

Job (25): How can man be righteous before God? Hymns 765, I Come by the Blood/Wonderful, 440

I mentioned last week, that chapters 23-24 contain Job's response to the final speech of Eliphaz (in chapter 22). Job basically wrestles with God's sovereign dealings with the righteous (23) and the wicked (24). This then brings us to chapter 25 and the final speech of Bildad (Job's response is found in chapters 26-31).

Bildad's final speech is the shortest of speeches made by Job's friends. It's almost as if they've given up. Thus, chapter 25 is not only the final words of Bildad, but they are really a summary of all that they've said. This is Bildad's (and by inference the other two friends) closing statement. This is how they end the discussion.

This is important because, chapter 25 is not only the shortest speeches of Job's friends, but it's pure truth. Robert Hawker—"This chapter is but short, yet it contains precious truths. It is not at all in re-proof, but only an account of God's holiness, and the uncleanness of all created excellency in His view."

I. God's Sovereignty (vv1-3)

II. Man's Depravity (vv4-6)

III. Observations

I. God's Sovereignty (vv1-3)

1. Bildad basically affirms four things about God: (1) Dominion and fear belong to Him—this means they are His in a unique.
2. Dominion and fear are His—they belong to Him in a way they do not belong to any other created being.
3. By "dominion" is meant "rule or reign" and by "fear" is meant "awe or reverence"—God is the sovereign Ruler who alone should be feared.
4. Ps.99:1-3—"The LORD reigns; let the people tremble! Let them praise Your great and awesome name—He is holy."
5. Jer.10:6-7—"Inasmuch as there is none like You, O LORD (You are great, and Your name is great in might), who would not fear You, O King of the nations?"
6. In other words, because God is majestic, He is worthy of being feared—"dominion and fear belong to Him."
7. (2) He makes peace in His high places—by "high places" can mean in the courts on earth or in heaven.
8. The point is the same—as the sovereign Ruler He provides orderly ruler over all of His kingdom (which includes heaven and earth).
9. John Calvin—"God makes peace in his high places, that is, He holds the bridle of all the things He has created so that with all the changes we see, He still continues to govern and everything comes into line with His will, since He guides everything by His counsel."
10. The Hebrew word rendered "peace" is the familiar word *shalom*—it not only means the absence of conflict but the presence of wellbeing.
11. God grants peace or wellbeing throughout His dominion—He not only governs in an orderly fashion, but He governs hearts.
12. While early rulers can promote peace in an external sense, only God can make or give peace internally.
13. Thus, the concept of peace includes the removal of conflict and the presence of reconciliation in its place.
14. An earthly ruler can end a conflict he may have with another nation—that would in one sense be peace.

15. But he's unable to promote unity—he can cease fighting and end the war, but he's not able to ensure harmony.
16. Thus, the peace that God makes within His dominion not only includes the cessation of war, but the presence of unity.
17. (3) There is no end to His armies—this refers to the armies of angels that He commands in heaven and earth.
18. This is the meaning of the often-used phrase "the LORD of Hosts"—that is, the host of angelic armies.
19. Dam.7:9-10—"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him."
20. This is a vision of Daniel wherein he beheld the LORD seated upon His throne and served by a great multitude.
21. The phrases "a thousand thousands" and "ten thousand times ten thousand" are figurative to mean countless.
22. Matt.26:53—"Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"
23. Again, our Savior is not saying, there's only 12 legions of angels, but there's a massive army at His disposal (there is no end to His armies).
24. (4) His light shines upon all—by "light" is meant one of two things: (a) the physical light that comes from the sun.
25. Matt.5:45—"He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."
26. Joseph Caryl—"As God made the light and gathered it into that great vessel the sun, so He carries it about the world every day. The light of the sun is the messenger of God's care and love to man every morning."
27. (b) The spiritual light that comes from God Himself—it's possible that Bildad is using light more figuratively.
28. Scripture speaks of the light of God's countenance, Ps.4:6—"LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us."
29. The word for "countenance" is "face"—thus, this phrase could be rendered "lift up the light of Your face upon us."
30. It simply means—May God look upon us with favor and blessing—May His goodness shine upon us.
31. And so, just as the light from the sun brings blessing, so the light of God's face brings even better blessings.
32. Or perhaps we could say—the physical that shines upon all men, is an expression of the light of His face.
33. For if you remember, that fact that God causes His sun and rain to fall upon the righteous and wicked, is an example for us to love our enemies.
34. Thus, just as the physical shines upon all men, so God bestows a measure of blessing upon the whole world.
35. John Calvin—"When Bildad then says that God's light shines on everyone, he is explaining that God pours out His blessings on His creatures in such a way that some spark of His goodness and wisdom is seen everywhere even though it is restricted especially to men."

II. Man's Depravity (vv4-6)

1. Verses 4-6 turn the focus from God to man—having asserted the power, majesty, and goodness of God, he now describes the depravity and impurity of man.
2. Let me remind you that by depravity is meant "moral corruption or wickedness"—man is morally depraved (Bildad states and then illustrates man's depravity).
3. (1) Man's depravity stated, v4—"How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?"
4. (a) It's universal—"How then can man be righteous before God?"—by man he means mankind as a whole.
5. The Hebrew word rendered "be righteous" (NKJV) and "be justified" (KJV) can mean either "righteous" or "just."
6. It refers to a person who is both guiltless and righteous—negatively they are without sin and positively they are righteousness.
7. It's for this reason the KJV renders the phrase "be justified with God"—be in a right relation with God.
8. For man to be justified or in right relation to God two things are necessary—he not only must be guiltless but righteous.
9. Thus, regardless where we look—if we go back in time or we examine every country, there's not a single man who can be righteous before God.
10. Rom.3:10—"There is none righteous, no, not one"—regardless of generation or ethnicity—all are unrighteous.
11. (b) It's native—"Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?"—this is why mankind is universally depraved.
12. In other words, not only is every man depraved (without exception) but every man is natively depraved (from birth).
13. "How can he be pure who is born of a woman"—every person born of a woman is born unrighteous and impure.
14. Job 14:4—"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!"—depravity comes through natural generation.
15. This means, we are conceived as sinners in the womb of our mother, and thus, are born as native sinners.
16. To say, every man born of a woman is born depraved means—depravity is native to every single person.
17. This brings us face to face with the doctrine of original sin, which if you recall means, every man is born originally a sinner.
18. Original sin has two parts to it—there's original guilt and original depravity—and the latter is the result of the former.
19. That is, because the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to us at conception, moral depravity is imparted to us as a punishment.
20. This is why all men are born corrupt—we are born corrupt as a consequence to the guilt we inherit from Adam.
21. (2) Man's depravity illustrated—having stated man's depravity, Bildad then illustrates it in two ways.
22. (a) From the moon and stars, v5—"If even the moon does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight."
23. The point being—in comparison to God's blazing purity, the sun, moon, and stars, are dull and gloomy.
24. Thus, when he says "the moon does not shine" he's not denying that it shines, but what is the moon (and the sun it reflects) in comparison to God.

25. And when he says "the stars are not pure in His sight" he means—"the stars are nothing to the purity of God.
26. Our sun is but a medium sized star, and it's been suggested some stars are thousands of times larger than our sun.
27. But what is the largest star, or else all the stars combined, to the moral purity and brightness of God Himself.
28. Jas.1:17—"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."
29. 1Jn.1:5—"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all"—He is essentially, eternally, and immutably pure.
30. (b) From maggots and worms, v6—"How much less man, who is a maggot, and a son of man, who is a worm?"
31. Here Bildad is not suggesting that men are literally maggots or worms, but he's merely making a comparison.
32. The compassion is twofold: first, like maggots and worms, man is lowly and needy; a worm is small and insignificant.
33. If the stars are nothing to God, how much less man, who is a maggot, and a son of man, who is a worm.
34. Second, like maggots man is unclean and filthy; just as they are offensive to us, we are offensive to God.
35. Again, if the moon and stars are not bright or pure in God's sight, how much less man, who is a maggot.

III. Observations

1. Before I come to some broader observations, I need to first point out the specific purpose or point of Bildad.
2. I fully admit it was not Bildad's intention to merely give us a clear description of God's sovereignty and man's depravity.
3. Bildad had more sinister purposes—remember, this is the final statement of Job's three confused friends.
4. Their basic premise throughout their speeches is that Job deserved to suffer because he was a secret sinner.
5. And to the extent that Job defended himself, they viewed that as the expression of a self-righteous person.
6. This is Bildad's basic point in chapter 25—"Job, you continue to excuse yourself as innocent and righteous. But you're no more righteous before God as a maggot or worm!"
7. And yet, as we view this chapter with a wider lens, we realize it contains several broader observations.
8. (1) All men are under God's dominion and owe Him fear—Scripture often uses the term fear for all piety (and by piety is meant heart-devotion).
9. Thus, to rightly fear God is to love Him, trust Him, adore Him, honor Him, obey Him, and rejoice in Him.
10. "Dominion and fear belong to Him"—or put another way, we should fear Him because dominion is His.
11. Now, historically, distinction is made between God's "kingdom of power" and His "kingdom of grace."
12. His kingdom of power is over all of His enemies—this includes Satan, the demons, those in hell and on earth.

13. His kingdom of grace is over all of His people—this includes the good angels, those in heaven and on earth.
14. Thus, in this way every creature is under God's dominion—He rules and reigns over every person (though He does not rule over every person alike).
15. Those ruled in His kingdom of power are ruled against their wills—they continue to fight against Him.
16. Those ruled in His kingdom of grace are ruled willingly—they bow before Him as loyal subjects (citizens).
17. Thus, the reasons listed in vv2-3 are reasons for both saints and sinners to fear God (yet, I want to focus primarily on sinners).
18. (a) All men, saints and sinners should fear God because of His peace—that is, God alone gives peace.
19. Scripture refers to Him as "the God of peace" (Rom.15:33), as peace belongs to Him—He alone gives it.
20. He makes peace between Himself and sinners; between different kinds of sinners; and to the sinner himself.
21. There are three hostilities that the gospel remedies—hostility between God and man, man and man, and man himself.
22. Eph.2:14—"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation."
23. By "middle wall of separation" is meant the wall that separated Jews and Gentiles in the courts of the temple.
24. To say there was hostility between Jews and Gentiles would be an understatement—they hated each other.
25. But God has abolished this in Christ, v16—"that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity."
26. That is, the enmity that existed between God and sinners, and the enmity that existed between sinners.
27. But how does the gospel reconcile sinners? Well, it gives a new heart that loves God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.
28. (b) All men, saints and sinners should fear God because of His power—He is a mighty King with a vast army.
29. How foolish is native man, who continues his warfare against God, refusing to bow to Him in humble submission.
30. What are you in comparison to God but a maggot or worm—can a worm defeat a man (then how much less God)?
31. (c) All men, saints and sinners should fear God because of His provision—His light falls upon all men.
32. Lk.6:35—"But love your enemies and do good, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil."
33. Just as we are told to do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal.6:10), so God does good to all men, especially His own people.
34. We could say, while His light rises upon all men (without exception), it especially rises upon His people.
35. Remember what I earlier said—all men are under the dominion of God—you live within His kingdom.
36. And every lawful thing you enjoy comes from His hands—His light shines upon every single citizen.

37. Do you have mental faculties? They came from God. Do you have health? It came from God. Do you have family. They came from God. Do you have friends? They came from God. Do you talents or abilities? They too came from God.
38. Every ray of sunshine and every drop of rain comes from God, and is an expression of His benevolent rule.
39. (2) All men are by nature unrighteous and impure sinners—this is the clear testimony of Scripture (as well as our experience).
40. (a) This should humble us—when man seeks to elevate himself, we simply needs to remember this passage.
41. What am I by nature, but a worm or maggot in comparison to God—I have no reason to exalt myself!
42. (b) This should encourage us—think of this—the King of the universe is concerned with you and I!
43. He's concerned with those who are mere worms in comparison—brethren, this is absolutely amazing.
44. If we are ever tempted to think too highly of ourselves, remember we are but worms, and, if we every grow discouraged, remember He cares.
45. Thus, to summarize this, the distance between God and man, is both a cause of humility and encouragement.
46. James Durham—"If we have low thoughts of God, we have high thoughts of ourselves, and if we have low thoughts of ourselves, we have high thoughts of God."
47. (3) All men who believe in Christ are righteous before God—there is a way for men to be justified with God.
48. But the only way we can become righteous before God is that someone earns a righteousness for us.
49. But here's the problem—if anyone was to earn a righteousness for us three things must be true of Him.
50. (a) He must be born of a woman—if anyone is going to earn a righteousness for us, He must be a man (this is God's Son became incarnate – 'But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law').
51. (b) He must be born free from sin—this means, He must live a righteous life from beginning to end (this is why He was born of a virgin – He was born from of original sin).
52. (c) He must be born to bear our sin—that is, we not only lack righteousness but possess an unrighteousness (He was 'born under the law').
53. Ps.22:6-8—"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him (Matt.27:43)."
54. Let me clarify—when our Savior refers to Himself as a worm He means—He was viewed as such by sinful men.
55. Thus, our Savior never became a maggot or worm in the way we are—He never became a depraved sinner.
56. And yet, He was not only treated as a worm by sinful men, but He was also treated as a sinner by God.
57. 2Cor.5:21—"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."
58. This means, those who believe on Christ not only have their sins forgiven, but they are given His righteousness.
59. V4—"How then can man be righteous before God?"—he can only be righteous before God in Christ.