

Job 36:1-16 • The Working of God's Righteousness

Introduction

In all the discussions and arguments going back and forth between Job and the others, no one **EVER** brings up the issue of "love". It doesn't even come up in later chapters when God personally responds to their discussions. All of the discussions pertain to righteousness—whether man's or God's. And the one person who responded to Job—Elihu—whom God never chastises, provides an explanation of the working of God's righteousness. While Job's friends errantly argue over the issue of sin, Elihu rightly contends that the heart of the matter is actually the working of God's righteousness. Most likely it's the issue at the heart of whatever **YOU'RE** going through right now.

¹Then Elihu continued and said,

²"Wait for me a little, and I will show you

That there is yet more to be said in God's behalf.

³I will fetch my knowledge from afar, And I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.

⁴For truly my words are not false; One who is perfect in knowledge is with you.

⁵Behold, God is mighty but does not despise any; He is mighty in strength of understanding.

[Read v.1-5]

Q: What is the chief attribute Elihu ascribes to God in v.3?

A: "Righteousness."

Q: What is another attribute Elihu ascribes to God in v.5?

A: "He is mighty in strength of understanding".

Q: Given the discussion of God's righteousness and understanding, why is it important that Elihu provides the context in v.5, "God is mighty but does not despise any"?

A: It's an allusion to the fact that God is not **JUST** about exacting punishment on those who deserve it, but has a higher purpose at work in the course of His righteousness: Love.

Q: Why do you suppose that the book of Job is a prolonged discussion about righteousness—man's or God's—but only hints at love rather than speak of it openly?

A: Biblically speaking, true godly love does not exist in the absence of righteousness. You can't just "skip" over righteousness and go straight to "love".

⁶He does not keep the wicked alive,
But gives justice to the afflicted.

⁷He does not withdraw His eyes from
the righteous;
But with kings on the throne
He has seated them forever, and they
are exalted.

⁸And if they are bound in fetters,
And are caught in the cords of
affliction,

⁹Then He declares to them their work
And their transgressions, that they have
magnified themselves.

¹⁰He opens their ear to instruction,
And commands that they return from
evil.

[Read v.6-7]

Q: The wording may be a little tricky because, after all, it's in poetic form, but what is God's ultimate plan for the righteous?

A: "...with kings on the throne He has seated them [the righteous] forever, and they are exalted."

*You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God;
and they will reign upon the earth.*

Revelation 5:10

Q: If God looks at things from an eternal perspective, then what does it mean "He does not keep the wicked alive"?

A: The wicked may exist in an elevated state in **THIS** life, but will suffer the second death resulting in losing their **ETERNAL** life.

Q: What is another indicator in these verses that God's righteousness is applied from an eternal perspective and does not provide a guarantee for THIS life?

A: "...gives justice to the afflicted." There are no promises of remedies for the ills of this life. Affliction has to come on "the afflicted" in order for justice to eventually be applied. The guarantee is for the final, eternal outcome, not necessarily for the present, temporary situation.

Application: Are you only being "good" or following God's Word because you desire a change in your current situation? While that may happen, how do you feel about the teaching here that we're supposed to be "good" and follow God's Word all the time regardless of the circumstances? Do you see the rewards of being exalted by God in eternity worth more than the temporary comforts of this life that is passing away?

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

[Read v.8-10]

Q: How does Elihu characterize God's first response to those who are "bound" or "caught", images of someone enslaved to something other than the One True God?

1. "He declares to them their work"
2. "He declares to them...their transgressions, that they have magnified themselves"
3. "He opens their ear to instruction"
4. "He...commands that they return from evil."

Point: These are the characteristics of the unrighteous: They perform bad deeds, they have great issues of personal pride, they are closed to instruction, and their behavior, choices and actions combine to produce the results of evil.

Q: What do the phrases "bound in fetters" and "caught in the cords" infer about God's righteousness?

A: Whereas unrighteousness is actually the condition of being enslaved to things of this world, God's righteousness is actually a choice in, and expression of, spiritual freedom.

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

Romans 6:17-19

Application: *To what things are you “bound” or “caught” up in that inhibits your pursuit of God’s righteousness? How are such bondages compatible with the work of sanctification in your life?*

[Read v.11-14]

¹¹If they hear and serve Him,
They will end their days in prosperity
And their years in pleasures.

¹²But if they do not hear, they shall
perish by the sword

And they will die without knowledge.

¹³But the godless in heart lay up anger;
They do not cry for help when He binds
them.

¹⁴They die in youth,
And their life perishes among the cult
prostitutes.

¹⁵He delivers the afflicted in their
affliction,

And opens their ear in time of
oppression.

¹⁶Then indeed, He enticed you from the
mouth of distress,

Instead of it, a broad place with no
constraint;

And that which was set on your table
was full of fatness.

Q: Is it enough to just “hear”?

A: No; the requirement is to “hear and serve Him”. The biblical proof that someone has “heard” or “listened” is in their obedience.

Q: What is the difference between the righteous who listen to God as described in v.8-10, and “the godless in heart” in v.13 who do not?

A: Righteousness comes about through one’s recognition of the bonds holding them and turning to God for release; the godless never turn to God.

Q: To what does the mention of “the cult prostitutes” in v.14 allude to in the contrast of the righteous and the godless?

A: It alludes to faithfulness. Throughout the Bible, marital fidelity is constantly equated to spiritual faithfulness. Just as true marital faithfulness does not stray in adultery or the pursuit of prostitutes, so spiritual faithfulness does not stray from the Person and Word of God.

[Read v.15-16]

Q: How would you summarize what Elihu is saying about how God works in the lives of the righteous?

A: They are not exempt from affliction, but are listening to God—evidenced by their obedience to His Word—so that they are led to a place of God’s strength and sustenance.

Q: What kind of guarantee is this? Does it assure us that nothing bad will ever happen to us?

A: It’s the guarantee of spiritual growth and overcoming the world in spite of all the difficulties we may encounter.

Overall Application

- *Why does the book of Job not speak of the issue of love but righteousness? How might this be counter to the priority given to love over everything else by many Christians today? How might this change your spiritual walk?*
- *What are the things to which **YOU** are in bondage? Are you even making an attempt to cry out to the Lord for a remedy? What steps are **YOU** responsible to take in addressing them?*
- *What is the best guarantee you can get for this life and the next?*

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