUTHORITIES IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

5. ***As God accomplishes His purposes, His central GOAL in working all things together for our good, is to progressively make us like Jesus! (Rom 8:29)***