

Job 42

Conclusion

Tonight we reach the end of our long journey through the book of Job. We have seen the stage being set through a heavenly conflict between God and Satan. We have seen the afflictions of Job and also heard his cries along with the so called instruction and counsel of his friends. Recently we have listened to God speak to Job in response to the mischaracterizations spoken by Job and his three friends. God has set the record straight and tonight we will hear Job's final response and God's final response to Job's three friends and Job himself. What we will see, is the mercy and grace of God on full display leaving us with more encouragement to trust God completely, even in the darkest of days.

I. Job's 3 Confessions

As we enter chapter 42, Job has certainly been put in his place by God. God revealed His power and authority by referencing creation of and control over the natural world that we live in. He alone designed and created the earth as well as controls all the natural process within it. God also spoke of his power and authority within the animal kingdom. One of the greater points that God made was that of His intense care for all things. Something that Job most certainly was incapable of matching.

After a brief respite and Job recognizing his insignificance in the grand scheme of things, God doubled down on his discipline of Job. God pressed on Job to demonstrate his authority if he was indeed capable of essentially doing a better job than God. Job was speechless because he knew God was right. To sum things up, God challenged Job's treatment and respect of God in comparison to that of some of the most fierce creatures God had created. God's major point here was that He alone demanded the utmost respect – something Job had not given Him.

I firmly believe that God wanted Job to understand that He alone was in control – He had a plan in all things – and that He alone could be trusted. "Don't question me – trust me!"

After hearing from God for the last four chapters, Job 42 opens with Job's final response to God. Has Job learned his lesson? It appears he has. What we see specifically is three confessions from Job that we would be wise to share with him.

a. God can do anything

The first confession we get from Job is his recognition that God can do anything and that no plan of His can be thwarted. God spoke of all of the things he managed and yet the extensive list that we read in these last few chapters is but only scratching the surface. God is in control of all things. He alone can do these things and He alone can do anything. As Job most certainly began to compare the things he felt he had accomplished with what God had accomplished, He most assuredly felt microscopically small. Simply put, Job began to understand who God really was. I'm confident that Job had some understanding of this beforehand but he allowed his circumstances to interfere with how he perceived and understood God. In a sense, Job's reality became more important than God's reality and that is a recipe for disaster.

Job also recognized that God's plan was indestructible. Job may have felt as though he had a better idea and yet it was God's plan alone that would be fulfilled. Job couldn't change it nor could anyone else. To think so is but a waste of time. This is where trust and faith come in and this falls perfectly in line with the message we got from God. God declared to Job that He was in control of all things, but even more

important is that God has a purpose for all things and cares for all of His creation. If we can stop to recognize this then we will gain the ability to trust Him. If we fail to recognize this, then we will question.

What Job's confession reveals to us is that a proper understanding of who God is, is crucial to a healthy and productive faith.

b. I spoke ignorantly

The second confession we get from Job has everything to do with an understanding of who he is. Job states, "You asked who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?" This is what God said of/to Job in 38:2 – the beginning of His response to Job. Job's answer to this is "surely I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wondrous for me to know."

What is going on here is quite remarkable. There is a progression to Job's confessions. Job came to a better/more full understanding of who God is and now this has led to a better/more full understanding of who he is! It's as if God has made the comment that I have been trying to speak to you and yet you are filling up the air with nonsense – ignorant nonsense! Job's reply is – you are completely correct. I did speak ignorant nonsense – I thought I knew and yet I have come to realize that I knew/know nothing!

How often can we say the same thing about ourselves? It is so easy for us to feel as though we have it all figured out – that we are so smart and yet all that reveals is a lack of understanding of how remarkable God is. Regardless of how smart/wise you are – how great your iq is – how great your affinity for earning money, respect, or admiration – that is only an extension of who God is – it all came from Him. In comparison, you are insignificant. That is what Job realized.

This confession reveals to us that a proper understanding of who God is naturally produces a proper understanding of who we are.

c. I have seen and heard God and therefore must repent

Job's last confession states, "I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes." Again, I want you to notice the natural progression of these confessions. First, Job comes to an understanding of who God is. Second, Job comes to an understanding of who he is. Now, Job recognizes what the natural consequence of those revelations is – repentance.

Job knew of God. He had heard reports, but this recent period of time – his troubles and now his encounter with God has provided a new experience. Job has experienced God. In his own words, Job declares that "my eyes have seen you." As we mentioned last week with Isaiah's encounter with God, when you see God for who He is, the only appropriate response is repentance and this is exactly what we see from Job. Remember the questions? They don't matter now. All those ideas Job had – his feelings of being mistreated are out the window. Why, because Job knows of God's majesty and his frailty – he is but dust and ashes. He rejects all that he has previously said.

This confession reveals to us that a proper understanding of who God is along with a proper understanding of who we are will necessarily produce humility and repentance.

II. God's Handling of Job's Friends

After Job's repentance, God shifts His attention to Job's three friends but he appears to do so in a very unique way that should capture our attention.

a. Eliphaz the leader

The first thing I think we must notice here is that God directly addresses Eliphaz the Temanite. He declares His anger with not only Eliphaz but also His anger for Bildad and Zophar. It's interesting to me that their two names are not mentioned – they are simply referenced as your two friends. Why would God do this? Doesn't this seem strange? I think there is a lesson here.

If you remember, Eliphaz was the first to speak during each round of speeches that these three men gave. The thought is that Eliphaz was the oldest of the three and therefore he spoke first. It could be this simple but I also think that this recognizes Eliphaz as the de-facto leader of this group of men. It is possible that as the leader, he also influenced the thoughts of these three men. Job 2:11 tells us that when they had heard of Job's situation they met together to go and support Job. Based on God's dealing with these men, I believe it is safe to assume that Eliphaz probably set this meeting up. He was the leader. With the role of leader comes responsibility and that is what we see on display here.

Were Bildad and Zophar responsible for their actions? Absolutely but as the leader, it appears that Eliphaz bore some of that responsibility as well. In 1st Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes that Christ is the head of every man and the man is the head of the woman. In other words, every man is the leader of the home. The wife and child are responsible for their own individual actions but the man bears some of that responsibility as well as his job is to lead well. In James 3:1 we read that teachers will be judged more harshly – they bear more responsibility as a leader. I believe that a similar type of responsibility is seen here with Eliphaz. He was the leader and is being dealt with accordingly.

b. No Elihu?

God tells Eliphaz that he along with Bildad and Zophar have misrepresented God. They have not spoken the truth about Him. That is why God is angry with them. Some of you may be thinking, wasn't there a 4th guy? There is no mention of Elihu here? Why is that?

The logical conclusion is that Elihu didn't misrepresent God. I don't think that we can definitively say that all of Elihu's words were completely spot on but at the end of the day, he did not misrepresent God in order to get his way. God didn't see the words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar that way and therefore He is going to deal with them differently.

c. God's mercy on display

For those who have a basic understanding of the story of Job I think it is easy to recognize these three friends as the so-called "bad guys." They have misrepresented God and He isn't happy about it. However, I think it is also easy for us to forget about how God chose to deal with them.

God told these men, "Now take seven bull and seven rams, go to my servant Job, and offer a burnt offering for yourselves. Then my servant Job will pray for you. I will surely accept his prayer and not deal with you as your folly deserves."

How many of you have ever been misrepresented? As a coach, I have had that happen routinely. It isn't fun and if you are honest, when you are misrepresented you likely don't have a lot of positive thoughts about the one who is misrepresenting you. That is the situation that God finds Himself in here and yet He deals with it differently.

Certainly God could have simply snapped his fingers and rid the earth of these three men and yet he didn't. Instead, He put on display is mercy and forgiveness. There was responsibility on the part of these three men but if they would display obedience and sincerity, God was willing to forgive them for their folly. It is easy for us to look down upon these three men but the reality is that often we are in the same situation that they are in this passage – guilty of folly against the Lord and yet God is faithful to offer mercy and forgiveness if we will repent and be obedient to Him. May we never forget this attribute of God!

III. One Final Glimpse of a Mediator

What follows next is interesting as God tells these three men that Job will pray on their behalf. It is because of this prayer that God “will not deal with these men as their folly deserves.” Why would God do this? I'm not sure that we can answer this question with certainty but I do believe the following:

What we see here is a parallel to the gospel. By praying on behalf of these three men, Job is serving in the highest priestly function possible. This appears to be a foreshadowing or a type of what is to come in Christ. Job is serving as a mediator just as Christ has done on our behalf.

What is insinuated in this passage is that these three men, on their own, would not have been able to obtain forgiveness from God. In a similar fashion, we cannot obtain forgiveness by our own merit. There is nothing we can do to obtain salvation – only Christ can attain that on our behalf just as Job could only do for these three men.

Also, in order to receive this forgiveness, these three men were required to be obedient. There was only one way to receive God's forgiveness and that was to offer up the sacrifices that God required of them. Only then would Job pray on their behalf and would God offer his forgiveness. In a similar fashion, John 14:6 declares that Christ is the only way to salvation. He is THE way. In order to obtain salvation we must be obedient to follow Him.

God is full of grace and mercy but requirements are present – what we see in this passage is a glimpse of the gospel to come. We cannot come to God or obtain His forgiveness on our own terms – we must agree to His.

IV. Job's Restoration

As we close the book, we see the restoration of Job. The same thing that applied to his three friends also applies to Job as well. Before this restoration came about, Job had to be obedient. He prayed for his three friends which I believe demonstrates true forgiveness, he harbored no ill will against them but instead was able to forgive them and lift them up before God.

This may seem like a difficult concept to grasp, especially with very difficult situations in our life. It can be difficult to forgive but we must always remember that God set the standard for us to follow. He did so with Job and his three friends and we also see it in the example of Christ. I know who I am and if you are honest with yourself, you know who you are. Even so, Christ was willing to lay down His life for us in

order that our slate would be wiped clean. He harbors no ill will but openly welcomes us in. He sets the standard. He asks nothing of us that He is not willing to do Himself.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

We see this lived out in Job

a. Relationships

The first thing we see restored in Job's life is his relationships. All those who had turned their backs on him have now returned to him. They sympathized with him and comforted him. They were not with Job when he needed them most but now they have returned and it is interesting to note that Job does not hold a grudge but welcomes back these relationships. Perhaps, God brought about the loss of these relationships so Job would not rely on man but only rely on Him.

I also believe that there is an important nugget of truth in this account. These individuals comforted Job concerning all the adversity the Lord had brought on him. Don't glance over that. If you walked down the street and asked individuals who brought calamity upon Job I believe many would say Satan but that is not the truth. All of Job's difficulty came from God. He is the one who orchestrated it. That is a difficult concept to understand and admittedly we don't want to understand it or come to grips with it. Why would God do such things? The truth is that we don't always have the answer to that question but the main point of this book is that we as followers of the one true God are called to trust Him in all circumstances. That was one of the key points of His conversation with Job. He alone is in control and it is He alone that we are to place our trust in.

b. Property

Next, God restored Job's property and possessions. In fact, He not only restored them but doubled them. Job had these things prior to losing them and now God doubles them. I think it is important for us to not automatically link Job's repentance and obedience with this blessing from God.

Does God want our obedience? YES

Does God demand our repentance? YES

But nowhere do we see that as a result of those, we will be blessed materially on this earth. That isn't the point here. The point is two-fold.

1. We will be blessed beyond measure eternally if we do these things.
2. God is gracious and desires to bless His people.

That is the point. As much as I love math and logical things this isn't a math problem. So many times, we want it to be that simple. If I do A, then God will do/bless me with B. That isn't how God works but we can be comforted and encouraged with the fact that God is gracious and does desire to bless those who are faithful to Him.

c. Children

The last thing we see is the restoration of Job's children. How heartbreaking it must have been for Job to lose his seven sons and three daughters. Losing a child is a difficult loss that cannot be understood by those who have not experienced it and Job experienced the loss of 10 children. We read here that God provides Job with seven more sons and three more daughters. There is no doubt in my mind that these children could not replace the ones Job had lost but they were most certainly a blessing to Job's life. In this account I also think there are two hidden nuggets for us as well.

1. Note that Job's daughters are mentioned by name as well as provided an inheritance. This goes against the cultural norm. Women were considered insignificant and yet we read of their names here. Also, the male heirs typically received the inheritance and female heirs were often reliant/the beneficiary of their husband's inheritance – not their father's. What does this tell us? That God blessed Job exponentially! He had plenty of inheritance to pass down – even to his daughters and that Job's name was so great that his daughters were important. This is how good God is!
2. I believe that Job's inheritance of seven more sons and three more daughters is a reminder of eternal life with our creator. If you remember, this is a question that Job had during this trial. Is there life after death? In addition, Job was blessed with double of everything with the exception of his children. Why? We can only speculate but I believe this points to the reality that Job did not lose his original children completely – they were in the presence of God and Job would one day be reunited with them.

Job's life appears to have been extended double as well. We read he lived 140 years after this which leads me to believe that he was possibly 70 at the time of his trial. He got to experience his children, grand-children, and great-grandchildren before his death. His life was blessed because God is good.

Job was a righteous man, so why do bad things happen to good people? That is the question many ask and connect with this book but to do so is to ask the wrong question. That isn't the point of Job. The point is that God is in complete control. He is in control of the good and the bad. We will not understand much of how God operates but we have been provided enough information to know that God acts with a purpose and is gracious and merciful. We are not called to understand, we are called to trust. That is the point of the book. God can be trusted with our lives.

Practical Application

1. Do our actions reveal an appropriate and accurate knowledge of God?
2. The company you keep matters!
3. Obedience and Forgiveness matter!
4. Not all suffering is punishment
5. TRUST