

How Should Man Be Just With God? Job 9

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores Job's struggle with righteousness and the transformative power of God's grace through Christ as the mediator for sinners.

Scripture: Job 9:2-32

Topics: "Righteousness", "Grace"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the profound struggle of Job, a righteous man grappling with the concept of being just before God amidst his suffering. Despite his uprightness, Job's self-righteousness and pride cloud his understanding of grace, leading him to question how a man can be justified before God. Darby emphasizes that true righteousness is not found in self-justification but through the grace of God, which meets us in our sinfulness. He highlights the role of Christ as the 'daysman' who reconciles us to God, providing the righteousness we cannot achieve on our own. Ultimately, the sermon calls believers to rest in the finished work of Christ rather than their own efforts for justification.

Transcript

In Job we have an example of a strong and upright soul, not understanding grace, with a great deal of selfwill. He knew he was not a hypocrite but was upright: God said so of him, and Job knew it. But there was a great deal of self-righteousness, self-complacency, and self-will. His piety made him attribute what came upon him to God, and his pride made him rebel against it. It is very interesting to see the exercises of a soul in this state. Job said many right things of God, and he knew God would not treat him as his friends did. He wants to find God. He knows God would do him justice if he found Him. "He is in one mind: who can turn him back?" But he could not find God. Job had not the secret opened as we have it; he was calling himself righteous. The question raised was how righteousness was to be found. Here is a soul in conflict with Satan.

There was life in Job, graciousness in his walk in life, upright dealing, etc.; and God said to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" etc. It was not Satan spoke first to God, but God to Satan. God knew what He was going to do, Satan did not. This history shews the resources the soul has when righteousness is called for. This took place before the law was given; if not before promises, before the gospel came. How is a man to be just with God? was Job's exercise. His friends had no thought about that. They were going on the ground of this world being the sphere in which God's righteousness in government is manifested; but Job saw the wicked prospering, the righteous sad.

Some will reason, soundly enough too, and tell us the other world will be the sphere where righteous acts will be rewarded and the converse. But why, if worthy of a good place in the next world, are they tormented here? But it is not so, that the condition of men answers to their conduct. There is another, thing besides righteousness, and that is grace. Grace meets with sin, and yet it does not contradict righteousness. Man knows nothing of this way.

Job had not really learnt what his own righteousness was worth, and he had not learnt how God brings out to a soul the consciousness of its state. Neither Job nor his friends understood God's way of grace - how God could ride over the sin by meeting it in grace. Job's friends could philosophise, they could tell a quantity of truths; but what comfort was there in that to a broken heart?

16 Now God in Christ is dealing with sinners: not men acting for God, but God acting in grace, because of man's state. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Christ had not broken the sabbath, but God was working because man was in sin and in misery.

This was not God dealing in law, nor promise, nor full grace, as shewn out in Christ; but here is a man taken up, Satan accusing him, and God dealing with him. A master hand was guiding all in Job's case, though Satan was permitted to sift him. The accuser goes up, and God says, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Satan accuses. Now he must go through another process to learn how a man, a sinner, could be blessed with God Himself - could know Him, could understand His thoughts and feelings. Satan might touch his goods, but not himself. This seems but an every-day occurrence: loss of children, property, etc. God carries it on, shewing how He orders everything. Job stands these losses; he blesses the name of the Lord; but his heart was not reached. Satan says, "Skin for skin," etc. Well, says God, You may go and do it. His wife too comes and says, "Curse God and die." His piety is proof against this also, his heart was not reached; but God has to do His work thoroughly. Job sits in the gate, his friends around him; he was a mark for every one; it is too much for him. Now he curses the day he was born. He was feeling human complacency before, and had not been exercised in the presence of God. Many can say good things of God who have never tasted what they are themselves in the presence of God. What we want is a righteousness that cannot be shaken in the presence of God. We must be brought to this - not only be conscious of grace, but have truth in the conscience.

Peter needed to learn what he was. There is a practical discovery in the presence of God of all the mischief that is in the springs of the heart; we want the springs of the heart broken up. How many are as discontented with God as possible, not looking after holiness, but seeking to make themselves comfortable! Until the will has been crushed in the presence of the majesty of God, there cannot be a right state before God. God does hate iniquity and love righteousness; but what good is that for a ruined man?

17 The world goes on the principle of sin being in it. Deceit is the will unbroken in the midst of the consciousness of sin. Those justified God who received Christ. The Pharisees complained because He ate with publicans and sinners; but the publican can say, That is just what I want. The sinner justifies God in owning the sin and receiving the grace. A man never knows God until he gets to that point - "How shall a man be just with God?" Men are willing to contend with Him; but what good is that? says God. God does love righteousness; but what avails that to me? How many sins to-day, yesterday, and so on, have I committed? It is no good pleading with God on that ground.

Then Job takes up another case. He cannot answer Him in His majesty, and He does not see His love. "If I justify myself, my own mouth will condemn me." How can I justify myself? How many foolish words this

week? If I am unrighteous what can I do? He is vexed in his soul about it. "He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If a scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent." A scourge comes, and perhaps the best family falls a prey to it. Shall I give up God then, and not trouble myself about it? But he has to do with God, and he cannot help it. He cannot escape His hand. He is not a man, as we are. Job would have got away from God's presence if he could, but he could not; he was all wrong as to this, but he could not get away from God.

"Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch." I cannot make myself clean before God. Men pass through the world in an astonishing way, thinking about their character, conduct, and of getting honour from one another, etc.; - but what are they in God's sight? Whited sepulchres, fair without, but full of dead men's bones within. The more a man labours to be good, the more he finds he is like the Ethiopian who cannot change his skin: the evil is in his nature, and he cannot get rid of it. When there is real integrity of heart, there is struggle. The sense of integrity, without the knowledge of righteousness, is the occasion of much misery in the heart. Job says, "Let not his fear terrify me." He had this fear. God has taken away the fear in Christ, and there is a daysman betwixt us, such as Job felt the need of.

18 The consequences of sin are not known yet. God is saving now, not judging in righteousness. There is the time coming when He will rule in righteousness. He is saving souls now for a better state hereafter, but then the "sinner dying a hundred years old will be accursed." We cannot judge of people's state of soul by their circumstances; we cannot say those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were worse than all that dwelt at Jerusalem.

When I come to that point, to say (not the world is wicked, but) I am wicked, I have the "daysman" between me and God. He is the One who has come to me in all the wickedness of my heart, and has come to me because I am so. Now I have, not only God working in me, sending Satan to plough up the fallow ground, and to shew to my conscience what was there long before, but God doing a work for me. He brings in a righteousness (His own) for the sinner. He works a work for us.

The first thing I find then is that this my state has not kept Him away from me, but it has brought Him to me. That is grace, not righteousness. Hiding my sin from me would not be mercy. Not letting me see things as God sees them is not mercy. It is in meeting me just as I am, and acting above the sin, that He has shewn mercy. Christ never alarms people who come to Him in their need. To the hypocrite He speaks terror, but to the poor in spirit it is "fear not: I am all that you need." You say, "I am such a sinner." Christ says, "That is just the reason I am come." You reply, "I have an awful will." "That is the reason I am come" says Christ: "I will break your will." "Neither do I condemn you," said He to the woman accused by the Pharisees.

I defy you to find a case where Christ brought fear upon a convicted conscience. He takes the fear away instead of causing it. He comes in the poorest and the lowest way to meet with those in need, and that they might not be afraid of Him. Grace reigns - it has come in God's own blessed sovereignty.

How different are men's thoughts of righteousness now from God's! We can let all go on quietly without trying to set things right, knowing we have something better. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ.

We have a daysman not only laying His hand on man but on God. He is the mediator to reconcile. If a day is assigned in a court of law, the daysman is the one who appears on my behalf to undertake my cause. Not only has Christ come to me in my sins, but He has come to answer for me, taking up the whole cause.

He has done it - settled the whole thing as to my sins, and is gone back to appear in the presence of God for me. He has appeared for God amongst us, but now He is gone to appear for us in the presence of God. I have given up all attempt to answer for myself: He has taken it up. Has God accepted His answer for me? Here faith comes in to accredit God when He says He has accepted Him. The work that the daysman has done is accepted. We know not only that there is a daysman, but that the daysman has sat down, the work being finished, no more remaining to be done (as to the sacrifice). The Holy Ghost is the witness of that: "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

19 Righteousness is there. Where? Before God. I am not talking of the fruits of righteousness, but of righteousness itself there. God's mind is that He has accepted Christ. God has given Him, and that is love. He has accepted His work, and that is righteousness. Now there is no fear. Grace reigns through righteousness. I stand in the presence of God by virtue of the perfect righteousness that has been presented to God. Where is love to be seen? Very feebly indeed amongst Christians, but love is not feeble in God. I find in Him perfect love. He has broken my heart because it was a hard heart.

Here was all the country set in movement to get Job's heart right! - Sabeans, Chaldeans, etc. God has been working in all this. I have the key to it all now through the gospel. Self-will, pride, all must be broken; but God is perfect love. He has taken away the sin by the cross, and He has provided righteousness. Then what have I to fear? Though He will exercise our souls that we may know good and evil, it is all love. I can glory in tribulation, knowing that it worketh patience, experience, hope.

Now, beloved friends, are you resting on the daysman? or are you saying, "If I can make my hands a little cleaner, my conscience a little quieter, I shall be all right?" If you were to stand in the presence of God, that would be all spoiled; Job 9:31. What righteousness is that which is spoiled in the presence of God?

It is the blood which has made atonement, and Christ at the right hand of God is our righteousness.

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