

PUT YOUR CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD

38 Then Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest. He said, ²Who is this who darkens deliberations with words that lack knowledge? ³Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

⁴Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵Who marked off its dimensions? [Tell me], if you know. Who stretched a measuring line across it? ⁶On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—⁷while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God sang for joy? ⁸Who knit the sea together behind doors; who brought it forth gushing from the womb; ⁹when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in dark mist, ¹⁰when I fixed limits for it and set its bolted doors, ¹¹and said, "This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves will break"?

¹²Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, ¹³that it might take the earth by its edges, [like a huge tablecloth,] and shake the wicked out of it? ¹⁴The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment. ¹⁵The wicked are denied their light; their upraised arm is broken.

¹⁶Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? ¹⁷Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? ¹⁸Have you contemplated the underworld's vast expanse? Tell me, if you know all this. ¹⁹What is the way to the dwelling place of light? And where does darkness reside? ²⁰Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? ²¹Surely you know, for you were already born; the number of your days is so large! ²²Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail, ²³that I reserve for times of trouble, for the day of war and battle? ²⁴What is the way to the place from where the west wind is dispersed, or the place from where the east wind is scattered over the earth?

²⁵Who cuts a channel for the down pouring rain and a path for the thunderstorm, ²⁶to water a land where no man lives, a desert without inhabitant, ²⁷to saturate a desolate wasteland, and make it sprout with grass? ²⁸Does the rain have a father? Who fathered the drops of dew? ²⁹From whose womb came the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens, ³⁰when the waters become hard as stone, and the surface of the deep is frozen?

³¹Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords that bind Orion? ³²Can you bring out the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with her cubs? ³³Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you establish their dominion over the earth? ³⁴Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cause a down pour of water to cover you? ³⁵Can you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, saying, "Here we are"? ³⁶Who imparted wisdom to the ibis? Who gave understanding to the rooster? ³⁷Who has the wisdom to measure the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens ³⁸when the dust fuses into lumps and the clods [of earth] stick together?

³⁹Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of her whelps ⁴⁰when they crouch in their dens or lie in ambush in a thicket? ⁴¹Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander around without food?

39 Do you know the time when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn? ²Do you count the months until they bear their young? Do you know the time they give birth? ³They crouch down and bring forth their young; their labor pains are ended. ⁴Their young thrive and grow strong in the wilds; they leave and do not return.

⁵Who let the wild donkey go free? Who untied his ropes? ⁶I gave him the desert to be his home, the salt flats to be his habitat. ⁷He scorns the commotion of the city; he does not hear the driver's shout. ⁸He ranges the hills as his pasture and searches for any green[plant]. ⁹Will the wild ox be willing to serve you? Will he stay by your manger at night? ¹⁰Can you hold him to the furrow with a harness? Will he plow the valleys for you? ¹¹Will you rely on him because of his great strength? Will you assign your heavy work to him? ¹²Can you trust him to bring in your grain and gather it to your threshing floor?

¹³The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, though her pinions lack feathers [for flight]. ¹⁴She lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand, ¹⁵unmindful that a foot may crush them, that a wild beast may trample them. ¹⁶She treats her young harshly, as though they were not her own, not fearful that her labor may have been in vain, ¹⁷for God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a portion of understanding. ¹⁸[Yet] when she spreads her feathers [to run], she laughs at the horse and rider.

¹⁹Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane? ²⁰Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? ²¹He paws in the valley, rejoicing in his strength, and charges into the fray. ²²He laughs at fear, afraid of nothing; he does not shy away from the sword. ²³The quiver rattles at his side, along with the glittering spear and lance. ²⁴In frenzied [excitement] he devours the ground; he cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds. ²⁵At the blast of the trumpet he snorts, "Aha!" From a distance he catches the scent of battle, the shout of commanders and the battle cry.

²⁶Does the hawk take flight because of your understanding and spread its wings toward the south? ²⁷Does the eagle soar at your command and build its nest on high? ²⁸It dwells on a cliff and stays there all night; a rocky crag is its stronghold. ²⁹From there it spies its prey, its eye sees it from a distance. ³⁰Its young feast on blood, and where the slain are, there she is.

40 Furthermore, Jehovah inquired of Job: ²Shall the one who raises frivolous objections contend with the Almighty? Let him who would instruct God [now] give an answer. ³Then Job answered Jehovah by saying, ⁴"I am insignificant, how can I answer you? I put my hand over my mouth. ⁵I have spoken once, but I cannot answer—twice, but I will[say nothing more]." (Job 38:1-40:5)

Introduction

A housewife testifies: "It was near the middle of April—with the deadline for filing income tax forms fast approaching—and my husband had not yet filed our return.

"Our tax forms should be mailed by now,' I badgered. But my husband was silent.

“Thoroughly exasperated, I rifled through the papers lying on his desk. I soon realized I could do nothing with them without my husband’s help. I know nothing about filling out tax forms. Come Saturday, with the deadline two days away, my fears of not getting those tax forms mailed on time intensified.

“You’ll never get those tax forms done,’ I charged, ‘I just know they’ll still be here a month after they’re due.’

“At this point my husband took my hand in his, looked me in the eye, and said, ‘Trust me.’

“Hugging my husband, I asked for his forgiveness. Then I renewed my vow to trust him. The taxes were paid on time.” (POWER, 4/15/90; p. 8)

Just as that housewife had to be reminded to trust her husband, so we must be reminded to put our confidence in the LORD, especially in times of trial or confusion.

I. Put Your Confidence in the LORD, Because He Is the All-Wise Creator

Now the LORD reveals Himself personally and directly to Job (38:1-3.) Job is charged as being one who *“darkens deliberations with words that lack knowledge”* (38:2.) As Job has spoken from his position of limited knowledge, he has produced darkness rather than enlightenment with regard to the issue of God’s justice and His just governance over the world. Job has darkened deliberations because he lacks a broad comprehensive perspective of God’s ways (Hartley, p. 491.) The LORD will now proceed to demonstrate Job’s ignorance by interrogating him with regard to the creation and maintenance of the world (38:3.)

The LORD begins by questioning Job about the formation of the world, using the imagery of the construction of a major building (38:4-7.) He asks Job, *“Who marked off the dimensions of the earth?”* (38:5a)—the site for this “building” (i.e.; the world) was carefully surveyed. *“Who stretched a measuring line across it?”* (38:5b.) A *“measuring line”* was stretched out to ensure that the world, or the earth, was constructed exactly according to the LORD’s “blue prints”—by implication it is being said that everything created corresponds precisely to God’s plan (Hartley, p. 495.)

The footings were set and the earth’s cornerstone was laid in place (38:6.) “In an ancient community the laying of the foundation stone for a public building such as a temple was a high occasion and was commemorated by a festive ceremony. On the occasion of laying the earth’s cornerstone the morning stars were assembled as an angelic chorus to sing praise to God ... At the moment the stone was set in place the sons of God, i.e., the angels, broke out in joyous singing, praising God, the Creator. Since no human being was present at this occasion, the inner structure of the universe remains a secret hidden from mankind” (Hartley, p. 495.)

The marvelous, mysterious, incomprehensible “construction” of the world testifies to the awesome wisdom of the Creator—a wisdom that is beyond the scope of man’s ability to understand. This should cause man to bow in humble trust before the LORD, as opposed to charging God with unrighteousness based upon man’s finite knowledge and limited understanding.

The LORD goes on to describe Himself as a great “midwife” presiding over the “birth” of the sea (38:8-11.) *“Who knit the sea together behind doors?”* (38:8a.) “The ancient Semites thought that the sea or the waters of the deep were the original elements of the world. Several ancient Near Eastern myths, e.g., *Enuma Elish* from Babylon and the *Baal Cycle* from Ugarit, recount the fierce battle in which the supreme deity won his right to rule by defeating the sea god(dess) ... In contrast to the mythical thought, the sea here is depicted as an infant in complete submission to JEHOVAH. Deep in the recesses of the universe’s womb, enclosed by double doors, suggestive of the womb’s labia, JEHOVAH skillfully knit the sea together like a fetus” (Hartley, p. 496.) *“Who brought it forth gushing from the womb?”* (38:8b.) “At the end of its gestation the LORD brought it forth gushing from the womb ... The picture is that JEHOVAH, the sea’s Creator, determined the sea’s every characteristic. Since he brought it into existence, he never had to subdue it in mortal combat as the ruling gods Marduk and Baal in ancient Near Eastern mythology had to do. It has always been subservient to him” (Hartley, p. 496.)

“Who knit the sea together ... when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in dark mist (?)” (38:9.) “JEHOVAH took care of the sea as gently as one cares for a newborn infant. He clothed the sea with clouds and swaddled it with dark mist. This is a graphic description of the heavy, dark clouds that often hover over the sea” (Hartley, p. 496.) *“Who knit the sea together ... when I fixed limits for it and set its bolted doors, and said, ‘This far you may come and no farther ... ‘ (?)”* (38:10-11.) “With another metaphor JEHOVAH states that he fixed limits or statutes, i.e., natural boundaries that the sea cannot cross. Or, using another figure, he shut the sea behind bolted doors, as though it were confined in a fortress ... Since he fully controls or restricts the sea, never can it at will inundate the inhabited world ... Its mighty, proud waves break at the seashore, the line drawn by God. Even when the sea is aroused in a violent storm and its waves reach far inland, there is a boundary it may not cross” (Hartley, p. 496).

Like a mighty general, the LORD commands the light to shine (38:12-15.) The LORD inquires of Job, *“Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place?”* (38:12.) “On the first day of creation God commanded the light into existence. And each dawn thereafter is a re-enactment of that first day ... JEHOVAH asks Job if he ever commanded the morning light even once to shine on any given day ... The answer is obviously negative, for the light obeys only JEHOVAH’s voice. He alone can bring forth a new day” (Hartley, pp. 496-497.)

Can Job command the morning light so that it *“might take the earth by its edges, [like a huge tablecloth,] and shake the wicked out of it?”* (38:13.) “As the light of day

spreads over all the earth, the wicked, who belong to the darkness and perform their evil deeds in the darkness, flee from the spreading light just as crumbs are shaken off of a linen table cloth” (Hartley, p. 497.)

“The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment” (38:14.) “Just as a lump of clay is turned into a beautiful design beneath a seal; so, too, the earth’s features glisten in beauty beneath the sun’s first rays ... In another picture, the early light of day makes the earth appear as a beautiful garment, exquisite in design and glorious in color” (Hartley, p. 497.)

“The wicked are denied their light; their upraised arm is broken” (38:15.) The light of day deprives the wicked of their light, the “light” by which they work, namely, the darkness. “The sun’s rays prevent the wicked from pursuing their evil designs; consequently, their upraised arm—a sign of their arrogant determination to enforce with violence their evil will—is broken ... These verses speak directly to Job’s concern that the wicked prosper unchecked (cp. chapters 21, 24.) JEHOVAH counters Job’s complaint with the position that his own command of the light confines the works of the wicked. He has contained the wicked within limits just as he has stayed the encroachment of the sea against the land. Like the sea, the wicked may cause terror and turmoil, but the light is the boundary that holds them in” (Hartley, p. 497.)

Next the LORD interrogates Job about his acquaintance with the extremities of the creation: Has Job ever traveled to the outer limits of the world? (38:16-24.) Note: “The axiom is that whoever knows or controls the extremities of the world has control over the universe” (Hartley, p. 498)—it is obvious that only God has such knowledge and such control. The LORD asks if Job has ever entered into *“the springs of the sea”* (i.e.; the origins of the sea) or *“walked in the recesses of the deep”* (38:16.) Beyond the depths of the sea lie the gates of death (38:17;) this, too, is unknown to Job and is beyond his experience and comprehension.

Nor has Job contemplated the underworld’s vast expanse (38:18;) that whole realm that is beyond the present realm of earthly life is foreign to Job. Note: Hartley maintains that the Hebrew word, **צְלוֹת**, which has a broad range of meanings (“earth,” “land,” “ground,”) here has the meaning, “the underworld” (pp. 498-499.) The context of the verse lends support to this interpretation, as the LORD is here interrogating Job about the mysterious realm beyond the inhabited earth.

The LORD wants Job to understand that there are vast dimensions of reality that are beyond Job’s comprehension and, therefore, due to his very limited knowledge and experience, it is wrong for Job to make definitive and disparaging statements about God’s governance of the world.

Moving from the depths of the sea to the far off horizons, the LORD asks Job if he knows *“the way to the dwelling of light”* or *“the place where darkness resides”*

(38:19-21.) “Poetically speaking, beyond the horizon are two chambers, one in the east for light and one in the west for darkness ... If Job knew the path to these abodes, he would have control over the light and the darkness ... His ignorance of this information indicates ... that his understanding is limited. Since he is not so ancient (vs. 21 is intended to impress upon Job his “youthful” lack of experience,) his position before God must be that of a contrite servant” (Hartley, p. 499.)

Next the LORD questions Job about the remote heavenly “*storehouses*” where the snow and the hail are kept (38:22-23.) The snow and hail are described as part of God’s arsenal that He can unleash against His enemies. Finally, does Job know the way to the place from where the west wind is dispersed, or the place from where the east wind is scattered over the earth? (38:24.) “The gentle west wind brings the much needed rain; while the east wind, the mighty sirocco wind, parches the earth” (Hartley, p. 499.)

The LORD thus confronts Job with the fact that He is none other than the all-wise and all-powerful Creator. Because He is the all-wise and all-powerful Creator, let us put our confidence in the LORD:

Why do you say, O Jacob, why do you assert, O Israel, My way is hidden from Jehovah, and my cause is disregarded by my God? ²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint, neither does he become weary. No one can fathom his understanding. (Isa. 40:27-28)

II. Put Your Confidence in the LORD, Because He Is the Caring Sustainer

Turning from His great acts of creation, the LORD now directs Job’s attention to the way in which He governs and maintains the world.

The LORD begins by questioning Job concerning the control and direction of the inanimate realm (38:25-38.) He appeals to Job to consider how He manages the weather (38:25-30.) God dispenses the rain and snow for the benefit of every region of the world, even a desert without inhabitant. God’s creative wisdom and ability is also seen in the various forms that water vapor can assume: from rain to dew to frost to ice, all are at God’s command and serve His purposes in the governance and maintenance of the world.

Next the LORD directs Job’s attention to the heavens and questions him concerning the constellations (38:31-33.) It is God who guides the stars and the planets in their heavenly courses—God’s wise governance of the world is not limited to the earth, it extends over the heavens and the whole universe. Note: Rather than it being the signs of the Zodiac that control the affairs of men, as the ancients believed, it is the LORD who brings out the constellations (or, the signs of the Zodiac,) in their seasons (38:32a.) When the LORD asks Job, “*Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you establish their dominion over the earth?*” (38:33,)

He is referring to the divine ordinances He established on the fourth day of creation:

And God said, Let there appear lights in the expanse of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them serve as signs, to mark seasons, and days and years ... ¹⁷And God appointed them in the expanse of heaven to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. (Gen. 1:14, 17-18)

The LORD goes on to inform Job that it is He, the LORD, who controls the storm (38:34-38.) At His command the clouds release their abundance of water in the form of rain, and the lightning bolts present themselves to the LORD as His servants, saying, *"Here we are."* "When the dry dust fuses together into hard lumps upon the sun-baked ground, it is the LORD who 'tips the heavenly water jars,' causing the rain to pour out upon the earth" (Hartley, p. 501.)

The LORD now proceeds to question Job concerning the animate realm (38:39-39:30.) Note: The creatures singled out for consideration are those especially associated with the wilderness, animals that are for the most part beyond man's ability to domesticate: 1) animals that are incorrigible, like the wild donkey and the wild ox; 2) animals that are dangerous, like the lioness; 3) animals that are inaccessible, like the mountain goat; 4) animals that enigmatic, like the ostrich. These are all God's creatures that serve His inscrutable purpose and who are objects of His care.

The LORD turns Job's attention to the lioness and the raven (38:39-41.) By means of His questions, the LORD indicates that it is He who provides food for these wild creatures. They are His creatures and He cares for them, both the mighty lioness and the carefree little raven are dependent upon God and He provides for them. Next He turns Job's attention to the mountain goat and the doe (39:1-4.) The questions regarding the mountain goat and the doe giving birth to their young in places that are inaccessible or hidden from man, implies that only God can watch over them and assist them in the birth process. Now his attention is turned to the wild donkey (39:5-8.) The wild donkey loves its freedom far removed from civilization: *"he scorns the commotion of the city." "He does not hear the driver's shout"*—unlike the domesticated donkey, the wild donkey does not submit to the yoke and command of the wagon master. This very animal that resists domestication by man has been granted its independent nature and lifestyle by God: *"it is God who untied his ropes"* (39:5.)

Next the LORD points Job to the wild ox (39:9-12.) The questions emphasize the independence as well as the unharnessable power of the wild ox—here is another animal that resists man's control. But, being a creature of God, the wild ox is subject to God's sovereign control and fulfills the purpose for which God has made him: although he is not useful to man, the wild ox is useful to God. Then there is the ostrich (39:13-18.) The ways of the ostrich may seem odd to

man: she proudly waves her wings, but she cannot fly; she seemingly neglects her eggs and her young. It is because God, her Maker, did not endow her with wisdom, yet He sees to it that her young do not perish and that her species does not become extinct. God has also seen fit to endow her with speed enough to outrace the horse and rider. As one contemplates the ostrich, one finds that the ways and purposes of God are beyond human comprehension.

The next animal to which the LORD points Job is the horse (39:19-25.) God has endowed the horse with might and fearless courage in the face of battle. He has made the horse to be a majestic creature; as such he bears testimony to the majesty of his Creator. Next Job is invited to consider the hawk and the eagle (39:26-30.) The hawk, as she migrates to the south each autumn (39:26,) bears testimony to the wisdom of her Creator. Likewise does the eagle: she soars in the heavens and builds her nest high up in the rocky crag far removed from danger; but even from that lofty height her keen eyesight enables her to spot the prey far below. The birds of prey are yet further testimony to the wisdom of the Creator and to the wonderful provisions He has made for His creatures.

Thus the LORD confronts Job with the fact that He is the all-wise and caring Sustainer: governing His creation and providing for all His creatures, each one uniquely endowed and fitted by their Creator to serve His purpose and display His majesty.

Because He is the caring Sustainer, let us put our confidence in the LORD:

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store up food in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (Matt.6:26)

III. Put Your Confidence in the LORD, Because He Is Our Faithful Covenant God

Having completed His discourse, the LORD now elicits a response from Job: Does Job possess the knowledge and power of God as Creator? Does Job possess the wisdom and care of God as Sustainer? (40:1-2) Note: The charge God brings against Job is the fact that Job raises "*frivolous objections*" (40:2)—that is to say, Job unnecessarily, or unwarrantedly, finds fault with God.

In response to the revelation and discourse of the LORD, Job is rendered silent: "*I put my hand over my mouth*" (40:3-5.)

Not only has Job been confronted by God as the all-wise Creator and the caring Sustainer of His creation; Job has also been confronted by God as the faithful covenant LORD. When He confronts Job, God reveals Himself by His covenant name: "*Jehovah* (or, "*the LORD*") *answered Job*" (38:1.) Note Deuteronomy 7:9, "*Know therefore that Jehovah your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his*

covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”

Although the LORD (Jehovah) answers Job out of the tempest (38:1,) Job is not swept away. The significance of this fact is two-fold. First, Job is justified before God: Job’s standing before the tempest demonstrates his innocence, his righteousness; note Proverbs 10:25, *“When the tempest has swept past, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever.”* Second, God is justified before the world: Job’s standing before the tempest demonstrates God’s justice, God’s righteousness; it demonstrates that God does make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked. Note Malachi 3:17-18, referring to the righteous, the LORD declares,

“They will be mine,” declares Jehovah of hosts, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”

Although Job is reduced to silence, he does not tremble in terror, as, for example, Isaiah, when he finds himself in the immediate presence of the LORD. When Isaiah is confronted with the majestic presence of the LORD, he cries out, *“Woe to me! I am ruined! —for I am a man with unclean lips and I live among a people with unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts”* (Isa. 6:5.) Because of his devotion to God—and that produced in him by the grace of God—God has made Job to stand secure. Job experienced the very thing of which the Apostle Paul writes: *“Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the LORD is able to make him stand”* (Rom. 14:4.)

From Job’s encounter with the LORD let us learn to put our confidence in the LORD; because He is our faithful covenant God:

Know therefore that Jehovah your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. (Deut. 7:9)

Conclusion

We should put our confidence in the LORD, especially in times of trial or confusion. This present passage from the Book of Job supplies us with three good reasons for doing so: 1) because the LORD is the All-wise Creator; 2) because the LORD is the Caring Sustainer; and 3) because the LORD is our Faithful Covenant God.