

SERMON BASED QUESTIONS

THE CHAPEL
GOD SPEAKS
JOB 38-41
11/19/2017

MAIN POINT

We can trust God's wisdom and conclude by faith that He is just.

INTRODUCTION

While in school, were you ever subjected to an exam that you felt was unfair? What was unfair about it?

How did you plead your case with your teacher? Did he or she listen to your arguments? How was the matter resolved?

There are myriad reasons we might find a test of our knowledge unfair. Perhaps we feel we were not given adequate time to study the material, or that the sheer volume of material we were asked to fathom was beyond us. Whatever the reasons, we are often quick to question the justice and authority of those over us when we feel they have acted contrary to their supposed character.

Such is the case with Job and God. Job felt as if God had acted contrary to His nature by allowing suffering and tragedy in his life, though he did nothing directly to deserve it. But as the Book of Job unfolds, it becomes clear that the question is not so much why righteous people suffer, but why should we expect that they should prosper? The book does not offer a reason for suffering and does not try to defend God's justice. It does not answer the "why" question that we are so prone to ask when things go wrong. Instead, this book teaches us to trust God's wisdom and conclude by faith that He is just. This truth is reflected in Job 40:1-14.

UNDERSTANDING

READ JOB 40:1-2.

How did the Lord characterize Job's attitude toward God and the nature of his criticism?

In this passage, three words help us understand how the Lord characterized Job's attitude and the nature of his criticism. The Lord found Job to be contentious in his attempt to somehow correct God in an argumentative way. The issue was not only the absurdity of a human being questioning the God who made him, but also the tone or attitude behind the accusations.

READ JOB 40:3-5.

How did Job respond to the Lord's rebuke? How does Job's response compare and contrast with his initial inquiry of the Lord?

Job moved from haughty to humble. Rather than seeking the Lord to submit to His understanding, Job submitted himself to the Lord's sovereignty. Rather than seeking the Lord to acknowledge his significance as a human being, Job realized just how insignificant he was in the presence of his Creator.

Read Psalm 22, in which David questioned God. How does David's prayer compare and contrast with Job's?

When have you questioned God about your circumstances? Were you more like David or Job?

READ JOB 40:6-14.

What does the Lord accuse Job of doing? How does the Lord address this accusation?

In verse 8, the Lord accused Job not just of failing to understand God's wise ways of governing the universe, but also of seeking to condemn God in order to justify himself. That is, the Lord accused Job of having used God to make his own arguments and beliefs appear to be right. In his complaints, Job impugned God's justice; it is this accusation that God addressed in these coming verses. Yet God did it in a surprising way: rather than defending Himself point by point and explaining His actions, God (with no shortage of irony) challenged Job to put himself in God's shoes and be Lord of all the earth.

When have you recently "reached your limits" with someone or something? That is, when has a person or responsibility pushed you to the edge of your ability to do all the right things?

How much greater is God's responsibility? Does He ever become frustrated or exasperated? Why or why not?

Without understanding the context of the passage, some might read these verses and conclude God had become exasperated at both His responsibilities and Job's questioning. Through the use of irony, God says that the government of the world is harder than Job or anyone else could ever truly grasp.

APPLICATION

Applying this section of the Book of Job is not necessarily as practical or pragmatic as one might like. This is not to say that one cannot apply it, but to recognize that the book causes us to consider more profound theological and philosophical questions such as those below. The application is to trust God's wisdom and conclude by faith that He is just—this is no merely pragmatic thing.

How does this passage (and the Book of Job as a whole) answer the question, "Is God sovereign and just?"

How should one reconcile the justice of God with a world that, although under His control, is

not just?

What can we learn from today's passage about the right ways to think about God and approach Him when we believe we are experiencing injustice?

PRAY

Close in prayer, asking the Lord to give you a submissive and trusting spirit. Pray that you would trust His wisdom and conclude by faith that He is just.

COMMENTARY

JOB 40:1-14

40:1 Except for the phrase about the storm, this verse is identical to 38:1 and follows the formula used through the debate cycle. In those introductory verses, however, none of the friends "answered Job"; they just "replied."

40:2 Eliphaz said of Job in 4:3, "You have instructed many." Now, with the same verb, God asked Job if he intended to "correct" the Almighty.

40:3 The formula is the same as elsewhere with the notable exception that the addressee is "the LORD."

40:4 With a rhetorical question of his own, Job replied that he could not answer any of the questions. In a gesture of submission and surrender he covered his mouth, the same thing the "chief men" did toward him in the good old days Job described in 29:9.

40:5 The $x + 1$ formula was an ancient Hebrew way of saying, "I have spoken once too many times already." What Job had said in 9:9 came back to haunt him and confirm its truth, "Though one wished to dispute with him [God], he could not answer him one time out of a thousand." Job had outtalked Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; but in the presence of God he was dumbfounded, that is, dumb and confounded.

40:8 Phrased this way, Job surely would not have said God was unjust, but in places (e.g., 9:24) he came close to discrediting divine justice. It is also true that in oblique ways Job maintained his innocence, that is, he justified himself but never outrightly condemned God (6:29; 9:20; 13:18; 27:2). Elihu and the other three said that Job justified himself (22:3; 32:2; 35:2).

40:9 Reflecting on chap. 38, where God spoke of his creative might and control of the elements, he asked Job if there were any comparison between their "arms" and their "voices." As usual, without giving Job an opportunity to speak, Yahweh continued, not with questions but with commands.

40:10 Here begins a series of four verses containing ten imperatives, commands to do things that a man might try to do, but only God can do with effectiveness.

40:11 The book of Job has about a dozen references to the wrath of God, a feature that often precedes or accompanies punishment of the wicked. By his withering glance God can "bring low" the "proud" (2 Kgs 8:11; Isa 13:11). Now he asked Job to do the same.

40:12 Except for the synonym "humble," v. 12a is identical to v. 11b. Job had complained that God did not see crime and therefore did nothing about it (12:6; 24:1-12). Now God summoned Job to look for "every proud man" and appropriately "humble him."

40:13 The same root underlies the verb "bury" and the noun "grave" at the beginning and end of this verse. Having discovered, identified, and crushed the proud, Job's task was to "bury them" and "shroud their faces" with grave clothes, a strange command but suitable to the tenor of the theophany, which was to demonstrate to Job that he was not God and could not do what God does. Therefore Job should not presume on God or lay charges at his door.

40:14 The conclusion of this summons was God's willingness to terminate his role as savior and allow Job to save himself. Its intent also was to bring Job to the logical conclusion that the same God who

created and controls the universe is and must be the Savior and Lord. The prospect of having to save yourself ought to be frightening, since the possibility is nil according to other parts of the Bible (Pss 3:8; 62:2 [3]; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5-6).