

Job's Response to Bildad's First Speech

Job 9-10

Job 9:1-13 - *"Then Job answered, "In truth I know that this is so; but how can a man be in the right before God?"³ "If one wished to dispute with Him, He could not answer Him once in a thousand times."⁴ "Wise in heart and mighty in strength, Who has defied Him without harm?"⁵ "It is God who removes the mountains, they know not how, when He overturns them in His anger;⁶ who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble;⁷ who commands the sun not to shine, and sets a seal upon the stars;⁸ who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea;⁹ who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south;¹⁰ who does great things, unfathomable, and wondrous works without number.¹¹ "Were He to pass by me, I would not see Him. Were He to move past me, I would not perceive Him.¹² "Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him? Who could say to Him, 'What are You doing?'¹³ "God will not turn back His anger..."*

Background Notes

Let's consider a few interesting statements that Job makes in response to Bildad's speech. In verse 8 Job says of God, *"Who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea..."* His point is that God is sovereign over the heavens and the earth - even over storms.

God *"stretches out the heavens."* Was Job aware that God created an expanding universe? That concept is also taught in Psalm 104:2: *"The Lord wraps Himself with light like a garment; He stretches out the heavens like a tent."* And Isaiah 40:22, *"He who sits enthroned above the circle of the earth... He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in."* All these verses tell us that God *"stretches out the heavens,"* indicating what we now know to be true – that God created an expanding universe!

Job 9:9 says that God makes the Bear and Pleiades: *"He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south."* These constellations have been known from ancient times. (And no - they are not the "signs of the Zodiac"!) Job's point was that God arranged the stars, including the design of the constellations.

"God will not turn back His anger; beneath Him crouch the helpers of Rahab" (v13). Obviously the "Rahab" mentioned here is not the woman, Rahab, of the book of Joshua. She lived many years later. The "Rahab" in Job 9 was a mythological sea monster that was symbolic of evil. And Job's point is that God in his anger subdues all forces of evil, both actual and mythical. Now with such a majestic and powerful God, how could Job even hope to plead his case? In the rest of the chapter and on into chapter 10, Job continues to voice his problem as he answers Bildad.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Job's first response of to Bildad misrepresents God.

Job 9:14-24 - *"How then can I answer Him, and choose my words before Him? ¹⁵ "For though I were right, I could not answer; I would have to implore the mercy of my judge. ¹⁶ "If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice. ¹⁷ "For He bruises me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause. ¹⁸ "He will not allow me to get my breath, but saturates me with bitterness. ¹⁹ "If it is a matter of power, behold, He is the strong one! If it is a matter of justice, who can summon Him? ²⁰ "Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me; though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty.*

²¹ "I am guiltless; I do not take notice of myself; I despise my life. ²² "It is all one; therefore I say, 'He destroys the guiltless and the wicked.' ²³ "If the scourge kills suddenly, He mocks the despair of the innocent. ²⁴ "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, then who is it?"

Notice - Job doesn't deny God, and he doesn't deny the power of God. Job's problem is not pride. He even despises his own life (v21). But in maintaining his innocence, Job **misrepresents** God. He implies that God brings suffering to the righteous and to the wicked arbitrarily - without a good reason or cause (v17).

Furthermore, he implies that it doesn't matter to God that Job is righteous. He is declared guilty anyway (v20). And from Job's point of view, God is unfair in having allowed unjust judges on earth (v24). Those are certainly misrepresentations of God, aren't they?

But stop and think - have we ever reasoned the same way?

Job 9:25-35 - *"Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good. ²⁶ "They slip by like reed boats, like an eagle that swoops on its prey. ²⁷ "Though I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my sad countenance and be cheerful,' ²⁸ I am afraid of all my pains. I know that You will not acquit me. ²⁹ "I am accounted wicked. Why then should I toil in vain? ³⁰ "If I should wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands with lye, ³¹ yet You would plunge me into the pit, and my own clothes would abhor me. ³² "For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. ³³ "There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both. ³⁴ "Let Him remove His rod from me, and let not dread of Him terrify me. ³⁵ "Then I would speak and not fear Him; but I am not like that in myself."*

In these verses Job continues to misrepresent God by implying His unfairness. We sense Job's despair. Life is short. It is slipping by quickly like a reed boat - the Egyptian speedboat of the day. Job felt that God was determined not to acquit him, no matter what he did to clean up (v27-32). He wished that he and God could go together to an arbitrator or umpire, because he believed that there he would be declared righteous, and I would be shown that God was treating him unfairly (v33-35). Again, Job is implying that God is unfair. Job's first response to Bildad misrepresents God.

2. Job's first response to Bildad challenges God.

Job 10:1-7 - *"I loathe my own life. I will give full vent to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. ² "I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; let me know why You contend with me. ³ 'Is it right for You indeed to oppress, to reject the labor of Your hands, and to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked? ⁴ 'Have You eyes of flesh? Do You see as a man sees? ⁵ 'Are Your days as the days of a mortal, or Your years as man's years, ⁶ that You should seek for my guilt and search after my sin? ⁷ 'According to Your knowledge I am indeed not guilty, yet there is no deliverance from Your hand."*

Throughout Job 10, Job **challenges** God to give him answers. He wants to know the reason why God is contending with him (v1-7). After all, God's hands created Job (v3). God was not like mortal man, with limited knowledge (v4-6). God has the big picture - but still He would not bring deliverance to Job (v7).

Job 10:8-13 - *"Your hands fashioned and made me altogether, and would You destroy me? ⁹ 'Remember now, that You have made me as clay, and would You turn me into dust again? ¹⁰ 'Did You not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese; ¹¹ clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews? ¹² 'You have granted me life and lovingkindness; and Your care has preserved my spirit, ¹³ 'Yet these things You have concealed in Your heart. I know that this is within You."*

Job continues to challenge God and God's ways. He sees God as inconsistent. God created Job, and at first He cared for Job. But now it seems that God is setting Job up to destroy him. It seems as if God had planned that all along!

Job 10:14-17 - *"If I sin, then You would take note of me, and would not acquit me of my guilt. ¹⁵ 'If I am wicked, woe to me! And if I am righteous, I dare not lift up my head. I am sated with disgrace and conscious of my misery. ¹⁶ 'Should my head be lifted up, You would hunt me like a lion; and again You would show Your power against me. ¹⁷ 'You renew Your witnesses against me and increase Your anger toward me. Hardship after hardship is with me."* In these verses Job is convinced that God is out to get him like stalking lion (v16).

Job 10:18-22 - *"Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Would that I had died, and no eye had seen me! ¹⁹ 'I should have been as though I had not been, carried from womb to tomb.' ²⁰ "Would He not let my few days alone? Withdraw from me that I may have a little cheer ²¹ before I go—and I shall not return— to the land of darkness and deep shadow, ²² the land of utter gloom as darkness itself, of deep shadow without order, and which shines as the darkness."*

In verses 18-22 Job once again wishes he had never been born. He reasoned that if his mother had miscarried, he would have gone from womb to tomb, and he would have been spared all his suffering (v18-19). And notice again the challenge to God at the beginning of verse 18, and then in verse 20: Job requests God to withdraw from him so that he could have a little "cheer" before he died! Of course, Job is **now** eternally grateful that God didn't grant that prayer request! So we see that in Job's first response to Bildad, Job challenges God.

Practical Application

Get right with God!

“Then Job answered, “In truth I know that this is so; but how can a man be in the right before God?” (9:2)

Be careful to use context when interpreting this verse. In the context, Job was **not** asking about salvation and justification. He was asking about vindication. He wanted to prove he was innocent. There was no secret sin in his life.

But **interpretation** and **application** are two different aspects, and Job’s question can certainly be **applied** to salvation and justification. One of life’s great questions is, “How can a person be justified before God?” The Bible gives only one correct answer. A person can be justified before God only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because He died for our sins on the cross. He died as our Substitute for the penalty of our sins.

Now that the price for sin has been paid, God can declare us as justified and righteous - not because of our own righteousness, but because of the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to all who believe. God now sees us and accepts us in Christ. Read Romans 3.

Remember, salvation and justification are not automatic, nor are they earned by our righteous deeds. To get right with God, we must come to faith to trust in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

Get right with God!