

It's been a bit of a stressful week. Ever have one of those weeks where so many things happen that you don't dare to ask "What next?"

On Monday, Marie and I were coming home from Lowe's and Wal-Mart (two of our most frequented locations in the area; we probably go there more than we come here, unfortunately), and I was helping to bring the things we bought in from the car. I loaded up my arms and headed to the door, opened the door and stepped into the living room, but evidently didn't lift my foot high enough and tripped over the threshold of the door. The next second is a blur, to be honest. I don't remember seeing the concrete floor rushing up toward my face, but they both met at a rather high rate of speed. I could do the math, but I'll leave that as an exercise for anyone interested in physics.

After hearing the crash, Marie asked me if I was OK, and my answer surprised her. I said no. I thought it would be best if I just lay there and wait for her to arrive. I knew I'd hit the floor quite hard, wasn't sure if there would be any left-over bits on the floor when I stood up.

Thank God, the biggest casualty of the fall, other than my pride, was my glasses, which are being replaced, and quite frankly they needed to be replaced anyway. Thankfully, I have contact lenses I can wear, and prescription sunglasses and computer glasses, so I don't need to worry about how I'm going to see; and the marks on my face will eventually heal.

Then came Wednesday. Our oldest daughter Amie and her two kids, Garrett and Tali flew in to Manchester early that morning, and Marie went down to pick them up. Then I saw the news on Facebook that Danny Campbell's mother-in-law, Kim's mom, was not doing well and the doctors didn't expect her to live through the morning. Danny sent out a request for prayers on Facebook, and she passed away later that day.

Thursday morning, I read, again on Facebook, that Karen Crocker, the wife of a friend of mine from high school and college, Gary, finally lost her eight year battle with colon cancer Wednesday night. Earlier last month he had been asking for prayers that she would live to see their 30th wedding anniversary. Those prayers were answered with abundance, because not only was she alive, she was nearly pain free and lucid the entire day, which was not normally the case for the past several months.

Seeing what my friends are going through puts my little spill earlier in the week in perspective. Not really such a big deal as I'd thought; just a little inconvenient. But why do these things happen? Why do bad things happen to good people? I don't think there's anyone in this room who hasn't asked that question at one time or another.

The classic example of bad things happening to good people is Job. Job was a good man. In fact, the Bible says in Job 1:1 that he was blameless and upright, and that he feared God and turned away from evil. That's pretty good if you ask me. Job had 10 kids, 7 boys and three girls, and they would get together every day and have parties at each brother's house. Every morning, Job would offer a sacrifice for his kids, just in case they had sinned at the party.

Not only that, but Job was a rich man. He had 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen (that's 1000 total, by the way), and 500 female donkeys. On top of that, he had servants to take care of all of them for him, so he and his family didn't have to worry about it.

I guess if there's a problem with being good and caring, it's that it attracts attention.

Let's start reading in Job 1:6.

Job 1:6-12

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ 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." ⁸ 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?" ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." ¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Now, a lot of people have some theological problems with this passage. Why is Satan meeting with God in heaven? What's going on here?

Well, part of the problem is our understanding of Satan; and to try to clear things up, we need to go back to the Hebrew (of course!).

Let me start by saying that Satan is another of those wonderful transliterated words that I really hate, like baptize, and prophecy. People have done a great disservice by not translating these words, but just Anglicizing them. The Hebrew word here in Job 1:6 is saw-tawn'. Actually, it's two words, ha saw-tawn'. The Hebrew word ha is similar to the English word "the" when used in front of nouns. It's a definite article, that points to the uniqueness of that person, place, or thing. Nowhere else in the Bible is a name prefixed by "ha". Many scholars think this is not in fact a name, but a title – a job description of the particular "son of God" that was speaking.

So what's the job? The Hebrew word saw-tawn' means accuser. Sort of like a prosecuting attorney. Ha Saw-tawn' has the job of walking around on earth and bringing accusations to God. At least that's the way I understand it.

In this particular scripture, it seems the accusation is more against God than against Job. The Accuser is saying that since God protects Job, Job has no real reason to fear God. So, God gives the Accuser permission to take away what Job loves, he just can't touch Job. And that's exactly what happens.

By the end of chapter 1, all Job has left is his wife, his house, and four servants who escaped all the disasters to report all the losses to Job. All his livestock (which was his wealth), all his children, and all his servants but the four, died on the same day. And God allowed it to happen.

Why!!!

How would you react if this happened to you? Everything you own and love is suddenly taken away from you. Take a look at the last two verses of Job chapter 1 and we'll see how Job reacted to it.

Job 1:21, 22

²¹ And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Well, that's great, but it doesn't really answer why, does it?

In a way it does. God took care of Job, and Job became very wealthy. So, to demonstrate to the Accuser that Job's faith was not simply because God gave things to him, God allowed the Accuser to take them away.

In the end of the book, God restores Job's fortune by twice as much (except for the children, he only has 10 of those again). So God blessed Job's faithfulness during the times of trouble, even though Job spends several chapters of this book arguing with God about what happens.

Psalms 41 is a lot like the book of Job. Let's take a look.

Psalms 41

- 1 *Blessed is the one who considers the poor!*
In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him;
- 2 *the LORD protects him and keeps him alive;*
he is called blessed in the land;
you do not give him up to the will of his enemies.
- 3 *The LORD sustains him on his sickbed;*
in his illness you restore him to full health.
- 4 *As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me;*
heal me, for I have sinned against you!"
- 5 *My enemies say of me in malice,*
"When will he die, and his name perish?"
- 6 *And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words,*
while his heart gathers iniquity;
when he goes out, he tells it abroad.
- 7 *All who hate me whisper together about me;*
they imagine the worst for me.
- 8 *They say, "A deadly thing is poured out on him;*
he will not rise again from where he lies."
- 9 *Even my close friend in whom I trusted,*
who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.
- 10 *But you, O LORD, be gracious to me,*
and raise me up, that I may repay them!
- 11 *By this I know that you delight in me:*
my enemy will not shout in triumph over me.
- 12 *But you have upheld me because of my integrity,*

and set me in your presence forever.

*¹³ Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting!
Amen and Amen.*

David prays for healing, and has to deal with people who wish he was dead. People come to visit him and say nice things to him, but in their hearts they think evil things and then when they leave, they tell people lies about him, spreading rumors.

David says in verses 11 and 12 that he knows that God takes care of him, no matter what. As it says in verse 12 “You upheld me because of my integrity”. Just like in Job 2:9 and 10.

Job 2:9, 10

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?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Even Job’s wife didn’t get it. Sometimes that happens to us, too. The people we’re closest to don’t seem to understand, and tell us we should just give up.

If anyone understood the problems that Job went through, it was the Church in the first and second century. Persecuted, despised, hunted, murdered, they still continued spreading the Truth; God’s love for all mankind.

Romans 8:31-39

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.

³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As we move on with our lives, we continue in Jesus, knowing that those who’ve gone on before us will be waiting for us in the end. And we will all be “more than conquerors”, because of Jesus.

Opening Scripture ***Job 19:23-29***

23 “Oh that my words were written!
 Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
24 Oh that with an iron pen and lead
 they were engraved in the rock forever!
25 For I know that my Redeemer lives,
 and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
 yet in my flesh I shall see God,
27 whom I shall see for myself,
 and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
 My heart faints within me!
28 If you say, ‘How we will pursue him!’
 and, ‘The root of the matter is found in him,’
29 be afraid of the sword,
 for wrath brings the punishment of the sword,
 that you may know there is a judgment.”

Closing Scripture ***Romans 5:1-5***

¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.