

The Puzzles of Job

by

Ord L. Morrow
Associate Radio Minister
Back to the Bible Broadcast

Nebraska Lincoln

~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~

Chapter Three

HOW SHOULD MAN BE JUST WITH GOD?

Job's friend, Bildad, argued that Job's afflictions were due to his sins. Bildad voiced his opinion in this fashion: **"Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? (Bildad knew as did Job that GOD always gives right judgment and justice) If thy children have sinned against him, and he hath cast them away for their transgression; If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; It thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous . . . Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evildoers: Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought"** (Job 8:3-6, 20-22).

In seeking an answer to Bildad's accusation of hypocrisy, Job must have thought back to the days of his worship, as recorded in chapter 1. If the sacrifices that Job offered did not avail, then he might well ask, **"How should man be just with God?"**

Job then looked at the relationship between himself and GOD and faced his own situation honestly and tried to evaluate things properly. According to the third verse of the 9th chapter he realized that a man cannot argue with GOD: **"If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand"** - not one in a thousand could answer Him! Then according to verse 4 Job saw that if men hardened their hearts against GOD: **"He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?"**, they were the losers, for the strength of GOD is far beyond man's comprehension. GOD can remove mountains. He can shake the earth and make its very foundations tremble: **"Which removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger. Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble"** (5-6).

GOD is near but man does not see Him: **"Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not"** (11). He takes away from man and no one can hinder Him. He did this with Job and, as absolute King, He had the right to do so! **"Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?"** (12).

Job does not confine himself to this line of thought. He knows that he cannot argue with GOD and that he is not righteous enough to question the acts of the LORD. Job fell back on the mercy of GOD when He said, **"I would make supplication to my judge"** (v. 15). Look well to this statement, for it contains the key to how any man can have a right relationship with GOD.

Continuing to think on his problem, Job said, **"If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong; and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse"** (9:19-20). He saw that the days of his life were flying by, **"Swifter than a post"** and as the **"swift ships,"** and as the **"eagle that hasteth to the prey."** He can neither forget nor ignore his past, for well he knows that GOD cannot overlook it. He continues his thinking out loud by saying, **"If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment"** (9:30-31).

It is then that the solution to this puzzle is given to Job. He sees there must be someone who can mediate between GOD and man: **"Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me: Then would I speak, and not fear him; but it is not so with me"** (9:33-35). This, then, is the answer to the question, **"How should man be just with God?"** Someone must be found who can **"Lay his hand upon us both."** It must be someone who is at home in the presence of GOD and at the same time is at home among men. It must be someone who is as righteous as GOD, and yet someone who can stand in the presence of GOD as a man. If such a person could be found, then men could speak with GOD and not fear!

Job was not the first nor the last to think on the question of how man can be just with GOD. This is a matter that must have occupied the minds of all men at one time or another. It may not have been expressed in these words, but it was thought of just the same.

It is not popular to think such thoughts out loud today. This is a day of self-worship, so men do not speak as openly on this subject as they may have in other ages, but they think on it nevertheless.

See the dilemma we have created for ourselves trying to act as if there was no problem of sin at all! First of all, we try to convince ourselves that there is no GOD. We say that the world got here by chance and that man got here by being at the right place at the right time, and he, too, is the product of chance and environment. Somehow by the exercise of our own will, we changed from one thing to another, from ants to alligators and from apes to Adam! By this line of reasoning we leave GOD out. He is not needed as CREATOR. Logically then, and of course we want to be logical in all things, there is no sin, no Heaven, no hell, no judgment. As the dog dies, so does a man die and all this matter of justice and concern with what GOD thinks, turns out to be merely old wives' tales. So there is not much to life and there is nothing to death. All that is left is for us to eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. That is all there is to life - so we would like to think.

Still, we are not convinced by our own arguments. Whistling in the dark does not remove reality

from us. We have a conscience and we cannot get rid of it. It is a moral sense, a feeling of right and wrong, something we cannot shake. We look for an answer concerning its source. We find that a conscience can be seared, or wounded until it does not respond as it should, but there is always something of it left.

Then there is GOD's miracle people, the people of the ages, known to us as Israel. Their presence must be accounted for. They cannot be explained away. In fact, they cannot be explained at all without recognizing the hand of GOD in history.

There is also GOD's miracle book, the Bible. In this great volume the prophets spoke of unborn history with the same assurance as if they were sitting at the unfolding scene with pen in hand, writing the events transpiring before them. When they wrote of coming events, they were not right only part of the time, but all of the time.

Then we always come back to the subject of our origin. We are not quite able to make ourselves believe that we came from nowhere, that we are nothing now, and that we are going nowhere to lose forever whatever identity we might have as individuals. There is a tiny suspicion of doubt in all of our hearts on this subject. For most persons it is more than a doubt, it is conviction based upon reason, history and revelation that we are creatures of the Great CREATOR. He is the LORD of Heaven and earth, the One who made the worlds and who upholds all things by the Word of His power. He formed man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

We are not creatures of chance who came into the world for a moment to live, laugh, weep, suffer, beget children and then die, knowing only the divinity of dust! We are here as the creation of GOD, and His desire is to make us His children by faith. We were created for His glory and for His fellowship and for His love!

"I lean upon the garden wall,
And looking on my garden small,
These foolish words I then recall:
Some men contend GOD is naught!
No GOD? In gardens? When the eve is cool?
No GOD to fashion rose and vine?
Ah, this I know, from time to time,
GOD walks in mine!

Another of our difficulties is that if we cannot persuade ourselves that there is no GOD, then we try to mold Him into a GOD that suits our own way of thinking. We want a GOD whom we can manipulate, one who lets us do as we please, one who never crosses us or hinders us in our selfish ways, nor will He judge us in the end. We like to remind ourselves that GOD is good, so good, in fact, that He will not call our lives into question or bring us into judgment for our sin. It follows then that if He is so good, He will not rebuke us for our rebellion or discipline us for our disobedience. We do not object to calling Him "**Lord, Lord**," as long as we do not really make Him LORD.

If this does not work, then we seek to define sin to suit our taste. "Sin is not really sin," we say with our tongue in our cheek, "It is just an unfortunate mistake." We are not really bad, that is, we are not sinners by nature, for what we do that is wrong is merely an error of judgment and nothing more. We can remind GOD that we meant no harm, and if He is the kind of GOD we have conjured in our minds, He will dismiss the whole matter with a smile. He may even give us a sympathetic pat on the head and tell us to forget the whole affair.

But this is not the way things are - and we know it! Our deeds, past and present, betray us. We have warred in our hearts toward our neighbors and toward GOD. The present world situation is a graphic testimony to all of that. We are jealous, our hearts are full of hate, and this leads to murder. We are full of guile, we are lustful, idolatrous, unfaithful, proud, discontented with GOD's ways, covetous, foolish, unthankful, deceitful, unrighteous, wicked, malicious, envious, backbiters, spiteful, boasters and inventors of evil. By nature we have no natural affection and are blasphemers, disobedient, truce breakers, despisers of those that are good!

No, It will not do for us to stand before our record and apologetically say, "I am sorry, I merely made a little mistake, I did not mean it at all." Our excuses will not do. GOD will not accept them. He demands justice, and we know we stand condemned as Job well knew. There is none righteous, no not one. We are guilty. Our mouths are stopped. We must find someone who can lay his hand upon us and upon GOD and find a ground of reconciliation, or we perish. Job knew this: **"Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both"** (9:33), and so do we!

Many thinking men, many well-known men and great men, as we count greatness, have admitted that their accountability to GOD had demanded their serious attention. Faced with the right circumstances, each of us, whether we will admit it or not, has wrestled with the question: **"How should man be just with God?"**

In this question raised by Job there is, first of all, a confession of need. The confession may not be universal, but the need certainly is. This is also the first step toward a solution of our estrangement from GOD. JESUS said, **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."** The lost He speaks of here are the lost who would admit it and seek help. People in His own day He warned: **"You will not come to me, that you might have life."** These would not admit their need. Yet death was everywhere; the wages of sin were in evidence all about them, but these persons would not admit it. This is why our LORD said in another place: **"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."**

This is a day of great tensions. There is frustration no matter where we look. This is a time of great sorrow. There are many people who know that life is short and that sin is in their hearts and all about them. They are weary and tired of this load. They have wept and prayed, but up till now have found no peace. If you are such, take heart, for the admission of your need is the first step to your help.

Job's question is also an admission of a lack. Something has gone wrong in the human race. Something has made it necessary that we re-establish right relationships with GOD. This is a confession of a lack of power in man to right what is wrong. Jeremiah spoke of this when he said, **"it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."** Isaiah pointed out this same truth when

he said, "**All we like sheep have gone astray.**" Job was fully aware of this when he stated that there needed to be a "**daysman**," a "go-between," a "negotiator," "a mediator," someone to plead his cause for him.

Job was no stranger to what had happened in human hearts. He knew the history of rebellion in the human race. This was the reason he was so careful to offer the prescribed sacrifices that GOD demanded in his day. He knew that there was a time when man had stood face to face with GOD. He knew that at one time GOD and man had walked together. Once there was sweet fellowship between the CREATOR and the creature. Once there was a time when man enjoyed listening to the voice of GOD, gloried in His presence and basked in His smile. But Job also knew that rebellion had sprung up in the heart of man and through rebellion, fellowship with GOD had been broken. Sin had entered, and death by sin.

Death was something Job saw before his very eyes. His sheep and their attendants had been burned up. His camels were taken away and his servants slain. His sons and his daughters were dead. He knew from the past history of the flood that the wages of sin is death; but he also knew from the events of the present that the wages of sin were still being gathered. Now he went to the heart of the matter and wanted to know how man can stand before GOD again and know His forgiveness and enjoy His fellowship. He asked, "**How should man be just with God?**"

The Gospel is the answer to Job's question. Paul says it in this fashion: "**Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . . 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. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound: But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Romans 5:12, 18-21).

The "daysman" that Job sought is JESUS CHRIST, the Mediator between man and GOD. As man He shared our sorrows and became acquainted with our grief; as GOD He paid redemption's price for us. He alone can lay His hand upon us as we receive Him and His righteousness and present us faultless before GOD (Jude 24).

Have you been justified before GOD by putting your faith, your confidence, your trust in JESUS CHRIST?

~ end of chapter 3 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
