



Last week Jonah and Job reminded us that we don't know everything, and even if we are fairly aware of things, life is more about God and what he does than it is about us. He alone has the authority to act meaningfully. We see that Jonah understands that when he tells the sailors to throw him overboard. He doesn't seem ready to submit to God, but he understands the futility of fighting him. Job comes to the same realization in Job 40:3-5 when he acknowledges his ignorance and admits that he is better off keeping his mouth shut.

While their initial responses to God are certainly steps in the right direction, unfortunately their acknowledgement of God's authority and their recognition of personal limitations or guilt aren't sufficient to resolve the problem. They have stopped digging the proverbial hole, but they still remain in the hole. In Jonah's experience it takes being hurled into the deep, banished from God's sight, and being brought down to the pit in the belly of a great fish to bring change. Meanwhile in Job 40-41, Job receives another round of questioning from God. What glory, strength, and authority does he have over creation? Can he control creatures like the leviathan and behemoth (or the great fish) like God does?

The implication of God's lecture to Job is not only that he is incapable of managing his world by himself, but also that it would all come tumbling down if God didn't sustain it. The irony in Job's position is that he has already experienced that lack of control in the destruction of his family, property, and health by enemies, weather, and disease. But instead of recognizing his own inability he focuses on the indignities and perceived injustices that he experiences. In response God reminds Job who he is and what he is capable of managing. So Job acknowledges his ignorance, but not until he evaluates his own experience of mortality does he understand that "everything under heaven belongs to God" (Job 41:11) and see his place in the created order.

When he finally understands his place, submits to God, and expresses his gratitude for God's blessing, Job's humility bears fruit as he aligns his life with God's expectations. In Job 42:1-6 he restates his ignorance in contrast to God's knowledge and power, but the real change comes in verse five when he knows and understands God personally. He "had heard *of*" God, but now he has *seen* him. Knowing God, he can now situate himself accordingly before him. He "despises" himself by comparison and repents of his ignorance and obtuseness even as Jonah does in the belly of the fish.

Discussion Questions

Has God ever allowed you to have your way when you disagreed with him? What leads us to insist on our way, and how do things typically go when we do?

Why do we often blame God for the consequences of our own actions? Why would God let us have what we want when it may not be best for us?

How does gratitude bring restoration and strengthen or renew our commitment to serving God?