

The Puzzles of Job

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Chapter Eight

WHAT SHALL I DO WHEN GOD RISES UP?

There are many questions raised in the Book of Job, but the ones we are considering are chosen for their timeliness and their timelessness. They are the questions of the ages and the important questions of today when men stop long enough to think about the realities of life.

The question now before us is not one to be answered hastily. It certainly is not one we will answer correctly if we are trying to act like very big ducks in very small ponds. If we are going around trying to get others to think we are greater than we really are, we will not have the right answer to this query. This is a question that must be faced when we are alone, faced honestly without any shade of pretense whatever. We need to get off by ourselves where we can stop our games of self-deceit and think seriously about matters that count. This is Job's question: "**What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?**" (Job 31:14).

This is a good question for any person to face at any time. It is not "What shall we do?" but "What shall I do?" In that day when GOD rises up and we must give an answer to Him personally, we will not be able to hide behind each other. We will not be able to pretend that we are part of a group and try to hide behind the facelessness of numbers. We will find no escape in saying concerning ourselves: "I am no more guilty than a lot of others." There will be no possibility of hedging on our answers. We will have to answer then as we should be answering now, as human beings with lives to live and souls to answer to GOD for.

In this one query Job faces some facts from which most of us try to hide. The first of these is that GOD will not be silent forever; and the second is that everyone of us must give an account to GOD. This is a personal question to each one of us and calls for a personal answer for such is what GOD will demand. In that long-ago time, Job knew by revelation that though a man dies he will live again. So if a man considers only this life, he is dangerously shortsighted. Things are not always what they seem to be on the surface. There is a day coming when GOD will rise up and break the silence. He will call each person to give an account before Him and will judge each one in righteousness. One by one we will stand before Him. What will our answer be when there is no escape? when there is no excuse? when the truth must be laid on the line?

We know that when we die our bodies turn back to dust. We seem to grow used to the taste of dust and ashes; that is, we think in terms of this short life only. Our plans are for today; see no farther than the sunset. If we are clothed and have a house over our heads and our stomachs are full, the Scriptures seem to lose their urgent appeal to consider the matters of time and eternity. We are prone to follow those described in Job chapter 21 who, when they think all is going well, ask GOD to leave them alone. Insurance we want for this life only, as though there was nothing beyond. We act as though the tomorrows would have no shadows and that GOD would be silent forever.

What we want we want now. Our actions indicate we are afraid that if we die we will somehow be cheated out of our just dues. We want our revenge now. Man's history is a story of torture, evil scheming and plotting man against man. It is the story of rebellion, robbery, aggression and hate which has led to stark terror time after time. Our selfish cry is for rewards now. Like the prodigal son in Luke 15 we want the portion of our heritage now. We want pie in our plates, not pie in the sky. The HOLY SPIRIT through Paul said some very pointed things with regard to the selfish spirit that demands everything at once. **"But why does thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way"** (Romans 14:10-13).

Paul is saying to those who want their rewards and revenge now, "Forget it! Live with the fact in mind that you will have to answer to God. Take care of your responsibility to Him and all other things will be right."

The Apostle John, in his first letter, touched on this same subject. He wrote, **"He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him"** (I John 3:14, 15).

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said that there are conditions under which it is better to suffer wrong than to retaliate. There are times when it is better to endure injury and insult than to fight back. So often we want something simply because we claim to have the right to have what is ours. We think GOD acts too slowly, so we want to get what we think is ours now. This is not a suggestion that we should become milk toasts and let others walk over us. What we are pointing out is that a great many of our problems could be solved quickly, easily and peacefully by asking ourselves two questions. They are the questions Job asked: **"What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"**

In the light of that day when we stand before GOD, does it really matter that we have our rewards now? Is it important in the light of that great event that those who have wronged us be put in their place now? Would it not be much better for us to leave our rewards to GOD? He is the final judge in all of these matters in any case. And as for revenge, we have neither all the facts nor the ability to judge righteous judgment, so why not leave this in GOD's hands also? Why feed on hate and bitterness when one of these days GOD will judge the world in righteousness?

We are admonished that in this present life we are to **"let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another"** (Romans 12:9, 10).

Job knew that his two great questions were related to what he had done in this life. One cannot live to please himself in this world and then pass into the next world scot-free to share all the joys of Heaven with all its unbroken bliss forever. There is a reckoning time for the Christian as well as the unbeliever. The believer will have his Christian life evaluated with respect to rewards or loss of rewards. There will be no question concerning his eternal destiny, for that was settled when he trusted in CHRIST. The judgment of GOD against sin's guilt and against all else that sin can do against him was fully met when the believer trusted in JESUS CHRIST as His personal SAVIOUR. The unbeliever, on the other hand, should he leave this life rejecting CHRIST, will have to face the consequences of the guilt of sin and the consequences of his personal acts of sin.

Job realized that he would have to answer to GOD for his mortal life. This is what he referred to when he said, **"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? For what portion of GOD is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high?"** (Job 31:1, 2). In plain language Job is saying that he made an agreement with his eyes that he would not look upon a woman with wrong desires in his mind. His questions can then be stated: *"For what portion should I have from God above if I were immoral, and what heritage from the Almighty on high?"*

In verses 3 and 4 Job says, **"Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?"** Here Job by means of questions points out the fact that the wicked will be judged, for GOD sees all that men do, observing every detail of our conduct. Job realized, what we need to realize, that the answers GOD will demand of us relate to what is done on earth. This is a personal matter. It is not what others do, but what each of us does that is involved. Job knew that his actions with regard to his servants would be included. If he were stubborn and unkind and uncharitable towards them, this would show up when he appeared before GOD. Job said, **"If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, when they contended with me; What then shall I do when God riseth us? and when he visiteth, shat shall I answer him?"** (Job 31:13, 14).

As with Job so with us. Life is more than passing time, it is building for eternity. We must not make it a time in which we see how much we can get by with, but a time of seeing how much we can store up for the eternal years ahead. It is more than a "this world" affair. In this life we are laying a foundation for the world to come.

If we are to stand before GOD "unashamed" as John wrote in his first Epistle, it is imperative that we find answers to some things that are very real in this life. We must squarely face our sins. This is not a matter we can dodge, for GOD **"sees my ways and counts all my steps"** It will do no good to deny our evil actions, because the results are all about us. We shall surely be brought to judgment for our sins sooner or later. This is why we must find the right answer to Job's question: **"How should man be just with God?"** We must face GOD's attitude toward sin and what GOD has done about it.

The Prophet Ezekiel tells us GOD's attitude when he says, "**The soul that sinneth, it shall die**" (Ezekiel 18:4).

Paul expresses GOD's attitude toward sin in these words: "**For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness**" (Romans 1:18). Paul brings the subject of human sin and guilt to its tragic climax when he says in Romans 3:10-12: "**As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.**"

Has GOD made provision for poor sinners? Is there salvation from such a condition? Is there mercy with GOD? If so, has He shown it and where can we find it? Is there a way, in spite of what we are, whereby we may be just before GOD?

GOD's plan of salvation is possibly best expressed in I Corinthians 15:1-4:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

You will notice that the first thing is that CHRIST died for our sins. This is in agreement with John 3:16 which tells us that GOD so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us. This is the message of Romans 4:25 which says CHRIST was delivered for our offenses.

We are next told that He was buried. Would not this be something we would take for granted? No indeed! There had to be assurance that He was dead, for His death was no ordinary death, since He was dying in our place. Joseph of Arimathaea testified to the fact of CHRIST's death when he wrapped the body for burial and laid it in his own tomb and rolled a great stone across the entrance: "**When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed**" (Matthew 27:57-60).

The Pharisees were sure He was dead, because they spoke to Pilate concerning CHRIST's burial. They remember He had said that after He was dead for three days He would rise again. These men wanted to be sure that the tomb would be protected so that no one could steal CHRIST's body: "**Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first**" (Matthew 27:63, 64).

Pilate was amazed to learn that CHRIST was already dead and in order to be sure about it asked

the centurion for confirmation. This he readily gave: "**And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead**" (Mark 15:44). When the soldiers came to break the legs of the persons who had been crucified, they found CHRIST already dead and so did not break His legs: "**Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water**" (John 19:32-34).

The third great fact of the Gospel is that CHRIST arose the third day according to the Scriptures. There could be no question about this. He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, and then of above 500 brethren, at once.

James saw Him and so did all the apostles. Some time later Paul saw Him when he was on the road to Damascus: "**And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from Heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do**" (Acts 9:3-6).

and

"**And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time**" (I Corinthians 15:5-8).

CHRIST was not only delivered for our offenses but He was raised again on account of our justification: "**Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification**" (Romans 4:25). His resurrection was proof that His death on Calvary satisfied the justice of GOD.

The sentence of death was, and is, upon the human race. Life is our problem. For this reason GOD sent His Son into the world to die in our place, and He arose again that He might give eternal life to all who place their trust unreservedly in Him. "**Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life . . . That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Romans 5:18, 21). It is through faith in Him that we are saved. This is a sure salvation and a present salvation. This is the force of I Corinthians 15:2 and Ephesians 2:8, 9. Consequently, when we stand before GOD the first great question will be with regard to what we did with His remedy for sin, His beloved Son. What will the answer be? Did we receive Him? Did we reject Him? If we received Him, did we go on to neglect Him?

We will have to give an account of the deeds done in the body. Sometime, somewhere as sure as

the setting sun, we must answer to GOD for what we have done in the body. We will then receive as believers either rewards or loss of rewards for those deeds. If unbelievers, then we will suffer stripes of punishment in keeping with the evil we have committed. There is no escape.

As you read these words what are your plans for this day? Are you preparing to take revenge on someone? Are you plotting evil in your heart against someone? Though we might be able to bury such deeds and desires in the depths of the sea we will face the consequences of these things eventually.

If we are to be saved from the penalty of our sins, we must do it now. If we are to receive CHRIST as LORD we must do it now. It will be too late when we stand before GOD in judgment. According to Romans 3, every person who stands before GOD will find the law will leave him speechless. No one will be able to justify his evil deeds when he stands before GOD.

John surely intimates in his letter that if we have not found the place of "**no condemnation... in Christ Jesus,**" our hearts will condemn us. GOD's holiness will overwhelm us because of our sin.

The whole world has been declared guilty in the sight of GOD. We will need someone to plead our cause in the face of judgment. This is the ministry of JESUS CHRIST for all who receive Him. "**There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time**" (I Timothy 2:5, 6). He only is qualified to approach GOD, for He did no sin, neither was guilt found in His mouth. He alone is qualified to plead our cause, because He died for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.

What will we answer in that day with regard to our souls? Do we know the SAVIOUR? As to our manner of life, is it lived for GOD's will or for our own? What are we doing with our gifts? Are we using them for the glory of GOD? Are we leading our families by our lives and by our teaching in a way that honors GOD? Will we hear GOD say to us, "**Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?**" Or are we among those to whom He will have to say, "**I never knew you: depart from me**"?

CHRIST will either be our SAVIOUR or our JUDGE. The choice is ours. This is the day of salvation!

~ end of chapter 8 ~
