

The Superiority of Divine Wisdom in the Midst of Pain and Loss

Route 66: Job

I. Introduction

- A. Read Job 1

II. Proposition

A. The book of Job explores the relationship between the sovereign justice of God and the suffering of the righteous.

B. Job's Question is: How can a just God allow the righteous to suffer?

1. Let's see how this question is addressed by our characters.

III. Exposition

A. **Satan: God only blesses the righteous; He does not allow the righteous to suffer.**

1. Satan: The righteous only follow God because God blesses them.

a. Satan believes that if God removes their blessings, then the righteous will curse God – 1:6-11; 13-18.

2. Job defeats Satan's logic – 1:20-22.

B. **Job: God is not fair! How can God allow the righteous to suffer and the wicked to prosper?**

1. Job laments his birth and life (3:1-26).

2. Job struggles with the question of righteous suffering:

a. Repeatedly, Job declares his innocence – 6:24-25; 7:20-21; 9:20-21.

b. Job sees life as unfair – 9:21-31.

1). Job repeatedly wonders why the wicked prosper – 12:3-6; 21:1-34.

2). Job wonders why God is silent – 19:7-12; 23:8-17.

c. THE Question: How can anyone be just/right before God – 9:1-4, 22-31.

d. THE Problem: There is no mediator between God and man – 9:32-35; 17:3-5.

e. Therefore, Job wants a personal audience with God – 13:3-15; 16:18-22.

1). The Lord is sovereign over a man's life – 14:1-12.

2). The sovereign Lord has handed him over to his enemies – 16:11 (16:6-17).

3). It is God who has struck Job – 19:21-22 (19:13-22).

4). Yet, Job knows that His redeemer lives – 19:25 (19:23-29).

5). Job knows that even if he dies, he has eternal life – 19:26-27.

C. **Job's Friends: God does not allow the righteous to suffer; you suffer because you are not righteous.**

1. The reality of righteous suffering is unacceptable to Job's counselors.

a. Their theology: the righteous prosper and the wicked will suffer.

1). This is known as the "retribution principle" (Hill & Walton, 269).

2). Eliphaz's wisdom:

a). You suffer because you have sinned – Job 4:1-11 (see also 4:12).

b). Eliphaz's counsel:

(1). Repent – 5:8

(2). Be glad you're suffering – 5:17-18

(3). They have investigated this case and it is so – 5:27

3). Bildad's wisdom:

a). God does not pervert justice; you must be guilty – 8:1-4.

(1). Retribution principle in reverse logic.

b). Bildad's counsel:

(1). Repent – 8:5-7

- 4). Zophar's wisdom:
 - a). God is unfathomable and knows all – 11:5-7.
 - b). Zophar's counsel:
 - (1). Repent – 11:13-15.
- b. Consequently, Job's friends believe this theology works in reverse order:
 - 1). Those who prosper must be righteous; those who suffer must be wicked.
 - 2). Eliphaz's wisdom:
 - a). It is the wicked who suffer; you're suffering, so you must be wicked – 15:20-35.
 - 3). Bildad's wisdom:
 - a). This is your fault; this is what happens to the wicked – 18:21.
 - 4). Zophar's wisdom:
 - a). The wicked do not prosper; suffering is his portion – 20:29.
- c. Job's friends have no category for righteous suffering.
 - 1). Today this is seen in Rabbi Harold Kushner & the health and wealth gospel.
- d. Since Job's friends have no category for righteous suffering; they proceed to tell him his sins:
 - 1). Eliphaz – 22:5-11

D. Elihu: Though the righteous suffer, the sovereign Lord is just, He does not waste our suffering and He is worthy to be exalted.

1. Elihu's counsel: Job, you are not right, for God is greater than man – 33:12
 - a. Elihu is a righteous man like Job – 33:1-7.
 - b. Job has been wrong about God – 33:8-12.
 - 1). God is not silent; God speaks to us through our suffering – 33:13-18.
 - 2). God does not waste our suffering; He does chasten men with pain on his bed (33:19-28), to bring his soul back from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of life – 33:29-33.
 - a). God uses our suffering to warn us of pride, to remind us of remaining sin, and to turn us away from evil – 36:5-10.
 - b). Another way of saying it – God uses our suffering to rescue us – 36:11-21.
 - c. Elihu pleads with Job to listen to him so that Elihu may justify Job and teach him wisdom – 33:32-33.
 - 1). God cannot do wickedness and does not pervert justice – 34:10-15 (34:10-20).
 - 2). God sees all; the wicked cannot hide – 34:21-30.
 - d. People accuse Job, that he should be tried to the limit – 34:31-37.
 - 1). Elihu answers Job and his friends (35:1-4):
 - a). His friends are no help – 35:5-8.
 - b). God is silent because of the pride of evil men – 35:9-15.
 - c). Job opens his mouth with words without knowledge – 35:16.
 - e. Elihu speaks on God's behalf (theodicy):
 - 1). The Lord God is just, punishing the wicked and delivering the afflicted – 36:1-16.
 - 2). The Lord God is exalted in His power – 36:17-23.
 - a). You cannot say, "You have done wrong" -36:23.
 - 3). You should exalt God's work – 36:24-33.
 - 4). The Lord God is sovereign – 37:1-20 (37:13).
 - 5). The Lord God is worthy of exaltation – 37:21-24.

E. God: Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?

1. "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge" 38:2?
 - a. God tells Job to get ready to take it like a man, for God will now ask him questions – 38:3-41.
2. God asks Job some 72 questions (related to creation theology):

- a. God asks Job, “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty” 40:2?
- b. Job’s brief response: “Behold, I am of small account . . .” 40:3-5.
- c. God asks: “Will you condemn me that you may be justified” 40:6-9.

3. Job 42 – Job, His Friends and God

- a. Job responds to God in humble repentance – 42:1-6.
- b. The Lord rebukes Job’s friends (not Elihu) – 42:7-9.
- c. The Lord restores Job’s fortunes two-fold – 42:10-17.

IV. Conclusion: Closing reflections

A. What are we to think of Satan?

- 1. Satan is God’s Satan – Job 1:12, 2:6
 - a. Greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world – 1 John

B. How are we to comfort one another in the midst of pain and loss?

- 1. How not to – Job’s friends speeches
- 2. How to – Job 2:11-13 (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

C. Where do we find the answers?

- 1. True wisdom lies with God – Job 28:12-28

D. Where do we turn in the midst of pain and loss?

- 1. Since wisdom is with God, we must look to and cling to God in Christ, the only innocent sufferer.
 - a. 1 Peter 3:18
 - b. 1 Timothy 2:5-6

E. How are we to endure in the midst of pain and loss?

- 1. Remember that God does not waste our suffering.
- 2. Therefore, let us not waste our suffering.
 - a. Regardless of our circumstances, we must do right and hold onto righteousness – Job 27:1-4.
 - b. James 1:2-4

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