

Lesson 76 - CHRIST AND THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION *Job 25*

Job was a sinner saved by God's grace according to God's promise to send a redeemer to save him from his sins (*Job 1:1,8; 19:25-26*). When Satan challenged the Lord concerning Job's faith, the Lord allowed Satan to afflict Job physically. Job suffered greatly.

(Job 25:1) - Job had three friends who came to comfort him - Bildad, Eliphaz, and Zophar. Their assessment was that God would not afflict "good" people but always blessed them with "good" things. Their conclusion was that Job must have committed some great sin to bring this misery upon himself, and he should confess his sin and repent to get God to bless him (*Job 8:5-6*). Their council was totally wrong and brought no comfort to Job who called them "*miserable comforters*" (*Job 16:2*). Job knew he was a sinner, but he maintained his innocence. From their discussions came some of the most profound and important questions that we all, as sinful people, should consider in light of the justice of God.

(Job 25:2-3) - Job and his three friends all agreed that is great and awesome. God is to be feared, and He is the God Who makes peace and establishes order in the heavens. It is not man who rules but God. God is also invincible, and His light shines on all without exception so as to expose good and evil.

(Job. 25:4-5) - God's Word tells us that all people by nature are legally deserving of condemnation and death and spiritually defiled within. So the question of all questions is asked - "*How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?*" This is a matter of God's justice which must be satisfied fully and God's power to give spiritual life and cleanse us within. God is a just God, and He must punish all sinners to whom sin is imputed (charged). God makes Himself known, not only in love, grace, and mercy, but also in justice (*Psalms 9:16*). Later on, the Lord sent a young man named Elihu to Job and his friends. Elihu offers a response to Job that lifts up the Lord, condemns Job's three friends, and rightly confronts Job with the reality of God's justice (*Job 34:10-12*).

Many today do not understand this major issue because they emphasize God's love, grace, and mercy apart from God's justice, holiness, and truth. In *verse 5* Bildad uses the metaphor of creation to show that God is so infinitely just and holy that He cannot deny Himself. Many do not understand that if salvation from sin, true forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life are to be shown by God towards sinners, this must be in accordance with and in honor of His strict justice. God cannot and will not pervert justice in order to save sinners. God IS love, and He IS a God of mercy and grace, but the question above presents us with a mystery that no human being can answer. How can God act according to His strict justice in punishing sinners and yet show love, mercy, and grace towards sinners? How can He be both just and the Justifier of sinners who deserve nothing but His wrath and the punishment of death for their sins? No religion or philosophy of man has even come close to answering this question. The answer comes from the wisdom of God Who is the source of justification, and it is the very heart of the Gospel of God's grace towards His chosen people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

"*Man*" here refers to fallen, sinful, spiritually and depraved man who has no righteousness to recommend himself unto God (*Rom. 3:10-20*). "*Justified*" has to do with being righteous in God's sight. To be "*clean*" is to be "*pure*," i.e. without any defilement of sin so as to be condemned under God's justice. All who are "*born of a woman*" are born into this world as spiritually dead and depraved. By nature, we have no understanding of or desire for the things that glorify God in Christ. We have no righteousness within ourselves, and we cannot make ourselves righteous by our works. If God were to judge any of us by our works, we would all be condemned. We have earned and deserve nothing but eternal death. Job stated this earlier (*Job 9:2-3*). Job stated that if any of us would try to plead our case before God in His court of justice, that for every "*ONE*" argument we present to justify ourselves, God could answer with a "*THOUSAND*" charges against us.

(Job 25:6) - Bildad used the metaphor of two different worms to make a point. (1) *“How much less man, that is a worm?”* “Worm” here refers to a “maggot” which feeds on dead things. It is descriptive of all of us in our sin and depravity with no ability to save ourselves or justify ourselves before God. (2) *“And the son of man, which is a worm?”* “Worm” here refers to a crimson worm from which was derived a red dye used to color materials such as the red color in the priestly robes and in the red color in the curtains of the tabernacle. Whether or not Bildad had this in mind, *“the son of man”* is a messianic title often referring to the sinless humanity of Christ (cf. *Matt. 12:32; 13:37; Luke 12:8; John 1:51*). Looking back on this from our New Covenant perspective, we can see the connection with Christ as God manifest in the flesh for the purpose of His death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. To support this understanding of this passage, consider *Psalm 22:6* which is a messianic psalm describing the sufferings of Christ to redeem His people. He refers to Himself as the crimson worm - *“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”* This crimson worm is a picture of Christ Who humbled Himself and became obedient unto the death of the cross for the sins of His people. This is also stated prophetically in *Isaiah 1:18* - *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson [the crimson worm], they shall be as wool.”*

Here we find the greatest of mysteries solved in a most glorious way. How can a sinful man be justified with God, and how can people who are born spiritually dead and depraved be given life and cleansed within? It is by God’s grace grounded upon the merits of the glorious Person and finished work of redemption accomplished by Christ for God’s chosen people (*Rom. 3:21-26*). Before the foundation of the world, Christ, the Son of God, was made to be the Surety of all whom God chose to save. All of their sins were laid to His account, i.e. imputed to Him, and He willingly agreed to be responsible to pay their sin-debt (*Rom. 8:33-34*). To do so He had to become incarnate and unite Himself to sinless human flesh to shed His blood and die for their sins (*Heb. 2:14-17*). As the sins of His sheep were imputed to Him, His righteousness, the very righteousness of God, has been imputed to them as the only ground of their justification before God (*Rom. 4:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*). All their sins are forgiven, and they are all declared righteous in God’s sight based on Christ’s blood, His righteousness imputed to them. God is both *“A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOR”* (*Isa. 45:21*) through the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s love, grace, and mercy, all reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (*Rom. 5:21*).

Again, how can a just God save sinners in love, mercy, and grace, and still be true to Himself in justice? It is only upon the ground of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. It is based on His righteousness imputed that God justifies His elect, and it is from Christ that He gives spiritual and eternal life. This glorious truth is described as a *“PROPITIATION”* (*Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10*), which means God’s justice satisfied in the blood of Christ. This truth is exclusive to the Gospel of salvation by God’s grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. All other religions teach a false god who must be appeased by something sinners do in order to earn his/her favor and blessings. But the true Gospel of God’s grace is the revelation of the *“righteousness of God”* (*Rom. 1:16-17*), which is a revelation of God’s justice fully satisfied by the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-Giver, and Preserver of His people. And His people are identified by God-given faith that brings them to believe, trust, and rest in Christ as their only righteousness by which God has justified them and from which God gives them spiritual and eternal life (*Rom. 6:17-18; 10:4-10; Gal. 6:14-16; Php. 3:3,7-10*). Their hearts are purified and cleansed by the Spirit’s application of the blood of Christ to their consciences in bringing them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. This does not mean that they are sinlessly perfect within themselves. It does not mean that their works measure up to the perfection of righteousness that can only be found in Christ. But it means that they continually look to Christ and plead His righteousness by faith - *“looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith”* (*Heb. 12:2*).