

Job's Response to God – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Job responds to God's rebuke by admitting the sovereignty of God and repenting
2. aim – To cause us to respond properly to the sovereignty of God in the face of Christ's offering
3. passage – Job 42:1-9

b. outline

1. Job's Repentance (Job 42:1-6)
2. God's Rebuke of Job's Friends (Job 42:7-8)
3. Job's Sacrifice For His Friends (Job 42:9)

c. opening

1. a **review** of the book up to this point
 - a. in **1:1-5**, we are *introduced to Job*, a man who is both wealthy and righteous
 - b. in **1:6-2:10**, we get a glimpse into the *heavenly councils*, two gatherings *by God* of his angelic servants – in *each*, God *proclaims* the nature of Job as righteous before Satan, but grants Satan *permission* to afflict Job
 - c. in **chap. 3**, Job gives an *initial* lament in response to Satan's attack: even having *been born*
 - d. in **chaps. 4-25**, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar attempt to persuade Job that his suffering has been caused *by his own sin* – **i.e.** if he will simply confess before the "deity," his suffering will be abated
 - e. in **chaps. 26-31**, Job makes his *final* appeal, *again* asserting his own righteousness, recognizing that his "friends" advice has *ultimately* been unhelpful *and even wrong in the face of what is known*
 - f. in **chaps. 32-37**, Elihu enters into the conversation, suggesting that Job's quest for "answers" (and his own protestations of innocence) are *misplaced*, turning his attention *to God* as the point
 - g. in **chaps. 38-41**, God gives the final speech, focusing on his sovereignty over all things
 1. he confronts Job for *impugning* his *morality* and *authority* – Job is rebuked by God for "elevating" himself to the status of "god"
 2. **e.g.** the use by God of Behemoth and Leviathan as examples demonstrates the *puniness* of Job, who cannot control *anything*, much less the forces of good or evil in the world
 - h. **summary:** Job is afflicted by God (through Satan) to demonstrate an *eternal* purpose, and Job has *missed the point of it*: the sovereign God is free, according to his *holy* eternal decree, to do with men *as he pleases*, to glorify himself – **man must respond to this properly ...**
 1. **i.e.** not a "theoretical" doctrine, but one of *immense personal value and foundational to life*
2. the **response** of Job to the speech of God
 - a. like the speeches by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, Job *will* respond to God (as he must *surely* do so) – God's questioning *demand*s an *answer* from him (**as will become apparent**)
 1. Job's response is a *part of the point of this book*: just as the speech of God gives us the "why" to this book (**i.e.** that God is sovereign, men are not), Job's response gives us **the proper way to respond to the sovereignty of God in everyday life**
 - b. **IMO:** the response of Job *also includes* the response that Job **must give for his friends**, and *their* understanding of God (**i.e. vv. 7-9**)
 1. **IOW:** Job will respond *for himself*, then Job will respond *for his friends*
 2. the rebuke by God of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar *purposes* a response **by Job**, which is *part-and-parcel* of the overall point being made by God in the book (**see next week**)

I. Job's Repentance (Job 42:1-6)

Content

a. Job's confession (vv. 1-5)

1. **axiom: v. 2** represents the *fundamental lesson* that all men must come to in reading this book
 - a. **read 42:1-2:** Job makes his *fundamental confession of faith*
 1. note the similarity of this confession to Nebuchadnezzar in **Daniel 4:35**
"... all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and [God] does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'"
 - b. the *humble confession* that God can do "*all things*" (anything he desires) *and* that no purpose within those actions "*can be thwarted*" (nor questioned)

1. **i.e.** God is *utterly free* to act **as he wills**, and nothing in the Created Order can “change” or “prevent” him from doing *exactly as he has purposed*
- c. **reverse:** all things in time and space occur according to God’s purposes and plans – the universe is ordered, the history of man is fixed, and the destiny of individuals is determined by God alone
 1. the sovereignty of God must “swing both ways” – not only can God *do what he wants*, but he also (by definition) **determines all that comes to pass** (according to what he wants)
- d. **thus:** it is *contrary* to this confession to suggest that God “limits” his sovereignty in order for men to have “free will” – to “assert” that God’s purposes are *in any way* “contingent” upon the free will choices or actions of men *absolutely violates this confession*
 1. **e.g.** this would be similar to saying that God cannot lie (**Hebrews 6:18**), but *chooses* to lie at times in order for something “outside” of himself to have preeminence
 2. **e.g.** if something is *perfect*, it cannot have *imperfections* – if God is *sovereign*, he cannot “limit” his sovereignty (otherwise, he’s not sovereign!)
 3. **compatibilism** = the teaching that God’s freedom to determine all things is *utterly compatible* with his choice to create us as free creatures
 - a. the infinite, *all-powerful* God purposed that the free choices of men would always be consistent with his sovereign actions, without making men “slaves” or “puppets” to his will
 - b. **i.e.** we are *definitely* free to choose, according to *our* nature, “inside” God’s sovereign decree to accomplish all that he wills (Job *chose* to speak as he did)
 - c. **e.g.** Peter’s declaration in **Acts 2:23**: Jesus was crucified “*according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God*” *by* the “*hands of lawless men*” (**i.e.** Pilate)
- e. Job has come to realize that his suffering was **for whatever reason God had purposed it**
 1. he now understands that suffering (his or any other) *has purpose*, even though *he* (or we!) may not *know what that purpose is* (per se)
 2. **i.e.** just because we have no “reason” given to us for our circumstances *does not negate* that God is sovereign – it does not negate that he is *free to decree (and act) as he wills*
 3. the same is true for our *spiritual reality*: God *purposes* who will receive his grace in order to be saved – he *does not* “lavish” grace *only by virtue of responding to men’s choices* (**John 1:11f**)
“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
 - a. to assert that we are “born” of our *own free choice* (**i.e.** our name is written in the Book of Life *when* God “sees us” respond to him) is to *negate* this confession
 - b. the sovereignty of God extends *even* to our choices of *him* – it is the *sovereign purpose* of God that determines both the *extent* and *specificity* of those who come to Christ
 - c. **i.e. Romans 11:36** – “*all things*” are *from* him, *through* him, and *to* him (**to his glory**)
2. **confession: vv. 3-4** each begins with Job *quoting* God back and then *replying* to the question posed
 - a. **read 42:3-5**: Job responds to God’s two (2) *primary questions*
 1. **note:** the ESV puts single-quote marks around these quotations within Job’s words to mark them out as Job *repeating back* to God *his own words* (**IMO: rightly so**)
 - b. “*Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?*” (**v. 3 cf. 38:2**) = who is it that comes to me with *little (or no) knowledge* and confronts me as to *his own understanding of things?*
 1. **i.e.** the *first* question of God to Job: what *finite creature* comes to me, an *infinite God*, and dares to cast doubt upon the *morality* of my actions?
 2. **Job replies:** “*I have uttered what I did not understand*” (**i.e.** things “*too wonderful for me*” = higher than my *puny little brain* can comprehend; **v. 3b**)
 3. **LOW:** I was *wrong* to assume that I could understand *why* things went as they did – I was wrong to assert that *my opinions* ought to dictate the course of (even!) *my own life*
 - a. **i.e.** why you (O God) *purposed* (**not just allowed!**) Satan to destroy my life *is truly beyond my ability to grasp*, and *certainly* beyond my *authority to dictate*
 4. **suggestion:** instead of *impugning* the character of God in always asking “why”, maybe we would be better off (instead!) to simply *trust* that *God knows what he’s doing*
 - a. **e.g.** instead of praying for *relief*, maybe we would be better off to pray for *greater strength*
 - b. **i.e.** if God has purposed for us to suffer in some way, then wouldn’t it be better to *recognize* that this is good (from God’s perspective), and seek to *glorify him through it* (**Boice**)
 - c. “*Hear, and I will speak, I will question you ...*” (**v. 4 cf. 38:3, 40:7**) = “*gird your loins*” and stand before me; demonstrate your *ignorance* and *powerlessness* by the fact *that you can’t answer me*
 1. **i.e.** the second (implied) question of God to Job: do you claim to understand *what is not understandable* (to you!), casting doubt upon the *power* of my decrees and purposes?
 2. **Job replies:** “*I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you*” (**i.e.** now I *truly get it*; what I only understood “vaguely” before, I now understand *completely*; **v. 5**)

3. **LOW:** I had “some” knowledge of who you are (**i.e.** by what I *heard*), but now I fully see
 - a. **note:** the “opening” of the eyes is a **metaphor** for coming to understand *fully* something only *vaguely* “heard of” in the past (**e.g. Luke 10:22-24**)
“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Then turning to the disciples he said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”
 - b. **e.g.** the disciples of Jesus were able to grasp truths (by virtue of Christ’s teaching) that the prophets of old never fully grasped – **i.e.** the disciples “saw” the fulfillment of the prophecies
 - c. Job now “sees” what he could not see before: God had a *purpose* in his suffering
 1. **note:** *if* Job himself is the author of this book, then it is under this statement that the heavenly councils are revealed by God to Job later (**i.e.** God *shows them* to Job)
4. **suggestion:** instead of *impugning* the character of God in asserting how “smart” we are, maybe we would be better off to *humbly admit* that God knows a “wee bit” more than us?
 - a. **e.g.** instead of building our “reformed faith” upon the depth of our “knowledge”, maybe we would be better to simply humble ourselves and admit that we don’t “know it all”?

b. Job’s repentance (v. 6)

1. **read 42:6:** Job repents by *despising himself*
 - a. **repent** = more than remorse or sorrow, to abhor sin and to *turn away* from such a pattern
“... being by the Holy Spirit made sensible [aware] of the manifold evils of [my] sin, doth [thus], by faith in Christ, humble [myself] for it with 1) godly sorrow, 2) detestation of it [hatred of sin] and self-abhorrence [hating the lingering desire of sin within me], 3) praying for pardon and strength of grace, 4) with a purpose and endeavor, by supplies [the power] of the Spirit, to walk before God unto all well-pleasing [to that which is holy]” (1689, 15:3; divisions/emphasis mine)
 1. a recognition that a certain thought, word, or deed is *sinful* (not just a mistake) – Job had come to recognize that his *assertions about himself and God* were (in fact!) sinful
 2. a proper *response* to such sinfulness in hating the sin and the *sinfulness* in ourselves – Job responds in disgust to his sinful assertions (**see below**)
 - a. he says “*therefore I despise myself*” = I hate *myself* for having said such things
 3. a turning to God, seeking forgiveness and the strength to carry on in holiness – Job is confessing (**see above**), seeking to be forgiven and restored
 4. a *purposeful* endeavor to sin no more *by* putting away everything that leads to such sin – Job will do this (**IMO**) as a part of his response to his friends (**see below**)
 - b. **contrast:** Job’s friends used their speeches to insinuate that Job just needed to “appease” the deity in order to be restored – offer a “sprinkle” of incense on the altar, and God will be pleased
 1. but ... Job recognizes that *much, much more* is required – God will not be “appeased” by an *offering*; God demands a *wholesale change of attitude* (**Hosea 6:6**)
“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”
2. **so:** Job *admits* that his thinking about God was *wrong*, and he *purposes* to think differently
 - a. **note:** covering oneself in “*dust and ashes*” is an outward “sign” of mourning, an ancient Semitic ritual of demonstrating grief, hatred of something evil, or a general submission or humility
 1. generally, “*dust and ashes*” represented **death itself** (**i.e.** returning to the dust)
 - a. Job sat “*in the ashes*” after Satan struck his flesh (**Job 2:8**)
 - b. Job’s friends “*sprinkled dust on their heads*” when they first encountered him (**Job 2:12**)
 - b. both *were* representative of Job’s grief over his situation – *now* the ashes are representative of Job *changing his attitude and outlook*, symbolizing that **his old way of thinking has died**
 1. baptism in the New Covenant serves the same purpose = I was a sinner (reveling in my sin), but *now* I have *died to that old life and been raised to a new life of holiness*
3. **repenting of our sin is essential to what it means to be a born-again follower of Christ – however, the true Christian turns, not only from specific sins, but from wrong ways of thinking about God and his purposes (Acts 2:38)**