

Out of the Storm

A Study of Job

Part 8 – “Who Needs Justification?”

Job 29-31

Main Idea: Job longed for the restoration of all he had lost and the vindication of the God who seemed to have abandoned him.

1 The Longing for Home (chpt 29)

“Oh, that I were as in the months of old...” (29:2)

- In chapter 29 Job expresses deep longing for his past happiness. However, Job’s longing for all that he has lost contains within it the seeds of hope for the future.
- Job’s lament is broadly two-fold:
 1. He laments the loss of his fellowship with God (vv. 1-6).
 2. He laments the loss of his dignity (vv. 7-25).
 - a) Job longs for the dignity of the Savior (vv. 7-17)
 - b) Job longs for the eternity of the Savior (vv. 18-20)
 - c) Job longs for the sovereignty of the Savior (vv. 21-25)

“If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.” - C.S. Lewis

2. The Longing for Dignity (chpt 30)

“But now they laugh at me...” (30:1)

- Dignity can be described as that value mankind inherently possesses as image-bearers of God. In chapter 30 Job laments the total loss of his dignity. He has been utterly dehumanized. He is now treated as nothing more than a beast.
- The stripping of Job’s dignity points us to the redemptive suffering of Jesus Christ.
 1. Redemptive suffering reverses the good order of creation (vv. 1-15).
 - a. A description of the mockers (vv. 1-8).
 - b. The substance of their mockery (vv. 9-15).
 2. Redemptive suffering is necessary (vv. 16-31).
 - a. God must remain silent (vv. 16-23).
 - b. The unjust suffering must be endured (vv. 24-31).

3. The Longing for Justification (chpt 31)

“For I was in terror of the calamity of God, and I could not have faced his majesty” (31:23).

- Other than a few brief exclamations of repentance, chapter 31 records the final words of Job before he appears before God. It is important that we take great care in discerning what Job is saying about himself in his final appeal.

- Christopher Ash¹ suggests that chapter 31 is structured in a covenantal framework.
 1. The nature of the covenant (vv. 1-3)
 - Job has entered a solemn commitment with himself to guard his desires. This is Job's self-imposed covenant to keep a clear conscience.
 2. Keeping the covenant (vv. 4-6)
 - Job's covenant is not based upon his personal preferences but rather on that standard of righteousness that is reflected in the character of God.
 3. The expression of covenant faithfulness (vv. 7-34)
 - Job offers a list of sins from which he has claims to have remained pure.
 - a. Walking in falsehood (7-8)
 - b. Adultery (9-12)
 - c. Injustice to servants (13-15)
 - d. Lack of generosity (16-20)
 - e. Violence against the defenseless (21-23)
 - f. Trust in wealth (24-25)
 - g. Worship of creation (26-28)
 - h. Vindictiveness (29-30)
 - i. Lack of hospitality to strangers (31-32)
 - j. Hypocrisy (33-34)
 4. The covenant challenge repeated (vv. 35-37)
 - Job returns to the challenge expressed in verse 6 to be weighed in the balance by God. His language is that of longing: "Oh that..." Just as he longs for the dignity of a child of God he now longs for justification before God. Job is challenging God to present evidence of his guilt which he is sure does not exist.
 5. The covenant attested in creation (vv. 38-40)
 - Job calls forth creation to give witness to the fact that he has kept faith.

How Job's longings point toward a future hope:

1. Job's longings are consistent with the longings that will characterize the history of Israel.
2. Job's longings are rooted in creation.
3. Job's longings find their "Yes" in Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20).
4. Job's longings anticipate the resurrection hope of all God's people (1 Corinthians 6:2).

- For all these reasons it is right and good for all of God's people to long for the very things Job longed for. Those longings are not an indication of a lack of faith but a validation that we were made for something more than a fallen world.

On what basis did Job claim innocence? Or, wasn't Job a sinner?

- Ultimately, however, Job is still a sinner, a man born under the curse of the fall. So while God has attested to his righteousness, Job nevertheless was a man in need of a Justifier. Job, like all sinners needed a righteousness not his own. He needed a perfect righteousness.
- "The innocence Job claims in chapter 31 is an innocence reckoned to him perfectly by grace, through the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is an innocence beginning to be worked in his actual life...Job 31 is true by grace."²

¹ Ash, Christopher, Job: The Wisdom of the Cross, Crossway, Wheaton, IL 2014, pp. 307ff.

² Ibid, p. 321