

Humbled!

May 27, 2018

We've reached the final chapter! Over these next two Sundays we will look at Job 42 in our study of this great book. Today, the focus is on Job's response to Yahweh's speeches. Then, next week we will see in the epilogue how things turned out.

But for today, we focus on that which Job has learned from his direct encounter with God. And in many ways, this could be a template for us. Should we find ourselves in an up close and personal encounter with God, I pretty much guarantee that this reflects how it will turn out for us. Job's perspective here would be our perspective. So, if this is what our perspective would be should we have such an encounter, what does this tell us about our perspective right now? In other words, if this is the result of an enlightening experience for Job, shouldn't His experience enlighten our perspective right now? And that is my point. We would serve ourselves well by taking note of what he says here and use it to formulate our perspective, right now, whatever our circumstances.

Does this make sense? If this is the result of an encounter with God where the person involved has questioned God's character and justice, and if this is in any way typical or patternistic, then perhaps we ought to receive it as the word of God to us and allow it to shape our thinking as well. In this case, we see here that Job's encounter has led him to affirm God's character and repent of his own rash statements to the contrary.

In contrast to the lengthy sections we have been taking over the course of these last months, this passage is only 6 verses, so pay attention or it will be over before you are engaged. READ Job 42:1-6

Main point: When we have a clear perspective on who God is and how He acts, we will affirm His character and repent of our rash and prideful acts.

I intentionally put this in terms of "when" and not "if." As I said moments ago, I see this as instructing us through Job. I see his reaction as the proper reaction. Therefore, this ought to be our perspective now because we have shared his encounter. In other

words, we do not need to wait until such a thing happens to us AND THEN we will adjust our perspective. Job's experience comes to us as the Word of God and ought to have that impact. I see it in a similar way to Thomas' encounter with the risen Christ. He would not believe until he stuck his finger in the nail holes. Finally, he saw and believed. We read that, and we ought not have to have that same experience in order to believe. We do not respond by saying, "Yes, and I would believe if I could stick my finger in the nail holes." No, we believe right now because we shared his encounter.

So, right now, as we go through these verses, I ask you to use them to mold, shape, or reshape your perspective on the authority, power, and goodness of God. I urge you to repent of anything in you that thinks otherwise. Learn your lesson through Job! (3 parts)

I. A clear perspective acknowledges God's sovereign hand governing what goes on in this world. vv.1-2

If and when we see clearly what God's role is, we will acknowledge that He is always in charge, always in control, always active, and nothing happens outside of His control.

Now, as we get into this, let's make sure we remember that Job has previously acknowledged God's sovereignty. Indeed, he has lamented that no one can stand against God. No one can tell him He did something wrong...but he sure would like to! Job has believed that he had legitimate reasons to question God's actions, God's sense of justice. And here, he acknowledges that he was wrong to do so.

Remember, the issue at hand is whether God has wronged Job in allowing calamity to come into his life. Both he and God would agree that Job has suffered through no fault of his own. His friends would not agree with that, but both God and Job would agree. But the real issue is whether it is right for Job to contend that either God was not in control (less than totally sovereign) or that God was in the wrong (less than totally good). Job has heard directly from God and this is now his response.

Then Job replied to the LORD: [2](#) "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.

We notice here something that Job knows. In the next section he will acknowledge things that he did not know. Here he acknowledges that God is in control, capable of and free to do all things. Everything is under His control, nothing is beyond His control. Again, it is not that Job did not know this before, but that this truth is at the forefront of his thinking, guiding his future thinking. It would be like saying, “Yes, tornadoes are powerful forces in nature.” And then you live through one and you come out saying, “No, seriously, tornadoes are powerful!” He knew it before in his head, but now he has experienced it for himself, and he acknowledges that God is free to do anything.

I find it fascinating and instructive that Job has come to this conclusion without God explaining Himself in Job’s situation. He did not explain why Job had to go through such suffering. He simply pointed to His role in other situations, situations that we would all know as well. Again, I think that is instructive for us. In other words, God’s speech was meant as much for us as it was for Job. God did not get into detail about the throne room scenes back in the first chapters. Indeed, I don’t think Job could have handled such an explanation. Can you imagine God explaining to Job, “Yes, your children all died, but I had bet satan that you would still worship Me even if that happened?” I doubt Job or any of us would be ready for that explanation.

Instead, God tells Job how intimately involved He was (and is) with His creation. He sets limits, He gives parameters, He dictates what is allowed to take place. And since He is sovereign God, it happens exactly as He planned. And after His explanation on this level, Job leaves convinced. He now knows that God is sovereign and that no one or nothing can stand in His ways.

Let me pause to ask you, “Do you believe that?” If you were to make the statement of verse 2, would it be just in theory or the true expression of your heart? “I know that You can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.” True? Really? Even when things do not turn out the way you want them to turn out? Even when you don’t know the back story as to why? Even if God never lets you in on what’s going on? Even if you’re the one asked to suffer unjustly?

I say this to impress upon you the seriousness of Job’s statement. This is a big deal. He is saying something quite important and profound. We would do well to consider seriously what he is saying. And I hope it does not take such a thing happening to us in order for us to say the same thing with Job.

II. When we speak ill of God's actions, we by definition do not know what we are talking about. vv.3-4

The fact that we would utter such things proves we do not have His perspective. By definition, we are ignorant. Whenever our "wisdom" conflicts with God, we are not wise, we are ignorant, we are "obscuring His counsel without knowledge."

3 You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. 4 "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.'

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Verses three and four contain two quotations that are not labeled as such in the original texts. So, in the NIV, we find the clarifying phrases "You asked," and "You said" to make sure we the readers understand who is talking here. Other translations might choose to handle it differently, but the clarification is surely correct. Job, in his response, quotes things that God has said. The first one quotes 38:2. This is how Yahweh began His first speech. This is what He accuses Job of doing: Job is muddying up what God is revealing about Himself from an ignorant perspective. It would be similar to us saying, "Stop! You don't know what you are talking about." Job here in ch.42 cites the quotation and then responds.

He responds with, "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." Can you see that this is similar to his confession in ch.40 but beyond it? Not only should he have just kept quiet, but he was speaking from a position of ignorance. He was speaking as if he understood how things worked and he did not. He wanted to tell God how things should be done when in reality, they were already being done wonderfully well. The truth was beyond him, there was a bigger picture than he knew.

He acknowledges that he was ignorant and he acknowledges that God's plans were far superior ("wonderful") to his. I think we all get this. I think we hear such words of ignorance on a daily basis from people who should know better. We may all be guilty of it ourselves on a regular basis. It sounds so good to be the "expert." We all think our perspective should be shared with and by others.

But when our perspective calls into question God's perspective, this is a dangerous and foolish thing. It's kind of like, "God is always right, and if you doubt

that, remember that God is always right.” If we come to some other conclusion, know that we are short sighted and wrong. In fact, the truth might just be beyond us, beyond our perspective, “Too wonderful for me to know,” or perhaps, “above my pay grade.”

The second quote is taken from 38:3 and 40:2,7 reinforcing the first one, acknowledging that God has taught and he has learned. “Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.” Job wants God to know that he heard Him. He got the point. He has no answers to any of God’s questions. Or, perhaps it would be more precise to say, Job answers every one of God’s questions with, “No, I was not there. No, I did not do that. No, You did that. No, I did not consider such a thing. Only You, God, can do such things.”

So, Job acknowledges things he did not know before, and he acknowledges that things he thought he knew he did not know. He had mistakenly put himself in the position of instructor to God when he should have been a student of God. He has learned his lesson.

Again, how do you respond? Do you say with Job to God, “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know?” “God, You are the teacher and I am the learner. I’m not going to be so foolish as to think I might teach You!” Again, in theory, we would all agree. But under the pressure of calamity in our lives, enduring unjust suffering pressing upon us, what would it take for us to get to the point of agreeing with Job? It is more difficult than it might seem. It is actually quite easy to express the opposite, to be quite forceful with God that we know better than He does, that He has made a mistake, that He should listen to us. How are you doing?

III. I was wrong and I repent. vv.5-6

Once more, we must remember the context. It is not that Job is agreeing with his friends’ perspective here, repenting of the wrong that justified God bringing calamity upon him. No, he is repenting of his wrong perspective and rash words in responding to the calamity. The wrong for which he is repenting happened while he was sitting on his ash heap, scraping his diseased flesh. This is where he went wrong.

5 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.

This statement is significant, but might need a bit of clarification. Job has just heard from God. This does not reference some sighting or vision. Instead, his knowledge of God has gone from second hand to first hand knowledge. That is the point. Before this point, Job thought he knew God because he knew about God. What he knew about God he had heard from other sources. . .and it was not the complete truth. There were flaws in what he thought he knew.

But now he has seen it for himself. He has experienced it firsthand. Before, he might have known, but now he knows that he knows. It has gone from head to heart, from theory to reality, from surface to core. Because of what he has gone through, he has discovered that his previous knowledge of God was incomplete, insufficient, flawed, theoretical. But now, his knowledge is dramatically different. And such is the perspective often of those who have lived through unjust suffering, lived through calamity, endured unexplainable trials. More than once or even a few times, such people tell me they would go through it all again to get to where they were now. Enduring the suffering has not ruined their faith but it has actually deepened their faith. That seems to defy logic, but it is true. In the midst of their suffering, they encounter God and it changes their life.

Remember that as these words were uttered, Job had not yet been delivered from the disaster. He was not yet restored. He was still in the presence of friends who were belittling him. Nothing had yet changed. And yet, to Job, his whole world had changed. He knew that God had not abandoned. He knew that God cared. He knew that God was still in control. He had regained or perhaps gained new hope.

6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

I don't take this as self-loathing, but as words of regret over his pride and rash speech. He wishes he had never said what he said. He hates what he sees in the mirror. He repents of his attitude, his words, his impugning of God's character. He now sees the ash heap under him in a new light. In this, he WAS guilty. In this, he was wrong.

For those old enough to remember, this was his Fonzie moment, when the words, “I was wrong” finally came out. Or, perhaps this was his “every husband” moment. This is what true repentance looks like. Notice there are no qualifications, no explanations, no alibis. It is simply, “I regret what I have said, I hate it, and I repent.”

I don't know about you, but these words weigh heavy upon me. It is not difficult for me to repent of things I know I did wrong, or things I said. But when it comes to things I did or said out of pride, that is harder. When we are convinced we were right, and then have to acknowledge we were actually very, very wrong, that is hard. When we have been confident, forceful, indignant on the rightness of our position, and it is in a dispute with God, and then find out we were wrong, it is hard. So, Job here proves his character once again in admitting, repenting when he has been shown to be wrong. The dispute with God is now over.

So, if we believe this passage is the Word of God, then what should be different about our lives?

1) We will hear what God has said to Job and use it to form our own perspective on God's sovereignty and justice.

2) We will remind ourselves of these things when life seems to go wrong through no fault of our own.

3) We will perhaps use this confession as our regular confession.

4) We will remind ourselves of the deceit that is our pride.

5) We too will confess and repent when we are wrong.

6) We will declare the goodness of our God, even when it seems He is not.

7) We will keep our mouths shut when tempted to tell God what He is doing wrong.