

“Answer Me!”—Job 38:1-3

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Answer Me!”, is Job 38:1-3 → *Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to Me.”*

This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Have you ever had times in your life when you felt like everything was going wrong and it seemed you just couldn't get “a break?” It may have felt like no matter what decisions you made, which ways you turned or how hard you tried, your efforts seemed to “backfire,” causing you more pain and grief. Such feelings are very real when people experience loss in their lives, whether it be loss of job, property, family members or even health. If such loss continues for a long period of time the feelings of grief can be accompanied by feelings of despair along with questions of purpose. This is only a glimpse of the life of the man whom Yahweh addressed in our text. His name was Job.

Job is described as a *blameless and upright* man who *feared God and turned away from evil*. (cf. Job 1:1) After receiving news of losing his property, his servants and his ten children one day—and eventually his

health (cf. Job 1:13-19; 2:7)—Job 1:22 says: *In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.* This does not mean he was not suffering. Nor does it mean he wasn't struggling with all the calamity happening to him.

When Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they . . . made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. (cf. Job 2:11) Naturally his friends wanted to be with him and help him even if they weren't sure what to say. In fact, Job 2:13 says *they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.* It is natural in your desire to reach out to your friend who is suffering to not know what to say. It may be a time to be silent as well as a time to simply be present.

Finally, when Job broke the silence, he simply burst forth in a lament, cursing the day he was born. (cf. Job 3) This led his friends to open up to share their analysis of why such suffering had come upon him. They told him he needed to confess his sins. After all, "confession is good for the soul." They told him that there is great disciplinary value in suffering. After all, suffering is good for you because it makes you stronger in the end. They told him that suffering is inevitable. After all, "into every life some rain must fall."

Their analyses were not necessarily comforting or even helpful. Basically, they were telling him that God must be punishing him for some

sin that he committed, assuming bad things only happen to wicked people. At one point Job even cried out in frustration at their “counsel”: *Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!* (cf. Job 31:35) Even a written indictment presenting charges against him in his sin was preferable to such suffering and accusations!

In the midst of Job and his friends’ discussions, our text tells us that Yahweh broke into the conversation *out of the whirlwind* and *answered Job*. (cf. verse 1) Revealing that the “counsel” thrown around in their discussions were no more than *words without knowledge*, He told Job to *dress for action like a man* (cf. verse 3) to receive the barrage of questions which Yahweh had prepared for Him. This idiom is equivalent to us being told to “roll up our sleeves” to ready ourselves for hard work.

However, God’s “answers” took the form of rhetorical questions concerning His *eternal power and divine nature* (cf. Romans 1:19), in effect challenging Job: “Answer Me if you know so much!”

A phrase I’ve used many times is: “Ask God questions . . . but don’t you dare question God!” It distinguishes an action motivated by faith or functionality. In other words, a person who is seeking God in faith is willing to submit to and trust in Him no matter what is happening in his life. The person who questions God’s authority refuses to submit to Him unless His rational analysis allows him to do so. In the end he is actually

placing his faith in his ability to logically reconcile God and His situation. He strives for control instead of faithful submission to the LORD. Job's friends were on the verge of such a faith struggle with all their analysis.

In His first question to Job in verse 2 of our text, Yahweh talked about those who darken *counsel by words without knowledge*. This is the danger of human analysis. While analysis strives to understand circumstances on the basis of knowledge it can lead to more confusion, uncertainty and even false conclusions. It actually "darkens" the understanding of the situation because it fails to take into account Proverbs 9:10 → *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*

Notice *the fear of the LORD* (i.e. faith in Yahweh) is ***the beginning of wisdom***. Since everything in the universe was made by Him (which Job had to admit with all of the LORD's rhetorical questions), it is important that He is the starting point as we seek wisdom and knowledge in our learning and discoveries from His creation. It is of utmost importance when it comes to morality, what's right and what's wrong. Any human analysis will eventually lead to justifying sin because the sinner doesn't want to take "No!" or "Because I said so!" for an answer. If faith in Yahweh is not ***the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is not insight*** in your life then you will be left to your own conclusions which satan will use to tempt you to deny *knowledge of the Holy One* completely. This is

eternally dangerous.

While all of these men involved with Job's plight interpreted it in light of Yahweh's work in their lives, Job was the only one who really clung to "the Holy One," so much so that he could see far beyond his plight to a bodily resurrection from the dead! He confessed his hope in Jesus in Job 19:25-27, as well as his longing to see Him with a new glorified body! He said: *I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!* In fact, Job's faith is commended by God after all this questioning because Job spoke what was right about Him throughout the ordeal. (cf. Job 42:7-8)

Job's faithful example is commended to you in various places of God's Word (cf. Ezekiel 14:14,20; James 5:11). An example of what? Many people refer to the example of Job to describe their lives of suffering: "Many times I feel like Job with the suffering I'm going through." Rather, Scripture refers to the example of Job to describe his life of *righteousness* and *steadfastness* by faith in God. When God says "Answer Me!" you, like Job, can only plead ignorance and fall before Him in humility and faith. In repentance you plead for His mercy (cf. Job 9:15) and cling to His grace brought about in the Person & Work of your Redeemer, Jesus, the Christ!

Notice God's grace through it all. In His answer to Job He said nothing about his suffering, nor did He address the struggle with divine justice. Job didn't get his bill of indictment nor a verdict of innocence. More importantly, God didn't humiliate or condemn him even though Job was humbled in His presence. The challenge in all circumstances of life is to place your complete faith in God's goodness and grace, even if you don't receive direct answers about your circumstances.

What words or thoughts flow from you when you find yourself in the midst of adverse circumstances? What do your prayers sound like when you're facing injustices or persecution? Where do you go for answers? Do you cling to your own analysis or the analysis of others only to provide satan a foothold to tempt you "into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice?" (cf. The explanation of the 6th Petition of the Lord's Prayer) Chances are we have all sinned by our words and thoughts in such situations. You may be involved in that sin right now. Maybe what was said of Job could not be said of you: *In all this Job did not sin with his lips* (cf. Job 2:10). Yet, as a sinner that didn't make him completely innocent. (cf. Job 9:2)

However, the Holy Spirit calls you to *the fear of the LORD . . . and the knowledge of the Holy One* where you see Yahweh's steadfast love and grace! Even Job's friends, though rebuked by God for their sinful counsel, were commanded by Yahweh to offer sacrifice for their sins (cf.

Job 42:7-9) because **His desire is to forgive your sins through the sacrifice of Jesus, the Holy One, so that you will receive eternal life!**

Instead of expecting you to answer that which you are unable to fathom He provides the Answer for you in Jesus and gives you the gift of the Holy Spirit Who gives you the faith to simply trust Him daily. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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