

Job 23

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Preacher: Billy Joe Calvert

[0:00] In the 23rd and 24th chapter of Job, Job is replying on this last cycle of speeches. Eliphaz, the Timnite, the oldest and probably the wisest by the world standard has just pulled off the gloves and given his final closing remarks.

And in those closing remarks, he has quit insinuating, he has quit implying, and he has just declared, are not your sins great? He has no longer spoken about what would become of one who walks in wickedness, but rather he has spoken about the fact in his mind that Job is enduring these things because he is wicked.

So we would expect when we see Job's response in the 23rd chapter that Job would take issue with that, but he does not. In the 23rd chapter, Job is really not speaking to his friends, he's not really even speaking to the Lord.

He is doing much like he did in the 3rd chapter and is just spilling out his heart. He is crying from the depth of his being. He will share such great truths in the 23rd and 24th chapter that the only friend left to speak, which will be Bildad, will say such a mumble jumble of words that he really won't even respond to Job's argument for Job leaves them speechless.

There is no response. The third friend will have nothing to say at all and Job will bring this portion to a closure. And we will once again be back at the point where those who came to help were no help at all.

[1:38] He says so in the very opening verse of this 23rd chapter that there are no, there's no aid or help from those around him.

Rather, his condition has been worsened because of the counsel he has received from his, quote, comforters. But here, let's see Job chapter 23.

Then Job replied, There the upright would reason with him, and I would be delivered forever from my judge.

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him. When he acts on the left, I cannot behold him. He turns on the right, and I cannot see him. But he knows the way I take.

When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to his path. I have kept his way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the command of his lips.

[3:02] I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. But he is unique, and who can turn him, and what his soul desires that he does.

For he performs what is appointed for me, and many such decrees are with him. Therefore, I would be dismayed at his presence. When I consider, I am terrified of him.

It is God who has made my heart faint, and the Almighty who has dismayed me. But I am not silenced by the darkness nor deep gloom which covers me.

Job chapter 23. Here, as Job has just been accused of being an individual of great sin, and therefore deserving of the calamities that have fallen upon him.

And here, as Job has said over and over again, that he was walking in righteousness and completeness, and yet it was to no avail. No longer does he defend himself, for there has been no answer to any of the comments that Job has made thus far.

[4:09] No one has given him an answer of, why do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer? There was an attempt at it there in the 22nd chapter. In the 24th chapter, Job will go into more details and speak of the reality that indeed there are in this life the prospering wicked and the suffering righteous.

He will come to the conclusion that there will be a day of reckoning, though, and that will be in eternity. But here in the 23rd chapter, he is not defending himself. There comes a point, by the way,

in every argument, in every discussion, where we no longer have to worry about defending our own character, for character is proven by conduct, not by words.

The greatest way to prove our character is to display our life, and Job has done so. He said, here I am, tell me where I have fallen short. And while they have made all these accusations, we will find later that they have not made those accusations with any kind of proof, any kind of valid testimony to the such.

So Job has lived up until this day with the shame and the ridicule of the world, the thoughts of falsehood and sin by everyone around him, but the certain testimony of his heart, not denying the Lord his God.

He has questioned a number of things. Sure, he has never denied him in action. He has had the ups and downs. He has spoken sometimes very harshly. He has spoken out of the depth of his suffering, and he has spoken in haste at moments, and God will call him out, but that is not a judgment.

[5 : 44] That is just what we call living, right? That's the reality of enduring in those seasons. Job never has a sin charged to his account.

There is the questioning of his understanding, but never a particular sin. Even when the Lord God does speak, there is no sin charged to the account of Job.

We know that Job is really enduring these things because he is indeed righteous. That God is displaying his righteousness to not only the world, but to Satan.

And he is using him for that purpose. But here we have this great transition where Job is finally being prepared to hear what it is that the Lord God Almighty has to say.

And I want you to see it. I've titled it The Revelations of the Refiner's Fire. The Revelations of the Refiner's Fire. What he has learned in the midst of the fire.

[6 : 41] We are reminded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego learned something in the fire, right? They said that we will not bow down, but if we die, we will still not bow down before you.

And it wasn't until they were thrown into the fire did they learn the reality of the presence of the angel of the Lord in the midst of the fire. It would have been really comforting if the angel of the Lord had shown up before they were thrown in the fire and stopped the king from throwing them in there. And they never would have, if he had even come close to the doubt, but it wasn't until they were in the fire did they see the revelation of the angel of the Lord. And it was that fire that shone them over and over again in Scripture.

We see that there are revelations that come from moments of suffering. There are revelations that come in moments of trial, even in sometimes in moments of doubt. It was Elijah's fire of doubt in which he thought he was the only one that God gave him the revelation of the reality that God always has his man.

As a matter of fact, he had over 7,000 of them at that time. God gives the revelations in the midst of the struggle. Job is at this point now where certain things are coming to light.

[7 : 51] And no longer does he have to defend his character. He no longer has to defend his actions. He no longer has to declare and decry all that he has done. He will again repeat the refrain that indeed he cared for the orphan, he cared for the widow, he cared for the helpless, he fed the hungry and gave a drink of water to the thirsty.

But he doesn't have to anymore because there are some things that have been fashioned in this fire. And sometimes, by the way, the fire was not just the fact that he lost his possessions and his children and he got sick.

Sometimes the greatest fire is the judgment of those who are sitting in front of him. He lost all of his possessions in an instant. He lost all of his children in a moment.

His health failed him instantaneously. But over and over again, the world around him doubted him.

And he sat longer in the judgment of the world than he did in the judgment of God.

And it was that fire that was beginning to fashion things in his heart. That fire that was beginning to show him matters. The very first one we see that is born out of this refiner's fire is confidence.

[9 : 10] Now, Job is not self-confident. And we have a tendency to think that he is such as his friends did. His friends accused him of being self-confident, of trusting in his own righteousness.

He is not. But he does have confidence. He has the testimony of his own heart and the testimony of his own character that speaks to the reality. Look at what it says.

Then Job replied, Even today my complaint is rebellion and his hand is heavy despite my groaning. So notice here that what is about to come out of this is coming out of the heaviness of God's hand and the groaning and the pain and the suffering.

So he's not going to say these things are true because life has gotten easier. He says, Oh, that I knew where I might find him. He has spoken this refrain once before.

He goes back into this reality of wanting to stand before the Lord God and longing to be in his presence, wanting to be before him and to go on trial.

[10 : 11] Now to us it seems a little arrogant. But we understand the confidence that comes from the testimony of his own character. And it is a confidence that is not rooted in his perfection but rather in the character of God.

And we will notice that in just a moment. And Job is saying, I just want to find the Lord God and I want to be before him and I want to stand before his seat.

And over and over again he says that I might be before him. He says in verse 4, I would present my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. That does not mean, by the way, we kind of lose a little bit of this in the English.

It's not that he's going to argue with God. But it essentially says, I want the opportunity to present my case before the Almighty. I just want to be there and say, God, this is what's happening.

This is what I know. And I want to hear what he has to say. He's not arguing. There's no implication of getting into a banter with God here.

[11 : 19] He says, I want to speak. And I want to speak freely. The first of all, we see this confidence. The confidence to stand before the Almighty and speak freely. By the way, that's a gift.

To be able to speak freely before the one on the seat. Now we know through the book of Hebrews that we come boldly before the throne through the blood of the Lamb. And it is the blood of the Lamb that ultimately gives us the confidence to stand before the Almighty and to speak freely.

The same picture that we get in the book of Esther when Esther could not go before the king for she had not been invited. But yet she garnered this confidence through prayer and fasting and the prayers and fasting and Mordecai. And she went and stood before the king in confidence.

And the golden scepter was extended and she could speak freely. It is the confidence that being in front of the king on his seat would also bring an opportunity to speak freely to the king on the seat.

And by the way it is the character of the one on the throne that dictates that not the character of the one before the throne. It is implying here that God would allow me the opportunity to present my argument without interruption without belittling me and just let me speak.

[12 : 39] So notice he's trusting more in the character of God that God would allow me to do so. He even states would he contend with me by the greatness of his power?

So here's the reality he is willing to acknowledge that if he didn't want me to speak God is so powerful he could just say be quiet, be still and boom I'd be done. And so would he's asking the question if I was before his seat and I began to speak would God in his power just shut me up? And he answers that and he says no. He wouldn't do it. Why? He says no. Surely he would pay attention to me.

Think about that for just a moment. He has just stated that the one he's going to stand before is powerful enough to silence him in a moment.

but he's also powerful enough to stop and pay attention to me. See the confidence there. It's not self-confidence that God wants to hear from me and he would let me state my case.

[13 : 58] He says and I would listen to him. It says in verse 5 I would learn the words which he would answer and perceive what he would say to me.

The little reading is I would listen to what God has to say about me. It is the reading that says this I want to stand before him and tell him everything I'm going through and then I want to give him the opportunity to tell me everything he knows about me.

Now many of us want to stand before God and tell him everything we're going through but not many of us want to stand still and let him tell us everything he knows about us. But Job said but I would listen and I would want to know.

Friend I want to ask you do you really want to know everything God knows about you? Most of the time we say no.

It's because we know to the core of our being our own wickedness and our own desperation and we know our own fallacies and we know that we do not deserve to be there but do you also know that

he takes delight in you? And if he's permitted you to be there it's because he's already extended the golden scepter to you and therefore what he says to you he's going to say out of love.

[15:19] He's already welcomed you into his presence which by the way that no unclean and unpure thing can be in the presence of God he cast that out but if you're in his presence then by all means listen to what he has to say about you when we go to him in prayer much like the psalmist we say here I am oh Lord declaring to me all my things I love the psalm that says that God knows all of our intimate ways he knows all of our good he knows all of our bad he knows when we go he knows when we stay still God knows everything about us and then that psalm ends with the testimony and yet God delights in us and so I think about that often God knows me better than I know myself but he rejoices over me that is astounding and that is confidence in the character of God not in the ability of man and he said I want to be before that judge why because when I'm in the presence of the panel judge of this world all you are bringing are accusations and they're ill founded accusations you cannot tell me the truth but when I stand before him he will tell me the truth and his truth will be absolutely true and I will have to accept it and then he makes this final declaration in verse 7 there the upright would reason with him and I would be delivered from my judge

I would be delivered forever he says if I could just hear the decree of the king on the throne then my deliverance would be forever I love what I believe it was Barnes who said in his commentary on this passage he said my full and final deliverance would be from the throne in heaven regardless of how anybody on earth saw me and what Job is saying if I could just be in his presence you could judge me all day long but it wouldn't matter because my full deliverance has already been granted I appeal to the higher court and the higher court has already granted me freedom and deliverance before I stood in his presence so judge me if you will I have confidence in the judge where do you get that through the fire of suffering confidence brings another fruit with it and it is comfort there is comfort found here he says behold I go forward but he is not there and backward but I cannot perceive him and when he acts on the left

I cannot behold him and when he turns to the right I cannot see him so I'm seeking for God I can't find him I'm confident that if I could ever be before him then I could find my vindication I could find my release from judgment if all I could just be and so that confidence is there but what you need is comfort because he says but I can't get there I can't find him so with all that longing and that confidence that God is good enough to vindicate me and release me and I'm trusting in the goodness of God here he said but I need comfort in the moment because I can't find him I can't be in the presence of me and here's where the comfort comes in but he knows the way I take I can't find him but he knows the way I take one little one translator translated this literal reading as he knows his way the literal reading is he knows the way either the way I'm taking or the way he's taking with me regardless it doesn't matter he the almighty knows the way and then we get this beautiful verse that when he has tried me I shall come forth as gold here's where comfort is found not that I have found him but that God knows the way he knows the way

I take he knows the way he's working with me he knows what he's doing in my life and he is doing something here and now he comes to this place of surrender right that when he has tried me I love what I believe it was John Piper said about this in the book of Job when we look at the reality of the sovereignty of God we can see at one time that the tragedies that come upon Job are ascribed to Satan but when Job speaks of them he speaks of the reality that it's God who's doing it that Satan tested him Satan did all these things Satan set him with swords upon him Satan did all these things and we see that in Job 1 and 2 but when Job starts speaking Job gives no attestation to the work of Satan Job says the almighty is doing it why because if we ascribe the work to Satan then we're saying that Satan is more powerful than the one we're trusting in but when we ascribe it to the holy God then we're saying he's doing it for a reason because we know he's good we're trusting in the goodness of God and I could stand before him and he would allow me to speak and so if he is good that's his character and that gives me confidence now I have the comfort that in his goodness that he is trying me that is there's a purpose for it and the purpose and we can quote these verses all day long but the purpose is for good that after he has tried me I shall come forth better as gold refined by fire he is not saying that

God has a purpose and that purpose is going to belittle me no he says the purpose is to purify me the purpose is to promote me the purpose is to make me better and this is where comfort is found that God has a purpose behind what he is doing and the purpose is ultimately for our good so that he gets the glory and he wraps that up by saying he knows his way I don't understand it I can't even

find him he's moving over here but I can't be in his presence but he knows the way now comfort is not found just in surrendering that because there are times in which we could have a false comfort well God just must be refining me where sometimes what God is doing is disciplining us sometimes we are not too comfortable because we're being disciplined and so now we have a sin in our life that is being dealt with and he is disciplining us but if we like Job have set in the fire long enough and we understand that this is no longer the disciplinary hand of a loving father but rather this is what God is doing there is comfort that comes from that comfort is found in the consistency of living and he declares that here he says I have comfort that God is refining me and I have comfort that God is purifying me why because my foot has held fast to his path and I have kept his word and not turned aside I have not departed from the command of his lips and

[22:19] I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food notice what he says I have lived consistently and since I have lived consistently my heart testifies to me that God must be doing something for me now if we don't have the testimony of a consistent life when we enter into that struggle then we have to say is this some sin I have committed is this a failure is this a weakness is God disciplining me for something that I have done have I sown these seeds but if the testimony of consistency resonates and all of a sudden we find ourselves in the midst of it then we must find comfort there with the reality that God is doing something to purify us to make us better and we've come to the point now where Job knows why it is happening but he doesn't completely understand all the reasonings behind it he can see the end because it's based upon the character of God and there's comfort there because if it is his work it's going to accomplish his purpose but now all of a sudden we come to another truth that is born there in that fire and that is this conviction and it is the one and if we're just to be straightforward about it scares most believers today it is why we have such a hard time with the book of Job because we like retribution theology even if we do not call it retribution theology we like saying we get what we give or we we can sow and then we can expect a harvest if we do good we get good if we do bad we get bad and it's all within our control there's really no comfort there there's no comfort in that because how many of us can do good every day there's always this back and forth what today was a good day so maybe I got good well what about tomorrow I don't know for

I don't know what tomorrow is going to hold and there's no consistency in that there's no comfort there's no confidence but if we have that confidence and that God is doing a purpose here then we have to come to this conviction and it starts in verse 13 but he is unique and who can turn him so now he begins to speak of the difference of the almighty as opposed to humanity and I love what he says but he is unique that is he's different he's not like me he's not like you and who can turn him the implied answer there is no one and what his soul desires that he does here's a clear declaration of the sovereignty of God what God wants to do he does and there's nothing anyone can do about it because he's unique even if Job is saying he desires that my life is miserable he's going to do it I can argue until I'm blue in the face but if that's what he wants that's what he's going to do now I know we're pushing back saying but why would God want that he's already said in a couple verses before because he's refining me and purifying me as gold there's comfort there there's a purpose behind it there's something there's a testimony that that will be at a later date but that has to be united with the conviction that God is unique and what his soul desires that is what he's going to do for he performs what is appointed for me and that is whatever is happening to me look at this surrender of Job these things that are happening to me God appointed them for me and many such decrees are his God is in control of all that is going on and he doesn't understand he still doesn't have an answer for it but he is making this declaration that God has appointed it for him the world says well that's crazy you're just what God has appointed his judgment for your sins it's no I haven't God wants me to suffer why I don't know but it's an appointment of the Almighty because he's unique and I cannot change his mind and neither can you and if this is what he wants to do then that's what he's going to do and I'm just going to let him do it which leads us and this is why so many of us shy away from it therefore I would be dismayed at his presence and when I consider I am terrified of him now that doesn't mean I'm scared to death like he I can't be near him it just means when I consider the greatness of the Almighty and the fact that if he wants to do it he's going to do it that's what causes me to tremble I'm still welcomed into his presence he would still allow me to speak his words to me would be true my vindication would be right but his greatness is so extensive and I tremble with the reality that he answers to no one and no one's going to change his mind or his ways and what he has purposed that he will do it is God who has made my heart faint

and the Almighty who has dismayed me think of everything that he's went through so up to this point of all the loss that he's experienced of all the people wagging the finger of his wife saying curse God and die of his people around him in the community turning their nose up to him of his comforters coming and judging him he says none of these things caused me to quiver none of these things caused me to faint but when I consider the Almighty that is where I get weak because he's great one of the things that is missing from the church in America today is the grand concept of the holiness and greatness of God that the church doesn't tremble at the reality of who he is you say well should I be scared of him no but we ought to be in awe of him we ought to fear him with a holy reverence we ought to be as everyone else in scripture is that when they walk into his presence they fall flat on their face and they expect to die for he is unique and we can understand that what he purposes that's what he's going to that's what he's going to do even if his purpose for me is to suffer and to struggle and all those things then that is his prerogative and I cannot change it I can cry out to him in confession and say search me oh Lord I can stand before him and let him speak to me and we have the privilege that Job does not we have the fullness of the revelation of God and we can let the word of God search us out and if we see a matter which we need to confess then surely we ought to confess and repent but when we've done so and we've stood before him and we've cried out from him and we've been in his presence and we've been in his word and he has spoken over and over and over again into our hearts and if he continues to show us that we are his and we are before him and we are accepted by him then we stand and say but you are God and you will do what you will even if we never understand for that is our conviction and because of that we don't have you figured out and because of that we have to say you make me tremble oh God I believe if we ever get over the fear of the Lord God Almighty then we would quit rejoicing in the wonder of restoration found at the cross the fact that the blood of the lamb gives us the opportunity to go before him in boldness we're not just running into the room of the highest ranking official you can think of you're running into the courtroom of the one who does what he wants to with the highest ranking official you can think of and it is the blood of Christ that gives us the ability to be there and we have to say that it is when I consider this when I think on this it makes me tremble for he is unique and there's nothing I can do about it I'm wholly completely dependent upon him I have confidence that what he does will be done well and I have the comfort that when he does it he's doing it for my good because I have the conviction that he's doing it for his own purpose and his purposes are always good even when I don't understand them and these are the revelations of the refiner's fire that we find in Job 23 let's pray father I'm so thankful that we were reminded of your greatness that Job could say that when he considers you he trembles for you are unique and that highlights the wonder of our salvation found in Christ it highlights the amazing restoration we have through our Lord and Savior and we trust that what you're doing in our life is for your good glorious purposes even when we like Job do not understand and we have no answers we look to the one who knows all things and does all things well and we say may you be our confidence and our comfort in each and every trial as we leave here tonight may we take that hope that wonder of who you are and share it with those around us that you may be magnified and glorified each and every day and we ask it all in Jesus name amen thank you guys greatly