

Job: God Must Provide For My Righteousness

(this transcript has been lightly edited for readability)

Everybody knows about Job. Everybody knows the suffering of this man. Everybody knows the sort of details of this story. Job could be the oldest book in the Old Testament; maybe it's foundational in ways that we haven't thought about. If you think of this story, what would you think is the big deep question of Job? I think Job asked the question of questions, and it's a question so deep that human wisdom fails to answer it correctly. Wise people don't answer this question correctly.

Maybe you would think that the primary question of Job is, “Why do bad guys prosper and good guys suffer?” And you do see that question here; you see the suffering of a righteous man. You would be tempted to think, “Doesn't my righteousness get me something?” Job echoes Psalm 73, where Asaph is looking around, and the bad guys are prospering, and the good guys are suffering, and he says this, it's rather humorous, he says, “Surely for no reason have I kept myself pure. I've obeyed for this? This is the game?”

Now the assumption of Asaph at that moment and the assumption of Job's counselors get at what is the ultimate question of Job. Here it is--Is relationship with God a meritocracy?

You say, “Paul, I don't know what that means.” Do we achieve the favor of God, the blessing of God, by means of our performance? And the devastating answer of Job is, “Absolutely not!” Because human righteousness always falls short of God's standard, and so Job destroys, decimates, human understanding of what's fair, because you would read Job and say, “It's not fair for Job to suffer!” Fair on what standard? No one deserves God's favor; no one deserves His blessing!

The most righteous person you could name falls short. That's the penetrating drama of Job, that all of our human wisdom, all of our scorekeeping falls short, doesn't answer the question. It's not right to say, “Job suffered because of his sin. It's not right to say Job deserved blessing because

he was righteous,” because, all of those deny the existence of a holy God who cannot be pleased by our righteousness, who must provide for us another righteousness so that we can have a relationship with Him.

The last four chapters of Job say, “You're not like me. You don't know what I know. You can't do what I do. You must not question me. I am magnificent in the ways that you will never be magnificent. My glory is beyond what you can understand. You cannot cross that creature-creator line. I'm good, I'm holy, I'm righteous, and I will do what I will. And hope is found in placing your trust in Me, not your trust in your righteousness!”

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