

Job 9
April 26, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Do you think a human being could successfully defend themselves if questioned by God? Why or why not? [Let people engage]

Transition: In Job 9 Job asks two questions: (1) “How can I be righteous before God?” (9:1–13) and (2) “How can I meet God in court?” (vv. 14–35). You can see how these questions connect. Job is righteous, but he has to prove it. How can a mortal man prove himself righteous before God? Can he take God to court?

It’s an interesting tension. Job knows no one can contend with God, yet Job still wants to speak or argue his case – even though he believes he can’t win!

BOOK:

9 Then Job replied:

2 “Indeed, I know that this is true.

But how can a mortal be righteous before God?

3 Though one wished to dispute with him,
he could not answer him one time out of a thousand.

4 His wisdom is profound, his power is vast.
Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?

5 He moves mountains without their knowing it
and overturns them in his anger.

6 He shakes the earth from its place
and makes its pillars tremble.

7 He speaks to the sun and it does not shine;
he seals off the light of the stars.

8 He alone stretches out the heavens
and treads on the waves of the sea.

9 He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion,
the Pleiades and the constellations of the south.

10 He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed,
miracles that cannot be counted.

11 When he passes me, I cannot see him;
when he goes by, I cannot perceive him.

12 If he snatches away, who can stop him?
Who can say to him, ‘What are you doing?’

13 God does not restrain his anger;
even the cohorts of Rahab cowered at his feet.

14 “How then can I dispute with him?
How can I find words to argue with him?”

15 Though I were innocent, I could not answer him;
I could only plead with my Judge for mercy.

16 Even if I summoned him and he responded,
I do not believe he would give me a hearing.

17 He would crush me with a storm
and multiply my wounds for no reason.

18 He would not let me regain my breath
but would overwhelm me with misery.

19 If it is a matter of strength, he is mighty!
And if it is a matter of justice, who will summon him (Hebrew me)?

20 Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me;
if I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty.

21 “Although I am blameless,
I have no concern for myself;
I despise my own life.

22 It is all the same; that is why I say,
‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.’

23 When a scourge brings sudden death,
he mocks the despair of the innocent.

24 When a land falls into the hands of the wicked,
he blindfolds its judges.
If it is not he, then who is it?

25 “My days are swifter than a runner;
they fly away without a glimpse of joy.

26 They skim past like boats of papyrus,
like eagles swooping down on their prey.

27 If I say, ‘I will forget my complaint,
I will change my expression, and smile,’

28 I still dread all my sufferings,
for I know you will not hold me innocent.

29 Since I am already found guilty,
why should I struggle in vain?

30 Even if I washed myself with soap (or snow)
and my hands with washing soda,

31 you would plunge me into a slime pit
so that even my clothes would detest me.

32 “He is not a man like me that I might answer him,
that we might confront each other in court.

33 If only there were someone to arbitrate between us,
to lay his hand upon us both,

34 someone to remove God’s rod from me,
so that his terror would frighten me no more.

35 Then I would speak up without fear of him,
but as it now stands with me, I cannot.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Embrace humility about what you can't control or explain. Job acknowledges that God's wisdom and power are beyond human comprehension. His conclusion isn't neat – it's humbling. There are situations where we won't get clear answers. Instead of forcing explanations ("this happened because..."), practice accepting limits.

Be honest with God – even when it's uncomfortable. Job doesn't sugarcoat anything. He questions, wrestles, and even challenges what he sees as unfair. Yet he's still engaging with God, not withdrawing. Honest engagement is better than silent distance. Job shows that wrestling can still be a form of faith.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Job 9). Victor Books.

In chapter 9 Job complains that he has no way to present his case before God, because he cannot find Him. Note in v. 33 his appeal for a "daysman" or umpire to stand between him and God. "How should a man be just with God?" (9:2) means, "How can a man ever plead his case with God?" Thank God for the Mediator, Jesus Christ, who represents us before God! See 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1–2; and Zech. 3. See Job 16:19–22; 23:3.

Wiersbe, W.W. (1996). Be Patient. (pp. 39-43) Victor Books

In Job 9 and 10, Job asks three questions: (1) "How can I be righteous before God?" (9:1–13) (2) "How can I meet God in court?" (vv. 14–35) and (3) "Why was I born?" (10:1–22; see v. 18) You can see how these questions connect. Job is righteous, but he has to prove it. How can a mortal man prove himself righteous before God? Can he take God to court? But if God doesn't step in and testify on Job's behalf, what is the purpose of all this suffering? Why was Job even born?

“How can I be righteous before God?” (Job 9:1–13) This is not a question about salvation (“How may I be justified?”) but about vindication (“How can I be declared innocent?”). If a man tried to take God to court, he would not be able to answer God’s questions one time in a thousand! Yet Job doesn’t know any other way to clear himself before his friends.

Most of this section is a declaration focusing on the attributes of God, especially His invincible wisdom and power that control the earth and the heavens. Would anybody dare go to court with an opponent powerful enough to shake the earth, make the stars, and walk on the waves? (See Isa. 44:24 and Amos 4:13.)

But God is not only invincible, He is also *invisible*. Job couldn’t see Him or stop him to give Him a summons to court. God can do whatever He pleases, and nobody can question Him! Even the monster *Rahab* (Job 9:13, NIV, another mythological creature like *Yam* and *Tannin*, 7:12) has to bow before God’s power.

“How can I meet God in court?” (Job 9:14–35) In order to prove himself righteous, Job had to take God to court. But suppose God accepted the summons? What would Job say or do? He discusses this by imagining several situations.

(1) *“If God came, what would I say?” (vv. 14–19)* How could Job answer God’s cross-examination? How does one reason with God or present one’s case before God? If God should answer, Job would not believe it was really His voice; and if Job should say the wrong thing, God would only afflict him more. When Job finally did meet God (Job 38–41), the Lord asked him seventy-seven questions! And Job couldn’t answer one of them! His only response was to admit his ignorance and shut his mouth in silence.

(2) *“If I could declare my innocence, what then?” (vv. 20–24)* This is no assurance that God will set Job free. Both Eliphaz and Bildad claimed that God rewards the righteous and judges the wicked, but Job said that sometimes God destroys both the righteous and the wicked. Wicked judges condemn the righteous and help the ungodly, and God apparently does nothing about it. Job is accusing God of injustice, not only toward Job and his family but also toward other innocent people in the land.

(3) *“If I try to be happy, what good will it do?” (vv. 25–31)* Time was running out for Job, like the king’s messengers that hasten to their destinations, and the papyrus boats in Egypt that skim swiftly down the river, and the eagle that swoops down from the sky. Perhaps Job should take a more positive attitude toward his afflictions, forget his pain, and smile (v. 27). But would that change anything? No! He would still be guilty before God, rejected by his friends, and sitting on an ash heap in sickness and pain. Even if he took a bath and changed clothes as an act of public contrition and cleansing, he would still fear what God might do. Job is convinced that God is against him and that any steps he takes on earth will be nullified by heaven. The defendant can smile and put on a brave front in court, but that doesn’t keep the judge from saying, “Guilty!”

(4) *“If only I had a mediator!” (vv. 32–35)* If God were a man, then Job could approach him and plead his case. Or if there were a “daysman” (mediator) between God and Job, he could take away the rod of judgment and bring Job and God together. But God is not man, and there is no

mediator! *This is where Jesus Christ enters the picture!* Jesus is God and became man to reveal the Father (John 14:7–11) and to bring sinners to God (1 Tim. 2:5–6; 1 Peter 3:18). He is the “daysman” that Job was pleading for centuries ago (Job. 16:21). Believe it!

Zuck, R. B. (1985). *Job*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 731-732) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

a. God's awesome power (9:1–13)

9:1–13. **Job** was aware of what Bildad had said (**I know that this is true**); he knew that the wicked perish (8:13). But that only compounded Job's problem. Why then was *he* suffering? In Eliphaz's dream, the voice had asked, “Can a mortal ('ěnôš, ‘weak, mortal man’; cf. comments on 4:17) be more righteous than (or ‘be righteous before’) God?” Job responded to that by asking, with almost the same Hebrew words, **how can a mortal** ('ěnôš, “weak, mortal man”) **be righteous before God? To dispute with** God (*riḅ* “bring a court litigation against Him”—one of the many legal terms in the book), as Eliphaz had suggested (5:8), would be impossible. Ironically, though Job did try to subpoena God (cf. 10:2; 13:22; 14:15; 31:35–37), he found that when God finally did speak, Job **could not answer Him!** (cf. 40:3–5)

The reason Job sensed his inadequacy to present his case to God is that God, he said, is awesome in **wisdom** and **power** (cf. 12:13). Again ironically, God displayed those same two attributes when later He spoke to Job (38:1–40:2; 40:6–41:34). It would be too risky to resist God, Job knew. God can move **mountains** (9:5), cause earthquakes (v. 6), and cloud over **the sun** and **stars** (v. 7). (God, not Leviathan, eclipses the sun; cf. 3:8.) He stretched **out the heavens** (9:8; cf. Isa. 40:22) like a tent over the earth, and He **treads on the waves**, that is, His power is evident in sea storms. In His creative power He made the starry **constellations** (Job 9:9).

Also, He does miraculous works (v. 10, an ironic quotation of Eliphaz's words in 5:9). Furthermore, Job cowered under God's invisible nature (9:11; cf. Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27), irreversible power (Job 9:12), and irresistible **anger** (v. 13; cf. v. 5). The reference to God's passing by (v. 11) may be Job's upstaging of Eliphaz's dream of a spirit passing by his face (4:15). **Even the cohorts of Rahab** (cf. 26:12; Isa. 51:9) submit to God. This refers to the Babylonian creation myth in which Marduk defeated Tiamat (another name for Rahab, and for Leviathan; cf. Job 7:12) and then captured her helpers. Later Rahab became a nickname for Egypt (Pss. 87:4; 89:10; Isa. 30:7).

Since God in His anger conquers all the forces of evil, both real and mythical, how could Job hope to contend with Him? Job sensed his situation was helpless and hopeless.

b. God's arbitrary power (9:14–24)

9:14–20. Since God is so great (vv. 4–13), Job again wondered **how** (cf. “how” in v. 2) he could possibly plead his cause (**dispute with** is lit., “answer”; cf. “answer” in v. 15) and win. Since he would be speechless in God's presence, all he could hope for from such a **Judge** would be

mercy. He thought he probably would not even get a **hearing**, that God **would crush** and **overwhelm** him. In both **strength** (cf. vv. 13–19a) and **justice** (cf. vv. 19b–24) God is supreme, thus leaving Job with no hope. (“Justice” translates *mišpot*, a juridical term used frequently in Job and meaning justice or legal equity, 8:3; 9:19; 19:7; 27:2; 31:13; 34:5, 12; 37:23; 40:8, litigation, 9:32; 14:3, legal charges, 22:4, or a court case, 13:3, 18; 23:4.) In fact Job was afraid he would become confused and witness in court against himself (**my mouth would condemn me**; cf. 15:6 and comments on 40:8).

9:21–24. For the sake of argument Job had said, “*If I were innocent*” and “blameless” (v. 20). Now he affirmed, **I am blameless** (cf. “blameless” in 1:1, 8; 2:3; 4:6; 8:20; 9:22; 12:4; 22:3; 31:6). Several times Job avowed his innocence (cf. 6:10; 10:7; 16:17; 27:6). But even so, Job concluded, what difference does it make? Whether **blameless** or **wicked**, God would arbitrarily destroy him. Such an indiscriminate action—like **a scourge bringing death to the innocent**, and **wicked ... judges** ruling over a nation—enraged Job. Here, for the first of several times, Job accused God of unfairness. As Job viewed life’s injustices—his and others—he protested the notion of his contenders that God never perverts justice (4:7; 8:3).

c. Job’s despair (9:25–35)

Job sensed that his case was useless because (a) his days were fleeting (vv. 25–26), (b) God held him guilty no matter what he did (vv. 27–31), and (c) no one could mediate his case (vv. 32–35).

9:25–26. Bemoaning the brevity of life (cf. 7:6–9; 10:20; 14:1–2, 5; 17:1), Job said his days were fleeting like **a runner ... like boats of papyrus**, the Egyptian speedboats of that day, and **like eagles**. The word for “eagles” is *nešer* (also used in 39:27), a word that may include both eagles and vultures. Perhaps here Job had in mind the peregrine falcon that can speed up to 120 miles per hour as it swoops **down on its prey**. These three (runner, boats, and a falcon) depict speed on land, sea, and air.

9:27–31. Job’s plight was great for even if he tried to **forget** his problem and **smile** (cf. his lack of joy, v. 25), he would still be **guilty** before God. So **why** even try? Even if he were to clean himself up (outwardly as a sign of inward purity) he thought God was so against him that He would toss him into a cesspool!

9:32–35. Again the idea of debating his situation **in court** seemed useless (cf. vv. 3, 14). After all, God **is** divine and **not a man**. Furthermore, no arbiter could possibly stand above both God and man (who could be greater than God?), listen impartially to both sides (**lay his hand upon us both**), and **remove God’s rod** of affliction and **His terror** (cf. 13:21; 18:11). *If* such were possible, Job would confront God fearlessly; **but**, he said in despair, **I cannot**.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Job 9). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.