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Sermon Notes

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How Can a Man Be Righteous Before This Majestic God?

Job 25-27

I. Bildad's Question: How Can Man Be Righteous Before God? (Job 25)

A. The Last Time Job's Friends Speak

B. Problems with this Section

1. Problem #1: the Brevity of Job 25

a. It is very short... seems truncated... like something's missing

2. Problem #2: The content of Job 27:13-23

a. It is the standard angle about God's judgment of the wicked

b. Though it has no introduction, it is in the Job section, so one would just assume it's Job speaking

c. BUT Job never says these kinds of things about "the wicked"... whenever "the wicked" are mentioned in Job up to this point, Job's friends take this approach... the wicked will be punished in this world by God

d. That's pretty much exactly what Job 27:13-23 says—more of the same; it even seems to line up exactly with Job's sufferings in detail, as though Bildad is saying the same things again: you are a wicked man as proven by your sufferings

3. It seems best to read Job 25 and Job 27:13-23 as one section

4. NOW... you may ask, how did they get separated? Or why isn't there an introduction to the second section telling us it is Bildad, or one of Job's other friends? Answer: I don't know! But the strongest evidence that it is someone other than Job saying these things is how much it sounds like one of the friends and not like Job
5. So... let's walk through Bildad's final statements... as usual, wherein he speaks about God's nature, we do well to listen carefully as if every word were true and we need to heed it
6. Few books in the Bible have such exalted language about the nature of God
7. Few books in the Bible correct our insultingly low view of God and rebuke our casual nature; we need to drink in these words, though they come from Bildad the Shuhite
8. His problem will come when he applies certain aspects to Job based on assumptions of Job's wickedness and secret guilt

Job 25:1-6 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied: ² "Dominion and awe belong to God; he establishes peace in the heights of heaven. ³ Can his forces be numbered? Upon whom does his light not rise? ⁴ How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure? ⁵ If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his eyes, ⁶ how much less man, who is but a maggot-- a son of man, who is only a worm!

C. Bildad's Excellent Question: God is Infinitely Majestic... So How Can a Man Be Righteous Before Him?

1. "Dominion and awe belong to God"

a. Dominion = sovereignty, rulership, kingly authority

Daniel 4:35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

b. Awe = dread, terror fall upon all who see him or approach him

- c. Even the holiest of angels cover their faces in his presence
- 2. "He establishes peace in the heights of heaven"
 - a. Hebrew = "shalom"... peace, order out of chaos
 - b. God is a God of peace, of tranquility of mind; the heavens are in perfect order around him, for all the angels gladly and instantly do his bidding
 - c. More importantly, God is at peace and one with himself—he is not conflicted or torn from within, not knowing what to do or what direction to go
 - d. The Trinity is perfectly at one—Father, Son, and Spirit in perfect agreement always
 - e. The highest heavens represent the realm of God himself... he is above even the highest created order, and there God is at peace
 - f. We human beings are not so... we are deeply divided within ourselves, deeply conflicted... and therefore never at peace in our natural state; therefore also we are conflicted with each other

Isaiah 57:20-21 the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. ²¹ "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

Isaiah 17:12 Oh, the raging of many nations-- they rage like the raging sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples-- they roar like the roaring of great waters!

- g. God brings order out of chaos... everywhere God's word goes, it brings peace and order... Jesus displayed this as well:

Mark 4:39 Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

- 3. Bildad: Look at the immensity of his army!!

Job 25:3 Can his forces be numbered?

- a. In Daniel 7 and Revelation 5, 100 million angels surrounded his throne ready to do his bidding
- b. But Bildad says his forces are actually beyond number... perhaps even more than the 100 million!
- c. These angels can FIGHT! One single angel killed 185,000 Assyrian troops in a single night... what could 100 million angels do on a battlefield??!!

4. His light illuminates the entire universe and every creature in it

Job 25:3 Upon whom does his light not rise?

It started on the first day of creation when God said "Let there be light."

Effectively all light ultimately comes from God... he created the sun and the moon to do his work on the fourth day of creation – but he was already emanating light from the very beginning of creation

And in the New Heavens and New Earth, the sun and the moon and all lamps will no longer be needed:

Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

So, Bildad is saying that all light ultimately comes from God, and there is not a single creature that God's light does not illuminate

- 5. As a matter of fact, to God, who is PURE LIGHT, even the moon and stars are dim by comparison

Job 25:5 If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his eyes

D. Bildad's main point: How Can Sinful Man Be Righteous Before Such a God?

Job 25:4-6 How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure? ⁵ If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his eyes, ⁶ how much less man, who is but a maggot-- a son of man, who is only a worm!"

1. This view of man in his corruption and sin is certainly not popular for those who want their ears tickled and their self-esteem built
2. But Jesus said plainly:

Luke 5:31-32 "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Spiritually, all human beings are diseased in sin... our souls are like lepers who have been ravaged by the disease for twenty years

3. So... the central question: HOW CAN SUCH AN EVIL CORRUPT BEING AS WE ALL ARE BE RIGHTEOUS IN THE SIGHT OF SUCH A MAJESTIC, HOLY, GLORIOUS, POWERFUL GOD??
 - a. Bildad is asking this of Job, who has consistently said "I am innocent! I want to make my defense before God, and he will acquit me!!"
 - b. Bildad is RIGHT to ask this question of Job. And the Holy Spirit is RIGHT to ask this question of all of us!
 - c. Bildad's problem is **he doesn't ask it of himself**, as though he were somehow exempt!

E. The Answer is Christ!!!

1. I cannot go any further without celebrating the answer!
2. If there were no answer, we would all be condemned
3. God's perfect holiness would exclude us all
4. God's future world, the New Heavens and New Earth would exclude us all

Revelation 21:27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful

5. BUT GOD in his kindness and mercy sent Christ to give us spiritual maggots and worms a righteousness not our own

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This is the answer to Bildad's vital question:

Job 25:4 How then can a man be righteous before God?

Answer: BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST!!

II. Bildad's Final Warning to Job (Job 27:13-23)

A. As We've Said... We Don't Know for Certain this is Bildad

B. Bildad's Points in 27:13-23

1. The fate of the wicked is inevitable and overwhelming

Job 27:13 "Here is the fate God allots to the wicked, the heritage a ruthless man receives from the Almighty:

2. Their children get slaughtered by the sword, or die of starvation or plague

Job 27:14-15 However many his children, their fate is the sword; his offspring will never have enough to eat. ¹⁵ The plague will bury those who survive him, and their widows will not weep for them.

NOTE: This is a direct contradiction from what Job said earlier in Job 21:

Job 21:7-8 Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? ⁸ They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes.

That is radically different! So this section doesn't seem like something Job would say

To continue with Bildad's final case against Job:

3. All the wealth of the wicked will melt away... other people will enjoy all their ill-gotten gains

Job 27:16-17 Though he heaps up silver like dust and clothes like piles of clay, ¹⁷ what he lays up the righteous will wear, and the innocent will divide his silver.

4. The mighty mansions of the wicked will crumble... though they build with marble pillars and look like they will last forever, they won't

Job 27:18 The house he builds is like a moth's cocoon, like a hut made by a watchman.

5. These disasters will come on the wicked instantly

Job 27:19 He lies down wealthy, but will do so no more; when he opens his eyes, all is gone.

6. The judgments of God are overwhelming... like a man swept away by a mighty wind or by a flood—powerless to stand against the onslaught

Job 27:20-23 Terrors overtake him like a flood; a tempest snatches him away in the night. ²¹ The east wind carries him off, and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place. ²² It hurls itself against him without mercy as he flees headlong from its power. ²³ It claps its hands in derision and hisses him out of his place.

C. How to Hear All This

1. In one sense all of this is true of the wicked ultimately... they die at some point and lose it all
2. And God's wrath cannot be escaped; there is no refuge that will work against the coming flood of judgment
3. So if these words could be used to warn people to flee to Christ, they would serve us well...

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly

4. So what's the problem? Assuming 1) that Job is wicked in the sense that Bildad means; 2) that these words don't apply to Bildad at all

III. Job Praises God's Majestic Power (Job 26)

A. First: Rejecting Bildad's Counsel

Job 26:1-4 Then Job replied: ² "How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that is feeble! ³ What advice you have offered to one without wisdom! And what great insight you have displayed! ⁴ Who has helped you utter these words? And whose spirit spoke from your mouth?

Job finally and completely rejects the perspective and counsel of his friends... he was struck down and weak by his trials, and they have not helped him at all. He yearned for wisdom from God about his trials, and they had none to offer. The actual words they spoke certainly didn't come from the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. So where did they come from?

Having swatted them aside like annoying mosquitos, Bildad has his own meditation on the majestic power of Almighty God

B. Praising God's Majestic Power

1. God knows completely the realm of the dead

Job 26:5-6 "The dead are in deep anguish, those beneath the waters and all that live in them. ⁶ Death is naked before God; Destruction lies uncovered.

2. God is mighty over the heavens and its celestial bodies

Job 26:7-11 He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing. ⁸ He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight. ⁹ He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it. ¹⁰ He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between

light and darkness. ¹¹ The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke.

Job touches on the mysteries of God's creation, especially of the heavens above; of invisible physical forces that cannot be explained... how the earth hangs in space on nothing at all; just as God originally created the universe out of nothing at all

He ponders the clouds... how they are made of water and have massive weight, yet the clouds just float along in the sky as if suspended on nothing

The clouds, suspended on nothing, are massive enough to block the light of the moon and snuff it out on some nights

Job ponders also the mysteries of the horizon line... as when you watch the earliest glimmers of dawn over the ocean and you can see a line, a boundary between day and night

He speaks of the pillars of the heavens, whatever they are – the heavens rest on them and do not come crashing down; yet God is able to shake those pillars any time he chooses

3. God is mighty over the sea

Job 26:12-13 By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces. ¹³ By his breath the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent.

The sea is mysterious, with its endless, powerful, undulating waves... its breakers rolling on one after the other, frothy, foamy, crashing; and it is God who stirs up the storms on the sea and controls them

Rahab represents that primordial enemy – the ancient serpent – that stands opposed to God, but whom God hacked to pieces as a warrior; the idea is the hidden turbulent forces of the deep blue sea are completely pacified by his word

So when Jesus stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee with his word – “Peace be still” and it was indeed instantly quiet – this is the fulfillment of God’s power over the terrifying forces of the sea

Matthew 8:27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

4. We have only touched the fringes of his mighty garment! We have only heard the whisper, not the mighty roar of God!!

Job 26:14 And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?"

None of these displays scratches the surface of God’s powers... omnipotence is infinite; the mightiest displays in creation do not deplete God’s power in the least. Job calls all these mighty displays the “outer fringe”, “outskirts”, tiniest edges of his ways.

So also the sounds we hear of God’s power is just a faint whisper... it’s all we can handle. If God unleashed the full might of his voice, we would be crushed by the sound of its power.

So, the more we study God’s might in creation and in history, the more staggering God appears to us. We are barely scratching the surface.

THAT IS WHAT A DYNAMIC HEAVEN is all about... an eternal education in the glory of God!

Psalm 111:2-4 Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. ³ Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. ⁴ He has caused his wonders to be remembered

IV. Job’s Conscience Testifies That He is Innocent (Job 27:1-12)

A. Now, Job Resumes His Defense

1. Fundamental is his claim that he is innocent and that God has wronged him... that God is denying him justice

Job 27:1-5 And Job continued his discourse: ² "As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul, ³ as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, ⁴ my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit. ⁵ I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity.

2. Job cannot agree with his friends that he is secretly wicked
3. See in verse 2 how Job, who just celebrated the mighty works of God in creation is now saying “YET for all his greatness, God has denied me justice.”
4. He basically takes a vow on this: “As surely as God lives...” This is a common Hebrew vow. As God lives 1) he has denied me justice; 2) I will never admit to sins I did not commit
5. He cannot deny his integrity to satisfy them... because that would be a lie, and that he could never do...
6. (vs. 5) His **integrity**: he is what he appears to be—blameless and upright as God said. To say he is crushing the widows and orphans and charging interest on loans and all these other evil practices NEVER HAPPENED

B. Job’s Fundamental Blunder Toward God

1. He assumes God is operating from the same theology as his friends... the law of sowing and reaping
2. And since he has NOT done all these evil things, God has denied him justice... God has dealt unjustly with him
3. This is the very thing God will immediately rebuke Job for when he finally speaks to him out of the whirlwind:

Job 40:6-8 Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm: ⁷ "Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. ⁸ "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?

This will be Job's greatest sin... and he does it a number of times — questioning God's justice in relation to him

C. Job's Greatest Defense: A Clear Conscience

Job 27:6 my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live.

1. What is conscience? A God-given part of our creation... every human being has it
2. It is a force within our souls that presses us to do right and forsake wrong as we understand it, and then judges our behavior based on that understood standard of right and wrong
3. Conscience is only as good as two things: 1) the truth of its moral compass; 2) how often the person listens to it or ignores it
4. On the first, people in false religions have their consciences harnessed to a system of lies—so their conscience tells them to follow the dictates of their false religion, and they feel guilty if they don't—like imagine a Muslim who secretly violates his pledge to fast during Ramadan... he breaks the rules and feels guilty about it. But the Ramadan fast in honor of Muhammad and Allah is itself a false religion
5. On the second issue—if you ignore the promptings of your conscience enough, it will become seared—it doesn't feel anything anymore
 - a. I read the account of a woman who was an abortion doctor; she said she cried and felt nauseous the first time she did an abortion; but after thousands of them, she feels nothing
 - b. Paul calls that a “seared conscience”

1 Timothy 4:2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

6. A healthy conscience is a true gift from God
7. Paul gives us both sides of Christian conscience:
 - a. The beneficial use of conscience

Acts 24:15-16 I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. ¹⁶ So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Simply put... don't do anything that violates your conscience!

Hebrews 13:18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.

b. The limits of conscience

1 Corinthians 4:4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

Clear conscience doesn't prove you are innocent... there could very well be blind spots... as Job will find out when God rebukes him

D. Final Words To/About Job's Friends

Job 27:7-12 "May my enemies be like the wicked, my adversaries like the unjust! ⁸ For what hope has the godless when he is cut off, when God takes away his life? ⁹ Does God listen to his cry when distress comes upon him? ¹⁰ Will he find delight in the Almighty? Will he call upon God at all times? ¹¹ "I will teach you about the power of God; the ways of the Almighty I will not conceal. ¹² You have all seen this yourselves. Why then this meaningless talk?

Job feels like his friends have become his enemies. Even if he is not speaking of Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad, he does have enemies who have mocked him and are disrespecting him. Beyond them, let's not forget the Sabeans who attacked his servants and plundered his oxen and donkeys, and the Chaldeans who formed three raiding parties and slaughtered his servants and stole his camels. Job utters these imprecations on his enemies.

And concerning his friends, he says these words:

Job 27:11-12 "I will teach you about the power of God; the ways of the Almighty I will not conceal. ¹² You have all seen this yourselves. Why then this meaningless talk?

V. Applications

Lessons

A. Main Lesson: Christ is the Answer to Bildad's Vital Question

Job 25:4 How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure?

Peter, speaking of the experience of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised Gentile Cornelius

Acts 15:8-9 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

By faith in the cleansing blood of Christ, we who were unclean and filthy in sin have been made pure.

AND this purification goes on after our initial conversion:

1 John 1:7-9 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

We can be Christians... "walking in the light" and yet still need the blood of Jesus to purify us (PRESENT TENSE... continuously!)

That happens as we confess our sins and go to the cross again and again

B. Keep Your Conscience Clean

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Acts 24:16 I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Hebrews 13:18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.

C. Stand in Awe of the Majesty of God

1. Look over both what Bildad and Job say in these chapters
2. Be humbled as a lowly human... and exalt the majestic God