

The Made-for-Man Version of Wisdom

Job 28:1 – 28

Nutshell: Trials are the matrix of life. How I respond to trials = who I am/ who I'm being molded into. Wisdom is the battlefield for winning or losing in my response to trials. Job conceded the battle.

To be Learned: Wisdom cannot be reduced to avoiding wrongdoing, though that is basic to it. God's wisdom cannot be of a kind unrelatable to our wisdom. It must be consistent with ours, accessible, and fully useful.

Review

I. Job is the ABCs, or kindergarten, of the Bible. It lays out the **basics** of the God-man relationship. Yet it's a kindergarten where you come out with a Ph.D.

II. The Story so far

- A. God told Satan that Job was THE best, 1:8
 - 1. Satan objected: "Only for blessings," 1:10
 - 2. God said Satan could take them away, 1:12
 - 3. Job lost all children and possessions, 1:13-19
 - 4. But he worshiped without protest, 1:20-21
- B. God bragged on Job again, 2:3
 - 1. Satan objected, "Skin for skin," 2:4-5
 - 2. God said Satan could touch him, 2:6
 - 3. Satan gave Job agonizing boils, 2:7-9; 30:18,30
 - 4. Job still didn't sin, 2:10

Kid-speak: God bragged about how good Job was, but did Job know that? Nope. So could God be bragging about you right now? Yes, if you love the truth and follow Jesus.

- C. After 7 days, Job cursed his birth, 3:1-26.
- D. Most of Job is an argument cycle, chaps. 4-31.

Argument Cycle 1

- 1. Eliphaz trusted *personal revelation*, 4:12,
 - 2. Bildad trusted *tradition*, 8:8,
 - 3. Zophar trusted *mystery*, 11:7
 - 4. *Each man had a deficient view of God, 42:7*
 - 5. Job answered each one: chs. 4-14
- E. They increasingly hinted that only sin could have brought on these afflictions

F. **Job has increasingly accepted that premise**

- 1. Thus, he begins accusing God for wrongful punishment, 40:8; 9:15; 10:2-7.
- 2. *What Satan couldn't do, the friends did!* Consider your power as a friend.

Argument Cycle 2

- G. The 3 friends speak again. Job answers each one, six more speeches, chaps. 15-21

Argument Cycle 3

- H. One last cycle, minus Zophar, 22-25
- I. Finally, Job insists on his uprightness, **26-31**
 - ↓ The 3 friends bluffed no confession of sin, 32:1
- J. Enter the human hero of the book (a type of Christ: truth incarnate), **Elihu**, ch 32-37
 - 1. God corrects Job, 38:2; 40:2, 8, and his 3 other friends, 42:7, but never Elihu
 - 2. God agreed with Elihu, 32:2; 40:8
 - 3. Elihu's *last* speech, chap 37, becomes God's *whole* speech: Creation, 38-41. God tag-teamed w/ Elihu.
- K. Job will *sulk* in 40:4-5, then *repent* in 42:1-6

Theme of Job: How can *I* be right in God's eyes (justification) if **He** is not right in my eyes (sanctification)?

III. Themes in Job:

- A. God's sovereignty: the main lesson Job learned: God is in charge, Job 42:2
- B. God's righteousness. His *sovereignty* ↑ is not arbitrary.
- C. The necessity of Trials, Ps 119:67, 71. Trials show me my fallen nature. Better trust God.
- D. Death. We live near death. Job had a clear preview. Also = preview of the Cross.
- E. God's faithfulness. He didn't quit until Job was restored.
- F. God's justice is what Job mainly argued vs.; but God *does* begin to requite the wicked here on earth, Job, 34:10, 20

IV. Argument Cycle Recap, chaps 3-31

- Chap 3, Job curses his birth
- Ch 4-5, **Eliphaz**: make things right with God
- Ch 6-7, **Job**: My *pain* is talking. "God, hear me."
- Ch 8, **Bildad**: only the wicked get swept away
- Ch 9-10, **Job**: God deserted me. "Why, God?"
- Ch 11, **Zophar**: God is *unfathomable*
- Ch 12-14, **Job**: God lets the wicked rule. "God,

I won't regrow if you chop me down."

- ↑ 1. Job thought God was tired of his collected sins. Job awaited the *afterlife* for God's favor to resume, Job 14:14-17.
- 2. ↑ The only way Job could put it together
- Ch 15, **Eliphaz**: You're just another failed sinner
- Ch 16-17, **Job**: "God, You plucked me." My Witness is in Heaven. "You blinded them."
- Ch 18, **Bildad**: The wicked (= Job) are consumed
- Ch 19, **Job**: Earth will tell my injustice, yet I know I'll rise and see Messiah (No prayer)
- Ch 20, **Zophar**: The wicked only *seem* sturdy
- Ch 21, **Job**: God *doesn't* judge bad men (~~Prayer~~)
- Ch 22, **Eliphaz**: You cheated of the poor. (!) But repent and you'll be fully restored.
- Ch 23, **Job**: God has changed course. (~~Prayer~~)
- Ch 24, **Job**: God *helps* the wicked hurt the poor
- Ch 25, **Bildad**: Man (Job) can't be righteous before God. (Prayer ↓)
- Ch 26, **Job**: We don't grasp most of God's works.
- Ch 27, **Job**: He repays the wicked *unlike* my case.

Kid-speak: Job and his 3 friends are arguing and arguing! What are they arguing about? Whether Job had done anything bad to make God mad.

V. Job's Final Response to the Three Friends, chapters 26 – 31.

- A. Job has now begun a lengthy speech, defending his integrity, chaps. 26-31.
 - 1. The 3 friends counted on bluffing him into confessing the grave sin/ sins that had supposedly invited God's anger. Job's final defense will slam the door on that, insisting thoroughly on his own righteousness.
 - 2. Job has recklessly traded away God's goodness. God cannot be good if He is unjust, but Job has plainly accused God of acting unjustly, 19:6-7; 23:7-8; 27:2; 40:8.
- B. What Job says in this long, six-chapter 'closing argument':
 - 1. Chap 26, God's perspective is much wider than ours. Ya'll have framed that idea to allow God to be inconsistent in my case, but God's inscrutability actually defangs all your fine arguments, Bildad.
 - 2. Chap 27, God's real judgment of wicked men follows a different pattern than the 3 friends have portrayed. God's *genuine* judgment of the wicked *doesn't* fit Job's case, then.

3. Chap 28, God's wisdom is inscrutable to us. The *version* of wisdom He gives us is to simply respect Him and avoid what He forbids. (Compare "the beginning of wisdom," Prov 9:10.)
 4. Chap 29, I wish it were like before, when my fear of God allowed me to do good to all, being honored by all!
 5. Chap 30, But now I am despised even by the despised of the land. Now they come at me. God, You've become cruel, casting me to the wind. Like the rest of the abandoned afflicted, I'm ignored, even by them, though I helped so many of them.
 6. Chap 31, I'm fully willing to bear a punishment befitting any crimes I've done. But here's my life's record. It's comprehensive, and it only vindicates me.
- C. Chapter 28 makes the wisdom necessary to understand Job's case inaccessible. He claims to have already done all that our version of wisdom requires of him.

Kid-speak: What does Job say in his last answer to his 3 friends? That he hadn't done Anything wrong. But what *should* he be saying? That God hadn't done anything wrong.

VI. Interpretive Approaches

- A. The current popular approach to Job sees chap 28 as the center of the book.
 1. You can find any number of them as chiasms online (book of Job, chiasm).
 2. They have commendable features, but they are not based on a sound understanding of the book. Mainly, they fail to see Elihu as the human hero of the book.
- B. Crucially, chap 28 as the book's center overlooks the fact that Job is in the midst of a heated disagreement with God.
 1. He still holds God as God, but with an inscrutable scale of justice when doling out affliction. Now Job sees God letting the wicked get away with it.
 2. The current approaches see chap 28 as one of Job's sane moments, probably his sanest until the end.
 3. As we will see, it is brilliant, as all his speeches are, but it is still crafted to justify him, the tone that has slowly taken over his argumentation.
- C. Two of my own chiasms of Job:
 - A. Blameless Job is God's 'conversation piece', 1:1-8
 - B. Satan gains permission to sift Job, 1:9- ch 2
 - C. Job holds fast his integrity, justifying God
 - D. Job despairs, ch 3
 - E. Job increasingly justifies himself vs. his 3 friends' accusations, ch 4-31
 - F. Elihu corrects Job, ending with an argument from Creation, ch 32-37
 - F'. God corrects Job, continuing with the argument from Creation, ch 38-39
 - E'. Job will not relinquish his right, sulking, 40:3-5
 - D'. God refuses to despair of Job's repentance: two more creatures, 40:6- ch 41
 - C'. Job returns to his integrity, justifying God, 42:1-7
 - B'. Satan is effectively disproven, his 3 (purposeful or not) agents rebuked, 42:7-9
 - A'. Job is once again God's 'conversation piece', 42:8-17

- A. Blameless Job, 1-3
 - B. Job Blames God, 4-31
 - C. Elihu Responds Correctly, 32-27
 - C'. God Continues and Completes Elihu's Response, 38-41
 - B'. Job Blames Self, 42
 - A'. Blameless Job Restored, 42
- } Elihu
and God blame Job

VII. OUTLINE of Job's Argument in Chapter 28

The chapter is fairly easy to outline.

- A. Man has plumbed the hidden depths of the earth, laying claim to great value, v 1-11.
- B. But Wisdom operates on a different plane, inaccessible to us, v 12-22.
- C. God knows Wisdom, including aspects of earth that are beyond us, v 23-27.
- D. The version of wisdom God gives man is to respect Him and do as He says, v 28.

Kid-speak: What does Job say in chapter 28? That man has lots of wisdom, but man still doesn't know why God punishes good people and lets bad people get away with it. Is Job right? Noper.

VIII. What Job Was Getting At

- A. The argument is arranged beautifully.
 - 1. He states what man *can* do, achieve, reach, and acquire. Man is genius, v 1-11.
 - 2. Likewise, the 3 friends have produced many noble gems of sagacity.
 - a. But those principles don't work in this new arena of Job's trial.
 - b. They're trotting out old truisms, ignorant of how unfitting they are for this case.
 - 3. Job introduces wisdom as a commodity wholly outside man's brilliant reach, v 12-22.
 - a. Job puts nails in the coffin by adding aspects of our physical earth that man is clueless about, yet God handles easily, v 23-27.
 - b. That is, we're great at mining but can't even measure the wind, for instance.
 - 4. The coup-de-gras is that God does toss us a bone, v 28.
 - a. He can't share *His* kind of wisdom, where we'd understand Job's trial.
 - b. But He *can* give us the version of wisdom appropriate to our limitations.
 - i. I.e., Respect Him and watch our step.
 - ii. In which, surprise surprise, Job was the unparalleled expert.
- B. Where Job's argument *should* have led.
 - 1. Proverbs and the NT in particular have digested the lessons of Job.
 - a. From there, we perceive the true nature of wisdom in trials.
 - b. The "in trials" part Job has artfully left out in chap 28, though that is the whole silent cathedral in which his arguments really plays out.
 - 2. Jms 1:2-4 indicate that trials are indeed baffling, requiring us to request wisdom from God.
 - ◆ a. Wisdom = "the right approach" or "the right perspective" for the trial. (The quotes give a good general definition for wisdom in general.)

- b. Taking us to the Word. The Word is not native to our thinking. Trials ‘plow’ our brains so the seed of wisdom can finally enter, Jms 1:21.

Kid-speak: When bad things happen to us, what does that help us do better? Hear God’s voice in the Bible, if we’ll look and listen.

- C. Job should have arranged his argument to say, “I’m not sure what God’s design is here...
 1. “... If it’s punishment, He’ll show me my error;
 2. “if it’s not, He’ll either disclose some other angle, OR
 3. “enable me to await further enlightenment;
 - ★ 4. “but I KNOW God can do no unrighteousness.”
 - a. That which should have been the incontrovertible had embarrassingly entered Job’s computations, egged on by the 3 friends.
 - b. The one thing he *couldn’t* overlook, he did.

IX. A Retake on Job 1:1 and 1:8?

- A. Job 28 has made me reconsider God’s initial assessment of Job.
 1. God is clearly proud of Job.
 2. He doesn’t seem to be finding anything deficient in Job.
- B. Yet it seems that Job’s 4-fold description is perfectly composed to exploit an innate weakness...?
 1. ... Job is too much of a rule-follower?
 2. But I don’t think the weakness is in the 4-fold list. It’s in *human nature*.
 3. That is, whatever else we might have added to Job’s description: love of God, wisdom of heart, one who breathed the living aspect of rules- *none* would have been immune from our instinctive self-defense, once penetrated by overwhelming pain.

X. A Comparison of Job 28:28 with Parallel Verses

- A. Job 28:28 says that fearing God IS wisdom.
- B. Whereas, Prov 9:10 and Ps 111:10 say that God’s fear is “the beginning of wisdom.”
 1. Meaning that the fear of God is the *starting place* for wisdom.
 2. Not implying that the fear of God would ever part our company on this path.
 3. But that wisdom has other aspects to *add to* and *complement* the fear of God.
- C. Nor is the wording of Job 28:28 ‘wrong’.
 1. But it must be considered that Job is in the midst of critiquing God, Job 40:8.
 2. He is instead justifying himself, Job 40:8.
 3. Job 28:28, in this context, can be read as *reducing* both wisdom and the fear of God to duty.
 - a. It makes our relationship with God more like a trade: He says, we do.
 - b. Noteworthy (perhaps) that Job has said so much about trade in this chapter.

Kid-speak: If I make everything about keeping God’s rules, is that going to turn out right?

No. But do we have to obey God's rules? Yes, but His rules have to go all the way down into our hearts.

- D. Again, nothing necessarily wrong with the wording of Job 28:28 per se,
 - 1. But compare it with Prov 3:7, which includes both the fear of God and turning from evil,
 - 2. but *begins with* not being wise in your own eyes, the very trap that has ensnared Job.
- E. Remember Jesus' correction of the Jews' misinterpretations of the Law in Matthew 5
 - 1. Which included misquotes, but also included *correctly quoted laws*:
 - a. "You've heard... Don't commit adultery," Matt 5:27.
 - b. It was their *understanding*, or what they *incorrectly* "heard" when Exod 20:14 was quoted that Jesus was correcting.
 - 2. So here, the quote itself is not necessarily the problem.
 - a. Though minus "the beginning of" at least arouses our suspicion.
 - b. And what we know about Job from God's assessment (40:8) confirms it.
- F. What should Job have added to a 'duty-heavy' approach to God's fear?
 - 1. Refusing to accuse God.
 - 2. Don't take the easy bait of human opinion, either agreeing with or countering it.

Kid-speak: If people say, "God must not like you, because bad things keep happening to you," what should we say? Nuh-uh.

- G. There *is* a kind of wisdom only God has, Jude 1:25
 - 1. Wisdom = sight. Only God sees everything.
 - 2. We are clearly to be wise, Col 4:5-6.
 - a. Our wisdom, though not omniscient, is real in that it is consistent with God's.
 - b. But it is crucial to understand that our wisdom will sometimes/ often feel like it must attain (practically) omniscience.
 - c. Hence, the need to understand where God alone is wise- to know when to stop and be content. Resignation.

Vision: Jesus is our wisdom, 1 Cor 1:30.

His response to trials qualified Him to be:

- 1) a righteous Representative for His people;
- 2) an acceptable Stand-in to take their sins.

Our wisdom is to access His sympathy in trials, Heb 2:14-18 and follow His lead in response to trials, 1 Pet 2:20-23, quietly enduring as the environment for God to teach us wisdom.