



Job 1:20-22: Lessons of Faith from Job's Suffering

Alex Samat

Abdi Allah Evangelical Theology Seminary (STTIAA) Mojokerto-East Java

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Abstrak:

The story of Job's suffering in the Bible describes the deep struggle of faith when facing life's trials and sufferings. Despite Job's great trials and sufferings, He maintained his faith in God. Even though he did not understand all the things he was going through, he was still willing to be patient and persevere, in the midst of his sick condition, losing all his possessions and being abandoned by his family and friends. Yet Job still expressed his faith that God was his helper. The purpose of this writing is to be able to arouse the faith and confidence of believers from Job's suffering. So that it can be a reflection of the Christian faith in building the foundation of Christian faith. Using a descriptive qualitative research method with a literature study approach, so the results of the research findings in the article are that the existence of suffering as part of the believer's life is actually a reflection of what Job experienced, namely suffering as the resilience of the Christian faith: efforts to build the foundation of Christianity are: First, Christianity is able to provide a definition and be able to understand as the correct paradigm about Job and his suffering. Furthermore, believers can face the challenges of Christian faith and suffering because the story of Job is an example of how, despite great difficulties, they can still maintain faith in something greater and understand that suffering can be part of a spiritual journey that ultimately brings restoration and blessings. see and emulate Job's suffering, both perseverance and faith as an evaluation of Christian faith.

Key Words: Job, suffering, and the believer's lesson of faith

I. INTRODUCTION

The book of Job discusses suffering in the face of trials and questions about human suffering. This story is a lesson in faith, perseverance and the meaning of humanity in facing difficulties. This book is one of the unique Hebrew canons because of its very extreme story and the unknown author. That does not mean that the story is a myth or a mere fairy tale. It is very clear that the book of Job is not a mere

fiction but a true story of a pious and righteous man (Job 1:1) who suffered because of his faith in God.

The main character in this book is Job, who is introduced as a rich, pious and honest man; he fears God and shuns evil (chapter 1:1). Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush have argued that the story of Job was the experience of someone who actually lived in ancient times, although it is possible that the story of his suffering was made up in a form known today by later poets¹. But since there is no reference to the history of the Israelites, Job is thought to have lived long before the Israelites settled in Canaan. Interest in God's wisdom dates back to Solomon's day, and this book may have been written during the reign of Solomon².

The time of writing the book of Job is unclear because there are no specific historical references in it. The writer argues that the effort to ascertain the year of the writing of the book of Job is neither feasible nor irrelevant, because it is more important to ensure that the events in the book of Job are the real experiences of someone who really existed, not just methods. It is true (history) as stated by God's Word through the prophet Ezekiel declaring four times that Job's story is true (chapter 14:14-20) and also the book of James writes that Job's suffering and perseverance did indeed happen (chapter 5:10-11). Responding to the problem of the current suffering experienced by believers, the figure of Job can be a role model or *prototype* of a believer who experiences unexplained problems in life but ultimately leads to the knowledge of God and the blessing of restoration.

which is even more profound as Job himself confessed, "*I have heard of You only from the words*

¹ Lasor, Hubbard, Bush, Introduction to the Old Testament 2 (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011), 107.

² John Balchin, et al, The Essence of the Old Testament Bible (Jakarta: Bible Readers Fellowship, 2008), p.119.



of men, but now my own eyes are upon You" (chapter 42:5).

No human being can avoid experiencing suffering, including believers in his life. By studying the story of Job's suffering, believers wherever they are are expected to find the message that the Book of Job wants to convey so that they can interpret suffering by rethinking how believers behave when they are experiencing suffering. As Kurniadi pointed out, Job learned to accept and respond to his suffering with an attitude of faith. According to him, with that attitude of faith, Job only directs his heart and mind to the sovereignty and will of God. That is why Job's attitude can be one of the inspirations for believers today, to keep believing in God even in very difficult situations.³

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive, with a literature study approach related to the resilience of the Christian faith seen from the perspective of Job's suffering, it is an effort to build the foundation of Christianity. The author searches several parallel texts from the book of Job and the Bible about suffering and also the faith of believers is also investigated to obtain descriptive information about suffering. This kind of suffering is an important lesson in the Christian faith in dealing with the suffering situation faced today.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hassell Bullock says that the most real problem in the book of Job is the suffering of the righteous.⁴ The book of Job clearly questions personal suffering, not the suffering of a nation, that is, God's sovereignty allows God-fearing people and innocent people to suffer, and the willingness to accept it without losing their faith. Through the narration of the book of Job, it tells the universal human experience to strengthen the belief in the present who are facing suffering in any form.⁵

Job is one of the most famous figures ever recorded in the Bible, he is famous as written in

chapters 1:1-22 he is also described as a very godly, wealthy man with a happy family. He came out as a truly amazing person. This wealth made him respected and considered one of the richest people in the east of his time. In the context of his society, Job's situation illustrates that he was a really important and powerful person, he was considered a pious and sincere person. Job was known for his wealth and steadfastness in his faith, although he endured many trials and sufferings. Job's piety was evident when he made a burnt offering for his ten children who had been baptized on the grounds that "perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts" (1:5).

In chapters 1:6-2:10, the dialogue between God and Satan, Satan believes that Job only believes because of his wealth and God's participation. Therefore, through the conversation or dialogue between God and the devil, and the calamity that befell Job and his family began which was carried out by the devil with God's own permission.

Job suffered terribly that included the loss of his possessions, the death of all his children (1:18-19). In the face of the suffering, Job's wife suggested that she curse God and surrender to death, seeing that their suffering was so heavy and absurd. When his three companions heard the news of all the calamities that had befallen him, they came from their respective forges, namely: Eliphaz the Friend, and Bildad, the Suah, and Zofar, the Naama. Then his companions came to celebrate Job. When they saw Job's state of suffering greatly from the rotten cancer that had afflicted his entire body, they wept and wailed for seven days (2:12-13). They did not speak until Job himself opened the conversation (chapter 3). Job's complaint against him as recorded in chapter 19:19-22 is as follows:

All my close friends are sick of me;
and those whom I love turn against me.
My bones are attached to my skin and flesh,
And only my gums stayed with me.
Pity me, pity me, O my friends,
For the hand of Allah has fallen upon me.
Why are you chasing me,
As if Allah,
and not become full to eat my flesh?

When Job faced his difficult times, he recalled his past life. Job had a good life, and was protected from misfortune. The prominent people respected him and asked for his counsel (29:5-11). He was rich, but he had a balanced view of money (31:24, 25, 28), that is, if there were widows or orphans in need, he helped them (29:12-16). And he was faithful to his wife (31:1, 9, 11).

³ Bartholomeus Wahyu Kurniadi, "The Inspiration of the Story of Job for a Catholic in Facing Expressed Suffering," MELINTAS 31, no. 1 (July 22, 2015): 47.

⁴ C. Hassell Bullock, Books of Poetry in the Old Testament (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2003), 89.

⁵ Calvis Stevanus, "The Awareness of God through Suffering Based on Job 1-2", Dunamis: Journal Christian Theology and Education, Vol.3, No.2, 2019:115.



But now, Job began to question the suffering he experienced to God. Job accused God of doing injustice to him: "Job said that God had done injustice to me, and spread his nets over me" (chapter 19:6). Job began to question God's justice to him: Why did he suffer; why God is silent and does not declare His justice to him. Job's questions were expressed in a dialogue with his three companions, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zofar, to which Elihu also responded (4:1–37:24). Job did experience life's struggles, beginning with piety and obedience (prologue) then turning into persistent rejection (*dialogue*), and ending with higher obedience after hearing God's answers (*epilogue*).

IV. DISCUSSION RESULTS

There are several important things about the meaning of Job's story as a lesson of faith in the face of suffering, especially for believers.

The sufferings of the believer's life

It is not impossible for believers who are still wrong about suffering. Some say that people who fear Allah in their lives cannot suffer because God cannot want suffering for believers.⁶ It can be said that the problem of suffering must be caused by sin. But the Bible reveals a different fact. This fact is revealed in the story of a man named Job. "The man is righteous and honest; he fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:1).

It should be acknowledged that the general view is that suffering is indeed a form of God's punishment for sins committed by humans as expressed by Job's three companions. But personally, the believer's suffering is not always caused by his own sin. Job is a vivid example of someone who suffers not because of his sin, but in His sovereignty, God allows Job to experience it to reveal His will and will. The Bible bears witness to Job's piety in his life, fearing God and shunning evil, he could still suffer. Believers must understand the problem of suffering objectively and honestly. And this Book of Job leads to an objective and honest understanding of suffering, that suffering is an integral part of human life. No one is spared from suffering. Likewise, believers must have the right paradigm regarding suffering.

⁶ Kalis Stevanus, *There Are Heretics Who Distort the Gospel in the Church, What Is Your Attitude* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Nusatama, 2016), 72.

Suffering must be interpreted and accepted as an integral part of human life without exception.

Therefore, when believers face suffering, they must accept it as an inevitable reality of human life and that God will not give them life trials or sufferings that are beyond their abilities (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13). As a believer, the attitude of rejection, let alone blaming God while experiencing suffering is unjustifiable because suffering is a reality that can happen to anyone, including believers. even though he was a Christian who believed earnestly, pious and committed evil.

Satan's Ways of Tempting Believers

God's sovereignty means that He exercises His right to do what He pleases with His creation.⁷ God does what He wants only because everything is His own. Everything that happens both on earth and in heaven is God's will. How do we know the devil's way of tempting Job? This does not mean that Satan could defeat Job, but we can see Job's response when the temptation came to him. In this case, the devil came to Job with various accusations and it was known to God and God Himself allowed the devil to tempt Job. What is interesting is God's message to Satan not to touch Job's life (Job 2:6). In this we can see that the devil is indeed incapable of doing what he pleases to believers without God's permission. However, temptation through the strategy that the devil launches still applies to believers. There are three ways of the devil in the story of Job, namely:

First, proclaiming Job before God. The great opportunity given by Allah to the devil to come before Him was not wasted by the accuser. In Job 1 and 2, it is revealed that the coming of the devil to God occurs twice, the first coming in Job 1:6-13, and the second coming in Job 2:1-6. On this occasion, Satan claimed that Job would have fallen and cursed God if he had lost everything he had. Second, it brought sickness (Job 2:7) "Then the devil went out of the presence of the Lord, and he struck Job with rotten cancer from the soles of his feet to the stone of his head." The devil's work took away everything Job had. With his power he then brought forth rotten cancer from the soles of his feet to the third stone of Job's head (2:7), persuaded through those closest to him, so his wife said to him, "Do you still persevere in your righteousness? Curse your God and die!" Taking advantage of the chaotic and highly emotional

⁷ Tony Evans, *The Theology of Allah Allah We Are Great* (Malang: wheat Mas, 1999), 107.



situation, the devil through his wife, tried to shake Job's faith by telling him to curse God.⁸

Believer's Faith Tested by God

Faith must be tested in order to prove strong and sincere. Without the test of faith, the value is invisible. As in a faith school without facing a test, it definitely does not get the grade. Every believer's faith must face a test from God. Instead, the test of faith produces the value, quality/improvement of Christianity.⁹ Every struggle faced must have its purpose and purpose. One of God's purposes in allowing suffering is to purify faith. The Lord's Word says, "My brethren, consider it a blessing, when ye fall into many trials... for when he has endured the test, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to whosoever loves him" (James 1:2, 12).

Based on the narrative of Job's story, it shows that the faith of believers will be tested through various sufferings and difficulties. Therefore, it is very important for believers to view every suffering they experience as a test of faith, not necessarily a form of God's punishment. As it is said in this story of Job, Job's suffering was the result of the devil's actions and God's permission, not because of his sin as accused by Job's three friends (Elifaz, Bildad, and Zofar). The dialogue between them lasted in three rounds, which became more and more heated. The three friends tried to persuade Job to accept his situation and confess his guilt to God so that he could be forgiven and immediately restored.

But Job firmly rejected their opinion. On the contrary, Job regarded his companions as deceivers (13:4-6; 16:2-3). Job suffered greatly both physically and psychologically. Job actually hoped to get comfort from his companions in the midst of his suffering. However, they accused him of committing sin or evil before God. According to them, the suffering that Job experienced was a punishment for his mistakes or sins. This understanding is called "retribution". This understanding is questioned in the story of Job. As stated by Fokkelman, his three companions viewed Job's suffering with a punitive rather than comforting view¹⁰. Balchin stated: "The

standard answer of Job's friends is that God punishes the wicked, and therefore Job must have committed evil¹¹. Drane added that the standard answer was due to the existence of a theological concept built on the basis of their awareness of God according to the context of that time. Piety is rewarded with prosperity and happiness, while wickedness is punished¹². Wahono also stated the same thing that the three companions of Job greatly strengthened the orthodox view that God rewards the right and punishes the wrong. Job, on the other hand, questioned all of that. Job continued to struggle with it.¹³

In such a situation, Job still believed that it was impossible for his suffering to be a punishment from God because he affirmed that he had never done anything evil before God (1:1). Job affirmed that he was not wicked or evil, and therefore his suffering was not a punishment for anything. It is not appropriate for him to receive that punishment, because he is right. Job repeatedly declared that he was righteous (see chapters 6:29-30; 9:15,20; 10:7; 13:18; 27:5; 33:9; 34:5-6). This is what led Job to speak harshly and angrily to God and accuse Him of acting unjustly against him (19:6; 27:2; band 8:3; 34:17). With regard to Job's suffering, the Bible clearly says that Job knew nothing of the origin of his suffering and did not know its end.¹⁴ This is where Job's faith was tested¹⁵. Job himself says in chapter 23:10, "For He knows my way of life; if he had tested me, I would have arisen like gold." And yes, Job learned to accept and respond to his suffering with that attitude of faith. By faith, Job only directed his heart and mind to God's sovereignty and will by saying:

"With me naked coming out of my mother's womb, naked I will also go back into it. GOD who gives, LORD who takes, praise LORD!" (1:21).

Through these words, Job realized that all he had was a gift from God. He realized that he was naked out of his mother's womb, not carrying anything. God is the one who gives everything he has. So God is the one who entrusts all the wealth and family he has. It was this belief that made Job realize

⁸ Irvin Tolanda and Peniel Maiaweng, God's Sovereignty Over Satan Based on the Book of Job Chapters 1 and 2 and Its Relevance in the Life of Believers (Makassar: Jaffray Theological and Pastoral Journal Vol. 9, No. 2, October 2011), 64-68.

⁹ Ibid, 73.

¹⁰ Jan Fokkelman, Finding the Meaning of Bible Poetry (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2009), 205.

¹¹ John Balchin, dkk. , 119.

¹² John Drane, Understanding the Old Testament 1 (Jakarta: Bible Readers' Guild, 2009), 88.

¹³ S. Wismoady Wahono, Here I Found (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1987), 229-230.

¹⁴ Calais Stevanus, "An Analysis of the Rhetorical Question in Job 40:1-28," *Dunamis: Journal of Theology and*

Christian Education, Vol.2, No.2, 2018:123.

¹⁵ J. Sidlow Baxter, 57.



that he had no right to defend all of them. In other words, Job wants to say that God has the right to take back what He has given him, in many ways and one of them is through disasters, sickness, and so on. That awareness arose from Job, as a result of his knowledge of God.

Job had experienced extreme sorrow and suffering, but in all of them Job chose to surrender to God's sovereignty. That was Job's faith where all his suffering did not dilute his faith in God.¹⁶ Job was firm in his view that God holds all things in His power, and determines the end of all things as predestined as such. That is why it is important for Christians today to have fellowship and knowledge of God every day, so that when facing the storms of life, they will not lose faith. From the process of knowing God, he will find a divine perspective that comes from his personal relationship with God, then direct his gaze (his faith) to be able to understand the problems he is experiencing positively, let alone blame and accuse God of doing something unjust. Job chose to be positive by surrendering to God in shaping himself. Faith was the source of Job's strength in facing his suffering. Job's story shows Christians today that faith is the key to victory in overcoming all the problems of life that God allows. Thus, as a believer by looking at this story of Job, we gain a new meaning that suffering is not always a punishment from God, but a test of faith so that we become motivated when facing severe suffering.

God's Justice

When Job was in great agony, he must have wondered why it was happening to him. Job was a faithful man to God and his life was righteous, so the suffering that came seemed unjust. His suffering made him question the justice of justice and God's purpose, especially because he felt that he had lived a righteous life. Shouldn't living a righteous life, fearing God, and shunning evil be blessed, whereas sinning will suffer (4:7-9). Job compares his life to those who in his human view are wicked but whose life seems to be very far from suffering.

Job once became discouraged and regretted his birth, "The wicked seem to be much better off than I am," he said (21:7-9), "Why did God punish me?" There were times when he just wanted to die. "Ah, may You hide me in the world of the dead, ... If

man dies, can he live again? So I hoped for days of my struggle, until it was my turn; so Thou shalt call, and I shall answer ... (14:13-14). In fact, Job once accused God of acting unjustly against him. Bullock said that by accusing God of acting unjustly against him, Job had made the same mistake that his companions had done. They justified God by sacrificing Job, whereas Job justified himself by sacrificing God (40:2).¹⁷ The same is stated by Sukmana that in order to defend his orthodox views, Job was sacrificed by his people (this is represented by his three companions: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zofar). In the view of society at the time about suffering as a result of sin. What the companions thought reflected the views of the people around Job. And Job dealt with his people in a bad situation. In the end, God reveals Himself and answers Job (38-41). Then from the storm, God spoke to Job with a rhetorical question: "Who is he who obscures decisions with words of ignorance? Prepare yourself as a man! I will question you, that you may tell me" (38:1-3). "Do you want to abolish My judgment, to blame Me so that you may justify yourself?" (40:3). Fokkelman states: "Job wanted an honest court to prove his honesty and to hold God accountable, that he was a truly righteous man." Job's¹⁸ assertion that he was innocent and that God had punished him unjustly (19:6) almost led Job to sue God. Now, God asked Job specifically if he would continue to assert his limited knowledge of God's way of governing the world by rejecting God's justice and goodness? Job could not answer God's question. Job demanded to be justified, but did he have the power to justify himself? Atkinson said: "Job often emphasized that he was confident in God's justice, but he also insisted on justifying himself. Now he realizes that only God can justify him."¹⁹

Job eventually came to his senses, repented and confessed his mistake for accusing God of acting unfairly or fraudulently on him. Job said, "Therefore I retract my word and regretfully I sit in dust and ashes" (42:6). This self-reflection of Job shows his acceptance of God's sovereignty for what has befallen him that God is a just God, unable to cheat or act wrongly. This chapter 42:6 clearly shows that Job was aware that what he was experiencing was still related to God's plan as he said in chapter 23:10. Thus, through the narrative of Job's story here, Christians are made aware to think positively about

¹⁶ Caleb Stevanus, "Awareness of God through Suffering Based on Job 1-2", *Dunamis: Journal Christian Theology and Education*, Vol.3, No.2, 2019:131.

¹⁷ C. Hassell Bullock, *Books of Poetry in the Old Testament* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2003), 148.

¹⁸ John Fokkelman, 206.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*



every life trial that befalls their lives that God is the God who is most just, it is impossible to cheat or make mistakes in their actions. It is perfect. And finally it was proved true that in his innocence Job did not sin and did not accuse God of being unjust or improper to him (cf. 1:22).

Suffering in God's Control

It can be seen that God is sovereign and supervises everything that happens to the lives of believers as His people. In chapters 1:2 and 2:2, it is clear that God is constantly watching over His creation, including Satan. So God asked the devil, "Where are you from?" God's watch and limit is also evident from what Satan says he can't touch Job because God has fenced him off and his house and everything he has (1:10, 12). Furthermore, chapter 2:6 clearly states that God again sets limits on Satan: "Now, he is in your power; just pity his life." In other words, the devil could only touch Job's body, but could not touch his life. That means, the suffering that believers experience is within God's perfect limits and supervision.

According to Strong, as quoted by Tolanda and Maiaweng, the word "fence" (1:10,12) comes from the Hebrew שָׁנַח "suk" which means "to entwine, that is, shut in (for formation, protection or restraint): - fence. (make an) hedge (up)."²⁰ In Indonesian, it can be interpreted as "wrapping, confinement (for formation, protection or control), fencing."²¹ In other words, God protects, controls and fences Job, his house, livestock, business, slaves, wives and his ten children and everything he has as His supervision and at the same time the limits that He has set so that no person or power (including the devil) can touch Job and what he has. The power of God has fenced off Job and all that is in him.

Job's confidence in God's power and sovereignty is expressed as follows:

When He dismantles,

no one can rebuild;

When He arrests someone,

no one can let it go.

When He dampens the waters,

dry them all;

when He releases it to flow,

so the land was hit.

In Him is power and victory,

He is the one who rules over both the lost and the misguided.

(Job 12:14-16)

God is sovereign over all of His creation, for He is the Creator, the Ruler, and the King of the Universe. This means that Allah has absolute power over all of His creatures, including sovereignty over the believers, His people. Although Satan wants to destroy His people, He is a sovereign and more powerful God whose intentions and plans for His people can never be thwarted by Satan (cf. 42:5). Of course, this also applies to the life of Christians throughout the ages. Therefore, every suffering experienced by believers is not a reason to doubt God's love and goodness. Every suffering experienced by believers is within God's perfect boundaries and supervision to fulfill His purpose and purpose for believers, for example Job (cf. Rom. 8:28). Therefore, there is no right attitude for believers other than to keep believing and hoping for God to realize His purpose and will. Just as Job suffered without losing faith in God, on the contrary, through his suffering, he was able to experience a personal encounter with God, become more intimate and know Him more deeply (42:5-6).

V. CONCLUSION

Suffering is often interpreted as the result of sin and punishment from God as embraced by Job's three friends. The views of the three companions of Job were a reflection of the orthodox views of society at that time. But this view is questioned in the story of Job. Through this story of Job, there are several important things related to the meaning of suffering as a lesson of faith in facing suffering in the context of believers, namely first, that believers are inseparable from the reality of suffering. Human beings in their lives are never free from suffering. Although Job was known for his pious life and obedience to God, he still suffered. Second: The faith of believers will be tested by God. One form of testing faith is through suffering like Job's; The death of his seven children, his property and experiencing physical illness and even psychological violence due to the accusations of his community. Third: God is the God of justice, there is no deceit in Him. Fourth: The suffering of believers is within God's limits and supervision, so that no person or power can touch believers, without His permission. Job learned to accept and respond to his suffering with an attitude of faith and trust in God's sovereignty. With that attitude

²⁰ 5 Irvin Tolanda and Peniel Maiaweng, "God's Sovereignty Over Satan Based on the Book of Job Chapters 1 and 2

and its relevance in the life of believers", Jaffray Journal, Vol.9, No.2 (2011):60-61.

²¹ Irvin Tolanda and Peniel Maiaweng, 61.



of faith, Job only directs his heart and mind to the will of God.

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