

JOB JOB

CHAPTERS 8, 9 & 10

Introduction

Our text in the Book of Job takes us into a courtroom. A quick glance at some of the vocabulary confirms the courtroom setting:

▶▶ The word “contend” occurs in 9:3 and 10:2; it means *to enter into litigation*.

▶▶ The word “answer” is used in 9:3, 14, 15 and 32; it means *to testify in court*.

▶▶ The word “judge” is used in 9:15; it means *an opponent at law, an accuser*.

▶▶ The phrase “appoint my day” is used in 9:19; it means *to summon to court*.

▶▶ The word “mediator” is used in 9:33; it means an *arbitrator*.

▶▶ The word “reason” is used in 9:14; it means *to argue a case*.¹

Job is in a courtroom. It’s not a courtroom in the land of Uz; it’s not an earthly courtroom at all. It’s a heavenly courtroom – **God’s courtroom**. Job is using an earthly courtroom as a metaphor to describe and discuss his standing before God.

Why this courtroom metaphor? Job’s friend, Bildad, argues that God *rewards your righteousness and reproves your unrighteousness*. Therefore, if Job would repent of his unrighteousness, he could contend with God on the basis of his righteousness and God would be obligated to reward him by ending his suffering. Job could take God to court and demand that He bless him for his righteous behavior!

Job agrees with Bildad, at least in principle. He says to him, at the beginning of chapter nine, “Truly, I know it is so.” But Job goes on to point out the fatal flaw in Bildad’s reasoning, saying in 9:2-3,

Job 9:2 “Truly I know it is so, But how can a man be righteous before God?”

Job 9:3 “If one wished to contend with Him, He could not answer Him one time out of a thousand.”

¹ From Wiersbe, *Be Patient*, p. 39.

When Job says, “How can a man be righteous before God?,” he is pointing out to Bildad that no man could ever hope to have sufficient righteousness to be able to contend with God in His courtroom. Later on in chapter nine, in verses fifteen and twenty, he will say,

Job 9:15 For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him...

Job 9:20 ...Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; Though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse.

Job is saying that, among human beings, there is none righteous, no, not one... that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... that all of our personal righteousness is as filthy rags compared to God’s perfect righteousness. Even the most blameless, righteous man stands condemned before the perfect standard of God’s righteousness.

If you can’t contend with God in His courtroom, what hope do you have? There **is** One Who satisfies God’s perfect righteousness, Who **can** stand in God’s courtroom on your behalf. Job calls Him the “Mediator” in verse thirty-three of chapter nine. We know Him as the Lord, Jesus Christ, identified as such in First Timothy 2:5 where you read,

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

Let’s go reverently into God’s courtroom, where we will see two things:

#1 Your Righteousness Will Condemn You
If You Contend With God In His Courtroom

#2 Christ’s Righteousness Will Clear You
If You Cleave To God In His Courtroom

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#1 Your Righteousness Will Condemn You
If You Contend With God In His Courtroom

Job is sitting on an ash heap in the garbage dump outside of Uz. He was afflicted with severe itching (2:8), insomnia (2:4), running sores and scabs (2:5), nightmares (2:13-14), loss of appetite (3:24), worms (7:5), difficulty breathing (9:18), foul breath (19:17), weight loss (19:20), chills and fever (21:6), diarrhea (30:27), high fever

(30:30), and blackened skin (30:30). His three friends - Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar – were all convinced that Job was getting what he deserved for his sin. Job maintained that he was blameless before God, and we know that he was. Eliphaz had spoken first, and Job had answered him, in chapters four through seven. Now Bildad speaks, beginning in chapter eight.

Bildad's theology of suffering is in verse twenty, where you read,

Job 8:20 Behold, God will not cast away the blameless, Nor will He uphold the evildoers.

In other words, God is obligated to reward the righteousness of man and He is obligated to reprove the unrighteousness of man. He applies this to Job in verse six, saying,

Job 8:6 If you were pure and upright, Surely now He would awake for you, And prosper your rightful dwelling place.

In other words, Job's suffering proved that he was unrighteous and deserved God's reproof. All he needed to do to receive God's reward was to repent and return to righteousness. Then he could demand that God bless him.

Let's see how Bildad goes about seeking to prove his argument, beginning in verse one of chapter eight.

Job 8:1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

Job 8:2 "How long will you speak these things, And the words of your mouth be like a strong wind?

Job 8:3 Does God subvert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice?"

Bildad comes on strong from the start! He calls Job's words "a strong wind"; Job was filled with hot air! Not exactly a "10" on the comfort scale...

Bildad is agitated because he feels Job is accusing God of "subverting judgment," of "perverting justice"; he feels Job is accusing God of acting wrongly, or unjustly. By definition, everything God does *is* right and just. We would agree – everything that God does *is* right and just.

One of Bildad's errors is that, though we sometimes are called to defend the truth about God, this was not one of those times! This was a time that called for compassion, not correction; for restoring, not rebuking.

Job 8:4 If your sons have sinned against Him, He has cast them away for their transgression.

Ouch! That hurts... Bildad has decided that Job's children deserved to die for their sin, that God killed them in His justice. Be careful coming to conclusions about events that are beyond your finding out...

Job 8:5 If you would earnestly seek God And make your supplication to the Almighty,
Job 8:6 If you were pure and upright, Surely now He would awake for you, And prosper your rightful dwelling place.

Job 8:7 Though your beginning was small, Yet your latter end would increase abundantly.

Job's three friends all repeat this same philosophy over and over: God is obligated to reward your righteousness, and to reprove your unrighteousness. Thus any adversity is evidence that you are unrighteous – that you have sin to confess. Once confessed, you'll be restored to health, wealth, and prosperity.

Bildad appeals to *opinion* and to *observation* as evidence he is correct in his thinking.

▶▶ He appeals to the opinion of the ancients:

Job 8:8 "For inquire, please, of the former age, And consider the things discovered by their fathers;

Job 8:9 For we were born yesterday, and know nothing, Because our days on earth are a shadow.

Job 8:10 Will they not teach you and tell you, And utter words from their heart?

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were all in agreement with the opinion of those that had come before them in their thinking. While it can be true that those who fail to understand history are destined to repeat it, just because something was commonly believed by your fathers doesn't mean it is true! God's revelation, not man's reasoning, must be the final judge.

▶▶ He appeals to the observation of nature:

Job 8:11 "Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh? Can the reeds flourish without water?

Job 8:12 While it is yet green and not cut down, It withers before any other plant.

Job 8:13 So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the hypocrite shall perish,

Job 8:14 Whose confidence shall be cut off, And whose trust is a spider's web.

Job 8:15 He leans on his house, but it does not stand. He holds it fast, but it does not endure.

Job 8:16 He grows green in the sun, And his branches spread out in his garden.

Job 8:17 His roots wrap around the rock heap, And look for a place in the stones.

Job 8:18 If he is destroyed from his place, Then it will deny him, saying, 'I have not seen you.'

Job 8:19 "Behold, this is the joy of His way, And out of the earth others will grow."

This series of observations is intended to show that for every effect, there must be a cause. Applied to Job, it meant that the effect of his adversity must have a cause, and that cause must be sin on Job's part.

We often try to identify causes for the spiritual effects we observe in people. Sometimes the only cause is **because!** Because God loves you and has a perfect plan for your life, He allows certain things to affect you. It's not simple and scientific; it's insightful and sanctifying.

Bildad sums up:

Job 8:20 "Behold, God will not cast away the blameless, Nor will He uphold the evildoers.

Job 8:21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughing, And your lips with rejoicing.

Job 8:22 Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, And the dwelling place of the wicked will come to nothing."

Repent and return to righteousness and you can contend with God in His courtroom, demanding your deserved rewards.

Job agrees – *in principle*. But there is a problem:

Job 9:1 Then Job answered and said:

Job 9:2 "Truly I know it is so, But how can a man be righteous before God?

Job 9:3 If one wished to contend with Him, He could not answer Him one time out of a thousand.

Job 9:4 God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?

The simple truth is that a man's best righteousness falls short when compared to God's perfect righteousness. If you try to contend with God on your own merits, no matter how good you are, you will be condemned.

Job has no hope of contending with God. In a series of his own observations, he points out God's power over every force of nature:

Job 9:5 He removes the mountains, and they do not know When He overturns them in His anger;

Job 9:6 He shakes the earth out of its place, And its pillars tremble;

Job 9:7 He commands the sun, and it does not rise; He seals off the stars;

Job 9:8 He alone spreads out the heavens, And treads on the waves of the sea;

Job 9:9 He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, And the chambers of the south;

Job 9:10 He does great things past finding out, Yes, wonders without number.

Job 9:11 If He goes by me, I do not see Him; If He moves past, I do not perceive Him;
Job 9:12 If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, 'What are You doing?'
Job 9:13 God will not withdraw His anger, The allies of the proud lie prostrate beneath Him.

If the earth itself, the sun, the stars, and the waves in all their strength cannot contend with God, how can a man hope to contend with Him in his own strength? He can't.

Job 9:14 "How then can I answer Him, And choose my words to reason with Him?
Job 9:15 For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him; I would beg mercy of my Judge.
Job 9:16 If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice.
Job 9:17 For He crushes me with a tempest, And multiplies my wounds without cause.
Job 9:18 He will not allow me to catch my breath, But fills me with bitterness.
Job 9:19 If it is a matter of strength, indeed He is strong; And if of justice, who will appoint my day in court?
Job 9:20 Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; Though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse."

If you think in terms of standing before God in your own strength, in your own righteousness, these words are true. Your best is worse; you would be condemned.

Alone, without help, you would fall into the despair Job describes:

Job 9:21 "I am blameless, yet I do not know myself; I despise my life.
Job 9:22 It is all one thing; Therefore I say, 'He destroys the blameless and the wicked.'
Job 9:23 If the scourge slays suddenly, He laughs at the plight of the innocent.
Job 9:24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, who else could it be?
Job 9:25 "Now my days are swifter than a runner; They flee away, they see no good.
Job 9:26 They pass by like swift ships, Like an eagle swooping on its prey.
Job 9:27 If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad face and wear a smile,'
Job 9:28 I am afraid of all my sufferings; I know that You will not hold me innocent.
Job 9:29 If I am condemned, Why then do I labor in vain?
Job 9:30 If I wash myself with snow water, And cleanse my hands with soap,
Job 9:31 Yet You will plunge me into the pit, And my own clothes will abhor me."

This is the inevitable conclusion of believing you can contend with God on the basis of your own righteousness. You can't. It would ultimately do you no good to be good – since God cannot accept you into His holy presence on the basis of your own goodness.

Job sinks deeper into despair in chapter ten. Let's read it all at once to capture his pain:

Job 10:1 "My soul loathes my life; I will give free course to my complaint, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

Job 10:2 I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; Show me why You contend with me.
 Job 10:3 Does it seem good to You that You should oppress, That You should despise
 the work of Your hands, And smile on the counsel of the wicked?
 Job 10:4 Do You have eyes of flesh? Or do You see as man sees?
 Job 10:5 Are Your days like the days of a mortal man? Are Your years like the days of a
 mighty man,
 Job 10:6 That You should seek for my iniquity And search out my sin,
 Job 10:7 Although You know that I am not wicked, And there is no one who can deliver
 from Your hand?
 Job 10:8 'Your hands have made me and fashioned me, An intricate unity; Yet You
 would destroy me.
 Job 10:9 Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay. And will You turn me into
 dust again?
 Job 10:10 Did you not pour me out like milk, And curdle me like cheese,
 Job 10:11 Clothe me with skin and flesh, And knit me together with bones and sinews?
 Job 10:12 You have granted me life and favor, And Your care has preserved my spirit.
 Job 10:13 'And these things You have hidden in Your heart; I know that this was with
 You:
 Job 10:14 If I sin, then You mark me, And will not acquit me of my iniquity.
 Job 10:15 If I am wicked, woe to me; Even if I am righteous, I cannot lift up my head. I
 am full of disgrace; See my misery!
 Job 10:16 If my head is exalted, You hunt me like a fierce lion, And again You show
 Yourself awesome against me.
 Job 10:17 You renew Your witnesses against me, And increase Your indignation toward
 me; Changes and war are ever with me.
 Job 10:18 'Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Oh, that I had perished and
 no eye had seen me!
 Job 10:19 I would have been as though I had not been. I would have been carried from
 the womb to the grave.
 Job 10:20 Are not my days few? Cease! Leave me alone, that I may take a little comfort,
 Job 10:21 Before I go to the place from which I shall not return, To the land of darkness
 and the shadow of death,
 Job 10:22 A land as dark as darkness itself, As the shadow of death, without any order,
 Where even the light is like darkness.'"

Job was confused. God made him, gave him breath; yet God seemed to be destroying him. It seemed to make no difference whether you were righteous or unrighteous – good or bad – because God was too far beyond your best goodness for you to ever hope you might stand in His presence.

Indeed, this *is* partly true! Among human beings, there is none righteous, no, not one... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... all of our personal righteousness is as filthy rags compared to God's perfect righteousness. Even the most blameless, righteous man stands condemned before the perfect standard of God's righteousness.

But this isn't the whole truth! Mankind **is** in a desperate condition, but you need not despair! God, Who alone is righteous, has done something to help you. Job unknowingly described it in the

closing verses of chapter nine. While it is all too true that your righteousness will condemn you if you contend with God in His courtroom, it is **also** true that,

#2 Christ's Righteousness Will Clear You If You Cleave To God In His Courtroom

Look at verses thirty-two through thirty-five of chapter nine:

Job 9:32 "For He is not a man, as I am, That I may answer Him, And that we should go to court together.

Job 9:33 Nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand on us both.

Job 9:34 Let Him take His rod away from me, And do not let dread of Him terrify me.

Job 9:35 Then I would speak and not fear Him, But it is not so with me."

If God were a man, then Job could contend with Him. Or if there were a "mediator" between God and Job, he could take upon himself the "rod" of God's condemnation for sin and bring Job into God's presence. Job complained that there was no "mediator" between he and God who could "lay His hand on us both."

*But there **is** such a Mediator!* It is the Lord, Jesus Christ, Who is God and Who became man. Because He is God, He can satisfy the perfect standard of righteousness that heaven requires... Because He is man, He can lay His hand on both God and man and be the Mediator that brings them together...

When you receive Christ as your Savior and cleave to Him by faith alone for salvation, He takes your sin and gives you His righteousness. You are cleared in God's courtroom – you are declared "*Not guilty!*" by God. What you could never achieve, you can freely receive – eternal life in Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and mankind.

Conclusion

When Job asked, at the beginning of chapter nine, "How can a man be righteous before God?," he was asking the most important question of all time.

What is your answer? Bear in mind that God is absolutely holy and perfect in righteousness. In order to stand in His presence you, too, must be holy and perfect in righteousness.

Can you ever hope to achieve perfect righteousness by your own efforts, through the rites, rituals, rules, and regulations of religion? No, you can't...

But what you cannot *achieve* on your own, you can *receive* from Jesus Christ! Receive Him and you receive His righteous standing before God. His righteousness will clear you. You will be declared "*Not guilty!*" for all eternity.