

Job 13:3-28

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[0:00] Amen. Job 12, 13, and 14, if you remember, is Job's long response to the arguments of his three friends.

When this whole ordeal began, we had the grand privilege of seeing what was going on in the courtroom of heaven. We've heard the declaration of God that Job is a man complete, not perfect in that he is blameless in perfection and spotlessness, but complete.

He's the same man at home as he is in public. He's righteous according to the standard of that judgment of his own righteousness. He's not an individual with a false sense of humility.

He is one that is following the Lord to the best of his ability according to the revelation given to him. He is setting aside his family, serving as the priest of his own home, even with his adult children and sanctifying them.

And yet he enters into a series of trials. His friends come. Job speaks first, and he speaks out of the depths of that pain. Job speaks probably a little forward for most people of that day, longing to die rather than to live in the midst of his suffering.

[1:16] What follows are the discourses of his three friends referred to as counselors. We don't ever want to lose sight of the reality that they came to bring him comfort and counsel. And we say that because it's not like these are three enemies gathered together just to heap accusations upon Job.

These are three friends, three people that were concerned, that made an appointment to come and meet with their friend that was in need. They were appalled at what they saw, so much so that they were silent and could not say a word.

The severity of the suffering was so much more than they thought or could imagine before standing before him. But then what they heard from Job didn't match what they were seeing with their own eyes.

Job declaring self-righteousness, Job declaring faultless before God and longing for a death of deliverance. And so they answer him according to the interpretation of the day.

We've spoken about it every time we open up the book, so we don't really need to continue to harp upon it. But they are reasoning according to what they know of God and what those who have went before them know of God.

[2:33] And the revelation given to them. One of the realities of why the book of Job is so important to us is because it is a time in history in which God is opening up more of himself to his people and to mankind in general.

Because this is during the patriarchal or pre-patriarchal time. This is before we have, you know, Abraham might have been wandering and sojourning through the promised land.

But they're definitely not growing and multiplying in captivity in Egypt. So this is long before the giving of the law. This is long before Mount Sinai.

This is long before God declaring these relationships. But the truths that are being taught here of God will lead into this reality. That we don't have God figured out.

So we have to live in relationship with him in accordance to who he is and his character. And we have to lean in on him and trust him to reveal more and more of himself to us.

[3:32] We need a progressive revelation. We need to know more than what we think we do. It is being challenged here in the book of Job. And as his three friends have answered according to what Job had known formally, what they knew experientially, and what everyone around them had declared, that if you do right, you get right.

If you do wrong, you get wrong. And so if there's wrong in your life, it's because you're doing wrong. And this has really been an accepted norm until Job. Because now we have one who knows himself

better than the ones before him.

And what we have in 12, 13, and 14 is Job's really discourse to all of that. Now, following this, they will answer again. And they will have even harsher words to Job. They don't listen.

But, I mean, in the heat of the moment, if you think about it, where Job says, You're useless counselors and you're no good to me. And, you know, he kind of talks to them with a little bit of sarcasm.

We can also put ourselves in those positions. So I say all this to say, let's not be quick to judge Job's friends. But let's not also be quick to judge Job.

[4:43] Because they're working through. This is the furnace of formation of beginning to understand a little bit of who the Lord God Almighty is. But here in the 13th chapter, in chapter 12, Job has addressed his friends.

He said, oh, so you're the ones who know all wisdom. And he begins to speak of the wisdom that they profess. And then he says in verses 1 and 2, I know this as well. Behold, my eyes have seen it. My ears have heard it. What you know I also know I've understood this.

So what he said is he said, I have seen and heard everything you're talking about. I've experienced the same reality you're telling me about. But there's got to be something more.

Because now what I'm going through doesn't match what I know. Now my situation is unique. And so here what we find in the 13th chapter starting in verse 3, Job transitions from addressing his friends to addressing the Lord God.

And he will address God in chapter 14 as well. And I want you to see this evening what it looks like to seek the audience of one. He's seeking the audience of one.

[5:53] The word of God says, but I would speak to the Almighty. And I desire to argue with God. But you smear with lies. And you're all worthless physicians.

Oh, that you would be completely silent. And that it would become your wisdom. Please hear my argument and listen to the contentions of my lips. Will you speak what is unjust for God and speak what is deceitful for him?

Will you show partiality for him? Will you contend for God? Will it be well when he examines you? Or will you deceive him as one deceives a man? He will surely reprove you if you secretly show partiality.

Will not his majesty terrify you and the dread of him fall on you? Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes. Your defenses are defenses of clay. Be silent before me so that I may speak.

And come on me what may. Why should I take my flesh and my teeth and put my life in my hands? Though he slay me, I will hope in him. Nevertheless, I will argue my ways before him.

[6:57] This also will be my salvation for a godless man may not come before his presence. Listen carefully to my speech and let my declaration fill your ears.

Behold, now I have prepared my case. I know that I will be vindicated. Who will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die. Only two things do not do to me.

Then I will not hide from your face. Remove your hand from me and let not the dread of you terrify me. Then call and I will answer or let me speak. Then reply to me.

How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my rebellion and my sin. Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy? Will you cause a driven leaf to tremble or will you pursue the dry chaff?

For you write bitter things against me and make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth. You put my feet in the stocks and watch all my paths. You set a limit for the soles of my feet. While I am decaying like a rotten thing.

[7:58] Like a garment that is moth eaten. Here we see in this transition that as Job has listened to and heard the counsel of his friends.

He has responded independently to them as each one has taken their turn to speak. So too has Job. And then he responds to them as a corporate body in verse 12.

I mean chapter 12. And in chapter 13 he is transitioning from seeking the counsel of his friends to seeking the audience of one. It is the great longing that Job will have from this moment on.

It is this longing that will be answered in the 38th chapter when God finally breaks the silence and begins to speak. It is here that when God does speak Job does indeed remain silent and doesn't say a thing.

We know that when God speaks he does not answer all of Job's questions. Rather he poses questions to Job to remind Job of his position and of his sovereignty. But it is that audience that Job is seeking.

[9:02] It will be some time before he gets it. There will be another round or two of argumentation that takes place before he does so. There will be much judgment. There will be much misunderstanding.

There will be some great truths that are shared. We will get into chapter 14. And we will find can a man make himself clean? But yet God does. God hides our sins and holds us.

We will find in verse 15 where it says that who could stand before the Lord God? Could the unjust sinner ever have the right to stand before God? And yet at the end of the book we do have God standing before them and declaring his wondrous glory and splendor to them.

And we see these truths here as they're wrestling out their understanding and God is revealing himself to them. We will often, I've thought about this the other day, we'll often teach from what we are passionate about but we minister from what we've suffered through.

And Job will in turn minister to his friends at the end and he will restore them because he knows the deeper things of God because of what he has walked through.

[10:17] He knows the things of God that are hidden to normal circumstances. And it is because he is seeking this audience of the one here.

And what does it look like to seek it? The first thing that we notice in this is that there is a presence sought. God has been silent from the very beginning.

The only voices we have heard since chapter 2 have been Job and his three friends. And there's been a lot that has been said. Each of them have proverbially referred to the other as windbags. There's a lot of talking going on. There's a lot that is being said, a lot that is being heard. Some truths, nuggets of truths that are normally true are there.

The normal circumstances, those would apply. But yet Job says, for all that he has heard, all that he has been told, that is not what he is seeking.

[11:19] He says, but I would speak to the Almighty. It is the presence of the Almighty that he is longing for. And he's longing for it because he has already declared that those who have been talking to him have told him nothing new.

They have not spoken the truth as he sees it in his situation. They have not brought a fuller revelation or a newer revelation. Because all that they have shared, he has already been made aware of.

And he knew that he would not find his help nor his hope in the counsel of those who did not know more than him. And so his longing, the presence that he seeks, is that of the Almighty.

And I love the name and the title he uses for God. Because he is referring to the one that is sovereign and indeed over all. He is the Almighty. He is not the one that is restrained or confined to limitations of understanding by what the people who have went before him have said.

But rather, he is the Almighty. But I would speak to the Almighty. And I desire to argue with God. Now in our language, when we read that, well, who is he to want to argue with God?

[12:39] The word argue there does not necessarily mean to prove a point or to win an argument, so to say. It just literally means that there may be justification and vindication.

That is, that the truth may be made known. That the truth would be seen. It is not so that one side can say, well, I beat you and I won this argument.

Because we do know that it is quite possible to win an argument and yet lose the battle. That you can win an argument and never really clarify or reveal the truth.

And so what Job is saying here is, the presence that I seek would be the one in which the truth is made known. And we'll see it as this passage progresses.

That I may know and that others may know. And that God himself would declare it so. I long to be in his presence. He says, but you smear with lies.

[13:36] And you are all worthless physicians. Here is something that is rather uncomfortable for us to admit. That while Job was saying, but I want to speak to the Almighty.

I want to argue with God. In the very next sentence he says, but you are in the way. You are trying to give counsel and you are trying to give help.

But you are in the way. This is a tendency that I have. I am a person who doesn't like awkward silence. It's my personality.

I feel like the void has to be filled. My wife tells me there is no such thing as awkward silence. It's just blessed peacefulness. That's our difference in personalities. But too often, I try to stand in the middle of the space where God is trying to do his work.

I want to intervene. Because I want to fix it. And I feel like I know how it should be fixed. And I jump in that space.

[14 : 44] They said seven days until Job spoke. But the moment Job spoke, his friends would not shut up. Because they didn't like the words he said.

What if they had remained silent and let God respond like he does at the end of the book? But Job says, I want to speak to him.

No offense, my friends, but you're not helping. You're not giving me good counsel. You're not declaring any truth. And the reason we want to help is because we feel like we know what's going on.

I do not think that it is bad motives of his friends. Just like in our lives, I never think that it is bad motives every time that I step into a space that I probably shouldn't.

The intentions are well-meaning. The intentions are well-grounded. Sometimes there is a moment where we are the vehicle and the avenue in which God uses to declare truth. And if that is so, then we ought to be that one.

[15 : 49] But hear what Job is saying. Because Job has a longing. Now, let's just go ahead and admit this. If Job's longing was not to encounter the Lord God Almighty, then the friends had the right to step in and point him to the Lord God Almighty.

But since his longing was to encounter the Lord, they assumed that God was going to speak through them. Instead of giving space for that time.

Job says, Sometimes the greatest wisdom is found in silence.

And remaining quiet and allowing the Lord God to speak because it is the presence that is sought.

And as Job seeks the presence of the Almighty, he moves a little bit further and he says, Here there is the partiality that is shunned.

In our wording, it's going to seem strange. We're going to kind of pull back from it for just a moment because it's going to be a little bit offensive. But he says in verse 6, Now, when we see that, we say, Well, we ought to be partial to the Lord God Almighty.

[17 : 24] We ought to be jealous for him. He is supreme. But what Job is accusing them of is something that if we're not careful, each and every one of us do.

And the partiality he shuns is the partiality where man feels like he has to defend what God is doing because he is afraid God's character will be defamed. I have had a number of agnostic and atheistic people.

I've had people that have left the atheism and agnosticism. And they've all told me the same thing.

Too often the greatest hindrance to Christianity are Christians because they make easy targets.

Because they feel like they have to define God when really you can't. And they spend their time trying to defend like, Well, if God exists, why is there evil?

Why does God permit this? Why does he permit that? Why do babies die? And see, all of a sudden in your mind you're trying to rationalize that. And how would you answer that?

[18 : 36] And sometimes the answer is because he is God and we are not. And we feel like it is our responsibility to defend the character of God.

It's not. He is God. And when Job's friends were encountered with an individual and the only reality was that here is someone who did no wrong and he was still suffering and to them that brought shame to the name of God.

So they wanted to defend God's character. And the only way to defend God's character was to defame Job's character. Well, it must be because Job's done something wrong.

Or it must be because there's some... That has been done throughout Christianity and throughout the history of God's people, by the way. That we feel as if it is our responsibility to excuse the unexplainable acts of God.

How do we explain Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11? How do we explain where the word of God says that some men have been appointed unto destruction? How do we explain that?

[19 : 51] Sometimes we can't explain it and we just have to surrender it. And we have to be content as the people of God to say, I tell you what, if you believe in Jesus Christ, you can ask him when you get there.

And we've got all of eternity to work out the theology on that. Instead of going through exhaustive explanations all for the same motive of trying to bring grace to the name of God and save face to the character of God.

God does not need us to preserve his character. He needs us to submit to his lordship.

And this is the partiality that Job is shunning. Don't belittle my circumstances because what's going on in my life makes God bigger than you can handle.

Because you can't explain it. If God is explainable, then he's not God. The moment you can explain it is the moment you can define it.

[21:05] And the moment you can define it is the moment you can control it. This is why names are so important in scripture, right? Because when you name something, you control it. And so when you know the name of something, you have it.

This is why when there's wrestling with the angel, and you see this when Israel is wrestling, and he says, tell me your name. And the angel of the Lord says, I'm not going to tell you my name for it is wonderful.

And the whole reason he wouldn't tell him his name is because if you can name me, you control me, and I'm not going to give you that control. I'm not going to permit you because I'm greater than you.

My name is too wonderful for you. I'm going to make a great nation out of you, but you'll never control me. And this is why it's so important when God reveals a name to us.

Because now all of a sudden, there's a part of God we understand. We don't control it, but we understand. But it's also telling in the scripture, there's always another name. And there's always a greater name, and a name that we do not know yet.

[22:02] And there's a name written on his thigh, a name that we know not yet, and a name that is recorded in heaven that will not be revealed to us until that day. We see that in the book of Revelations. There's a name unknown. Why? Because there's more of God than we will ever know.

And that has to be that way because if we can define it and contain it, then we control it. But we need to submit to his lordship, and we need to give space for the mysterious, wondrous ways of God to take place in the world around us and not always have an answer.

Now, that's hard for me. That's just hard. To not always have an answer as to why, but to know that God is moving.

And he shuns this partiality. Why would God permit this? I don't know, Job says, and neither do you. And if you tell me you do, then you are belittling my experience.

Third, we see that there is a personal surrender made. He tells them, as they have tried to declare and save the name of God from shame, will it be well with you when he examines you?

[23:33] That is the same examination you're saying he's doing to me. How would you come out? Or will you deceive him as one deceives a man? Well, he will surely relieve you if you secretly show partiality.

Will not his majesty terrify you and the dread of him fall on you? Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes and your defenses are defenses of clay. And he makes this transition.

Now he quits looking at them. He says, Be silent before me so that I may speak and then let come on me what may. Here is this surrender. He says, I want to speak.

I'm seeking the presence of the Almighty. And as I speak, then let come on me what may. He surrenders all personal rights to life here. Why should I take my flesh and my teeth and put my life in my hands?

Here is this wonderful verse. Though he slay me, I will hope in him. Nevertheless, I will argue my ways before him. Some believe, and I think it might be actually true that the literal reading is, when I get into his presence, he will kill me and there is no hope.

[24:40] Yet I trust. And that, there was a, early manuscripts have it written in such a manner, but there's a scribal edition on the side in which we get our modern translation that though he slay me, I will hope in him because that is the wording that is implied there.

So the literal reading is this, Job is saying, I know the moment I stand before him and declare my righteousness, his holiness will kill me and there's no hope for that because he is so righteous and holy, but yet I want to be there.

That is surrender. What he's saying is, he said, I so want to be in his presence that even if it kills me, I'm going to trust that that's where I need to be and I'm going to surrender it.

But guys, remember this now, this is long before the sacrificial system. This is long before the cross of Calvary. This is long before this. This is, you know, everywhere in scripture when someone's in the presence of God, they fall to their faces and say, woe is me, I'm going to die.

Job's expectation is to enter into the presence of God and die because God is holy, holy, holy. But he has surrendered his right to life to be in the presence of the Almighty.

[26:04] And he has assumed this personal surrender. He says, this also will be my salvation for a godless man may not come before his presence.

So he said, just the ability to be there is kind of a justification in itself. For if God would welcome me into his presence, vindicates what I've been saying this entire time, that I am indeed complete and righteous because God's allowed me and permitted me.

This is something else that the rest of scripture just continues to resonate with, that the godless are not welcome into his presence. It tells us in the book of Hebrews what we go boldly before the throne, but we go boldly how? Through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Through the blood of Jesus Christ. I read something, it was so, I'd never seen it like this, I probably have thought it like this, but I've never seen it declared like this, I'm so thankful for it.

I read it this past week, R.C. Sproul made a comment and he said, I used to ask this on an examination of a student. So I'm going to ask you the same question. Okay? It's a true or false question.

[27:13] And I'm going to ask you just like you did and I answered it, I'm going to tell you I got it wrong. So I'm going to let you guys have it to. He said 100% of times it was wrong. Here's the question. That the blood of Jesus Christ is the only means in which God cleanses the sinner of his sin.

That God, and I'm going to say it right, that the blood of Christ is the only way that a sinner will ever be clean from his sin. True or false? Each one of us say true.

He opened up a little bit further, he said no. You know, and somebody said, that's anti-scripture. He said no. Because God doesn't clean you from your sin. He never removes the fact that you are guilty for Christ died for the guilty.

Look, I'm guilty now. But Christ's righteousness covers your guilt. So that when God looks at you instantaneously, he sees your guilt, but he sees the righteousness of Christ covering your guilt. We are still sinners saved by grace. And it's his righteousness that is covering our sin. It's the miraculous work of salvation.

[28:34] God forgets our sins. He casts them as far as the east is from the west in Christ. And as Hebrews says, we go boldly before the throne through the blood of Christ because we are the ungodly that are not welcome there, but for the blood of Christ.

We are covered. We are clothed in the blood of Christ. This is why in this life, each one of us want to forget what we used to be, but we can't because the effects of that sin are still there for the wages of sin is death.

It's still there, but the righteousness of Christ is over the top of it so that when God looks at us, you know the propitiation, see, remember that? The cherubim that were on the Ark of the Covenant, remember that imagery we saw in the book of Exodus?

This gives you a little bit better viewpoint of that. So you had the cherubim, the wings touching each other, spread out, and there's the blood put up on the propitiation seat. It was called the propitiation seat. It's one of the hardest things in Scripture for me to say, by the way.

I have too many, there's too many P's and R's in there. But anyway, we are told elsewhere in Scripture that Christ is our propitiation seat. Why?

[29:49] Because the law is in existence in the covenant and the Ark was the Ten Commandments. That's the law. That's the standard of God. Above the Ark is the glory of God, the Shekinah glory of God.

And so you've got the standard of God and the Shekinah glory of God and the thing that is between the two is the blood of the Lamb on the propitiation seat so that when God looks at His standard, He sees the blood of sacrifice.

And so He interprets the law through the blood. And so the righteous, just requirements of the law are not fulfilled before they've been covered in the blood.

Christ is our mercy seat. The sin still remains. The law is still there. He fulfilled the law. He didn't remove the law, right? The standard has not changed. Be holy as I am.

Holy is just as in the New Testament as it is in the Old Testament. That's not an Old Testament principle. That's a New Testament principle. But all of us fall short of holiness. For no man is righteous, no, not one.

[30 : 45] All of us are desperately wicked. But the mercy seat of Christ is that when the holiness of God looks at us, He's looking through the blood of Christ's righteousness. And though we are guilty, Christ is perfect and His perfect righteousness makes us, we have righteousness imputed to us.

We didn't earn it. That is, it is placed upon us. So now we are accepted in the presence of a holy God. As sinners. Welcomed into His presence.

Because of Christ. And Job is essentially saying the same thing that if God lets me into His presence, this is my salvation. This is the testimony that God welcomes me.

And the fact that God welcomes us into His presence through prayer and communion and relation is our salvation. That when He sees us, He doesn't see us as the mess-ups we are.

He sees the blood of Christ, the perfection of Christ, the righteousness of Christ over us. And it's a personal surrender.

[31 : 50] And Job says, I so want to be into His presence even if I die. Even if there's no hope for me. For as He will say in the 14th chapter, what hope does a sinner have in the presence of God?

But for Christ, none. And finally, what we see in this passage before us is the posture assumed.

And as He feels like He can go into the presence of God, He assumes a particular posture, one that ought to be assumed by each and every one of us.

He says in verse 20, only two things do not do to me. So He's got two, I got two requests. Two prerequisites before I come into your presence. Number one, remove your hand from me.

Ease the suffering. Just remove your hand for just a moment. And He says, and let not the dread of you terrify me. That is, give me boldness to speak.

So He had a proper understanding about who He is, the Almighty, by the way, of who He was going into. He says, then call and I will answer. Let me speak and I will reply and then reply to me.

[33 : 08] God calls and Job doesn't get a chance to answer. And then the answer is finally at the end. But here's His posture. He says, I come into your presence.

Verse 23 really opens it up. How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my rebellion and my sin.

Here is a man who has said earlier multiple times, I have done no wrong. His friends have accused Him of all wrongdoing and He has declared to them that they are absolutely wrong.

He has stood by His integrity. He has stood by His completion. And yet when He goes into the presence of God, the very first thing He asks of God is, make known to me my sins.

So He does not remove the possibility from there being an unknown sin in His life. It is the heart cry of the psalmist that says, make known to me my wicked ways, O God, search my heart and try me.

[34 : 18] It is the posture of saying, God, before I declare to you everything that you ought to do for me, why don't you declare to me everything I am before you?

It is the posture of inspection. I'm standing before the Almighty and saying, O God, here I am.

Make known to me the things that I do not know about myself. Make known to me my rebellion and my sin. Reveal these things to me so that I can ask, why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy?

Will you cause the driven leaf to tremble or will you pursue the dry chaff? For you write bitter things against me and make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth. You put my feet in stocks and watch all my past and you set a limit for the soles of my feet while I am decaying like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten.

What do you say? It's God, you're watching me all the time. So God, all I want to know is I'm going to put myself before you and say, here I am. You reveal to me what you know about me.

[35 : 34] Then, then I will be in the audience of one. And oh God, then, maybe then I'll begin to know more about you as you search me out and you try me.

Job has had the audience of his friends but what he is seeking here is the audience of one, the Almighty. And he's seeking it with sincerity, he's seeking it in truth and he's seeking it with passion.

He will get it. He doesn't get all the answers. What does God do to him? God reveals what he knows about Job, right? Job, are you there? Job, can you handle this? Job, are you as big as I am? And what he's doing is he's revealing his character to Job as he's revealing Job's smallness to himself. Let's be careful about saving God from misunderstanding because sometimes he's just

going to be misunderstood.

For his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. But may we cry out to him as Job saying that God help us to know who we are in your presence as we seek your audience.

[37 : 04] And we see it in Job 13 verses 3 through 28. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.