

JOB: A STUDY IN IRONY (εἰρωνεία)

Irony is found throughout Western Culture and probably most cultures.

Irony is foundational throughout the book of Job –in almost every chapter. One form of irony will help us understand Job as a book in a much clearer way. Those ideas will **also** help us deal with life.

Kinds of Irony in Job:

1. Verbal Irony

A contrast between what is **literally** said and what is **actually** meant!

Surface meaning and an underlying meaning.

Say one thing and mean another

1 Corinthians 4:8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. 1 Corinthians 4:9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. 1 Corinthians 4:10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. 1 Corinthians 4:11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; 1 Corinthians 4:12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: 1 Corinthians 4:13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

Job 1:10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

[Hosea 2:6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, And make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.]

Job 3:23 Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, And whom God hath hedged in?

Job 29:1 Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, Job 29:2 Oh that I were as in months past, As in the days when God preserved me:

Job 38:8 Or who shut up the sea with doors, When it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?

Job 40:22 The shady trees cover him with their shadow; The willows of the brook compass him about.

Much of our humor has elements of irony in it!

2. Sarcasm

Sarcasm uses the same technique as irony but with an edge! Sometimes with a funny, soft edge.

Sometimes with a hard, negative edge.

Job 12:1 And Job answered and said, Job 12:2 No doubt but ye are the people, And wisdom shall die with you. Job 12:3 But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?

Job 13:1 Lo, mine eye hath seen all this, Mine ear hath heard and understood it. Job 13:2 What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you. Job 13:3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty, And I desire to reason with God. Job 13:4 But ye are forgers of lies, Ye are all physicians of no value. Job 13:5 O that ye would altogether hold your peace! And it should be your wisdom.

Job 16:1 Then Job answered and said, Job 16:2 I have heard many such things: Miserable comforters are ye all. Job 16:3 Shall vain words have an end? Or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? Job 16:4 I also could speak as ye do: If your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, And shake mine head at you. Job 16:5 But I would strengthen you with my mouth, And the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.

[Job 15:11 Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?]

Job 11:1 Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Job 11:2 Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be justified?

Job 15:1 Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said, Job 15:2 Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, And fill his belly with the east wind?

Job 18:1 Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, Job 18:2 How long will it be ere ye make an end of words? Mark, and afterwards we will speak.

Job 32:8 But there is a spirit in man: And the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. **Job 32:9** Great men are not always wise: Neither do the aged understand judgment.

Job 32:17 I said, I will answer also my part, I also will shew mine opinion. **Job 32:18** For I am full of matter, The spirit within me constraineth me. **Job 32:19** Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; It is ready to burst like new bottles.

3. Dramatic Irony | Sophoclean Irony

The reader / audience is aware of pertinent information or circumstances which the characters / participants are NOT!

This requires that an audience / onlooker know things the participants / characters of the story do **NOT!**

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

Job 1:7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. **Job 1:8** And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? **Job 1:9** Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? **Job 1:10** Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. **Job 1:11** But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. **Job 1:12** And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Job 2:1-6

Job 42:8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.

We the readers / hearers know about:	
Satan	The discussion in heaven
The question / purpose	God's complete sovereignty
Satan's attacks	

We the readers / hearers also know about:	
Losses	Questions
Suffering	Numbness
"Counsel" / comfort	Endless dialogue

Job only knew about:	
Earth	Losses
Questions	Sufferings
Numbness	"C"
Endless dialogue	

What did Job's three friends know? Elihu? Job's wife? – only what Job knew or less

We have a better: **Vantage point** | **Perspective**

Thoughts:

- Job is suffering
- Job knows it!
- His friends know it
- **None** of them know why
- **None** of them know about the scenes in heaven
- They have opinions anyhow!
- Opinions based on tradition | experience | visions | "inspiration"
- Opinions right much of the time
- Opinions totally wrong concerning Job!