

17. God asks, we answer

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Do you remember many pop quizzes you had to take while you were in your senior high or college? If you were one of those sick genius kids, you probably enjoyed it while the rest of the lowly ignorant people like us were tortured, suffered through, and being humiliated because of our low intelligence, but mostly because of our own laziness to study.

Remember when your teacher said, "I am going to ask, you answer. You all have been taught to answer these questions that I am about to ask." But to us, it might as well have been a foreign language. We were not even in the same planet. It kinda reminds us of the Charlie Brown's classroom teacher in those TV cartoons? We didn't have the foggiest idea what our teacher was asking, either.

After chapter 2, we didn't hear one word from heaven. God was silent. Job thought that he was forsaken by God with injustice and unfairness. He knew that God wouldn't do that but he couldn't understand what was going on. So he demanded God to show up and judge his case so that he could be vindicated.

Please don't think that Job doubted the existence of the Lord or cursed the name of the Lord. He'd never done it as satan wished. But he became too righteous in his own eyes that he was heading to self-destruction.

When God finally spoke to Job in chapter 38, He spoke out of the whirlwind of the storm that Elihu had been describing in the last few chapters. Though Job demanded that the Lord speak to him, when God asked, he couldn't answer because God's majestic presence made him realize that he was not worthy of speaking to the Almighty God.

We'd prefer that God would speak to us in the sunshine with a still, small voice in our inner being, but sometimes He must speak out of the storm to get our full attention. This is how He spoke to the Israelites on Mount Sinai in Exodus 19; Ezekiel saw the glory of God in a storm and heard His voice in Ezekiel 1 and 2.

From chapter 38 to 41, God asked Job 77 questions, and Job couldn't even answer one. Actually no human could, but God. What was the purpose of God's questions to Job in this way? It was to make Job realize his own inadequacy and inability to meet God as an equal and defend his cause.

A piece of advice to those who demand God to explain the purpose and reason of the work He does in your life, please do be careful with what you demand from Him. He might take you upon your challenge. It is not gonna be a pretty sight if He does. He is not the One whom you want to challenge.

God's address to Job can be summarized in three questions:

- 1) "Can you explain My creation?" – Job 38:1-38
- 2) "Can you oversee My creation?" – Job 38:39-39:30
- 3) "Can you subdue My creation?" – Job 40:8-41:34

Job responded to Him briefly twice at the beginning of chapter 40 and 42.

As we study these last four chapters of this Book, we will encounter a few creatures that we have no idea about. We should not get distracted from what the Lord wants us to learn. Rather than spending much of our time and effort on the guessing game of those creatures, let's look at the main reason for this conversation between God and Job who was representing the entire human race.

A. CAN YOU EXPLAIN MY CREATION?

Job 38:1-7 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: 2 "Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? 3 Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. 4 "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Once God broke the silence, He didn't give any answers to Job's questions, rather He began with a reproof. He didn't apologize for having been silent so long. He didn't offer a hint of information about the whole thing between Himself and satan way back when it all started. Furthermore, God didn't even acknowledge that Job had been through deep physical pain and emotional struggle.

The purpose of this reproof was not to be cruel to Job, rather to refresh his memory about "Who the boss is." Oh, how we need that refresher course in our hearts often! How quickly do we forget who is in charge of our lives! It is the Lord, not us.

Here God didn't question Job's integrity or sincerity; He only questioned his ability to explain the ways of God in the world. Since Job thought that he knew about God, God wanted him to know how much he didn't know about the Lord. Knowledge of our own ignorance is the first step toward true wisdom. Wouldn't you agree?

Listen, when God asks questions to us, it is not because the All-Knowing God somehow doesn't know what is going on in our hearts. If that is the case, He cannot be the All-Knowing God, would He?

In Genesis 3, God came to the Garden of Eden and He was looking for Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, because they were hiding from the Lord due to their sin of disobedience. Was it because God couldn't find them from their hide-and-seek game? I think not. The Lord graciously was giving them an opportunity to repent and turn their hearts back to the Lord for His forgiveness.

The majority of sins that are committed by the believers of God come to their end by being exposed because they wouldn't repent from them.

Luke 12:3 Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

From the beginning, God planned His creation to be a garden of joyful beauty; but mankind's sin has turned the creation into a battlefield of ugliness and misery. I agree with what Mahatma Gandhi said, "There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed."

Do you know that the world produce enough foods each year to feed the entire population of this world? But there are 5 million people per year dying from starvation

not including malnutrition. That is about 13,698 people dying a day. America is the leading nation that provides free foods to the third world countries. But the greed of those country officials has no end. Somewhere around 85% of these starvation deaths occur in children 5 years of age or younger.

God asked Job if he knew how the Lord contains the seas around the world in v8 through 11; about the sun in v12-15; followed by 11 questions relate to the vast dimensions of creation, then about snow, rain, for a good measure God asked him about the various constellations. Did Job understand the laws that governed their movements or know how to control all these billions of stars and planets? No!

By this time, Job thought that he had probably had enough, but the Lord kept on asking. Job was way out-classed, way out of his league.

B. DO YOU CONTEND WITH GOD?

Job 40:1-5 Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said: 2 "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it." 3 Then Job answered the Lord and said: 4 "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. 5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further."

The Lord stops here and asks one more penetrating question to Job, "He who rebukes God, let him answer it." Job used the right word "vile". The Hebrew word for 'vile' is "qalal". It also means "despicable" or "cursed".

This verse reminds me what prophet Isaiah said when he had a vision of the Throne Room in heaven:

Isaiah 6:1-7 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."

The presence of our holy and righteous God exposes the filthy sinfulness of our nature.

Let's go back to what Job said in v4:

1) Behold, I am vile.

Modern psychologists would scream against this kind of statement. We've been encouraged to recognize our value, importance, self-esteem, and significance as individual, and there's certainly a place for recognizing our worth. But when we come face to face with the Living God, we quickly realize that we're nothing without Him.

Notice that God didn't correct Job for saying, "I am vile." Clearly, the Almighty meant for Job to stand in quiet awe of His power and might. Job's statement was one of needed humility.

2) What shall I answer You?

Suddenly, all Job's questions and demands meant very little to himself. Though God didn't answer any of Job's questions, Job got the earful of answers from God who controls the entire universe and loves him very much. God was reminding Job "Rest in Me. Trust Me. I can handle it all," and gave him relief from his mental anguish.

3) I lay my hand over my mouth.

Job had ordered his friends to do this when they spoke harsh and unkind words. Now, it was time for him to swallow a spoonful of his own medicine. In the face of God's power, sovereignty, and grace, nothing Job said would have made any difference. So he surrendered to the majesty of the Almighty.

Speaking of hearing from God, many Christians say that they cannot hear from Him. I see at least four reasons why they don't hear from the Lord:

1) They may not be born-again Christians.

They may think that they are Christians, but in reality, they have not received Jesus into their hearts as the Savior and Lord. Until they do, they are not the children of God, it is only logical that they don't hear from God because they don't have the Holy Spirit within them.

2) They ignored God's answer because they didn't like it.

They cannot hear any other answer from the Lord. God cannot be negotiated, nor threatened by anybody.

3) They cannot hear His answer because they decide that God can only speak to them in a particular method they want to hear.

Mostly God answers to us through His Word, the Bible in context as I've said many times. Or sometimes God uses godly people to give us His answer, but everything we hear must be checked with the Word of God before we follow.

4) They cannot hear from God because they willfully sinned against the Lord and haven't repented from their sins.

Our sins cut the on-going relationship with our God. In other words, we turn our deaf ear to His voice because we love our sins more than Him. Remember when Jesus took all of our sins upon Himself on the cross, God the Father had turned His back on His only begotten Son?

Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Oswald Chambers whom I deeply admire once said, "Sin is not a weakness. It is not a disease. It is a red-handed rebellion against God. And the magnitude of that rebellion is expressed by Calvary." If we want to see how horrendous and how wicked our sins are, look at what God had to do to Jesus to redeem us. Jesus' suffering on the cross was the punishment for our sin.

God saw the self-righteousness of Job deep-within the heart of Job before Satan ever came to Him with his wicked proposal. He allowed Satan to throw all of his horrendous attacks against Job to bring up his self-righteousness which would not come to surface unless the heat was turned up high enough.

We are not by nature humble, submissive, or quiet. We like to be in charge. Do we not? We seek to be in control. We like calling the shots. Many times, we don't like surprises – not even God's surprises. Nor do we like having to wait for His answer, especially in complete stillness and silence. We'd rather seek forgiveness than His permission. We'd rather resist than obey. We'd rather talk than listen.

When we learn to let go, however, God speaks. He may send storms our way to get our attention. He offers love, grace, and provision if we will simply give up our own selfish plans and motives and allow Him to take control of our lives.

The Book of Job teaches us that our response to life is a choice. Our attitude is a choice. We can have a totally selfish attitude and go through longer fiery trials or be submissive to the Lord and come out of it even though the circumstance may not be changed, we will be changed from inside. It is our choice.

C. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Knowledge of our own ignorance is the first step toward true wisdom.
- 2) We can start to hear from God when we stop demanding from Him.
- 3) We can hear from God when we remove our sins out of the way.