

Job Chapter 13

Job 13:1 "Lo, mine eye hath seen all [this], mine ear hath heard and understood it."

All this which either you or I have discoursed concerning the infinite power and wisdom of God, I know, both by seeing it, by my own observation and experience.

We see that Job's patience with his three friends was wearing a little thin. Everything they had said to him, he already knew from the experiences of his life. Many of the things they had accused him of, he had taught against himself. He understood everything they were saying, but they would not believe that he had not sinned in the ways they discussed.

Job 13:2 "What ye know, [the same] do I know also: I [am] not inferior unto you."

"I am not inferior unto you" shows the deep resentment that Job had toward his friends' unsympathetic diagnosis.

This is a repetition of a statement made in the last lesson. His friends had thought they would instruct him on repenting and reaching the LORD in prayer. He was as well acquainted with the LORD as they were.

Verses 3-4: After a litany of wounding words from his friends, who he declared a bunch of useless quacks ("physicians of no value"), Job all the more desired an audience with God. He used similar pronouncements regarding Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar elsewhere (16:2-3; 17:10).

Job 13:3 "Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God."

I would rather debate the matter with God than with you. I am not afraid of presenting my person and cause before him, who is a witness of my integrity, and would not deal as unmercifully with me as you do.

Job had no intention of trying to prove his innocence to anyone, but God. It is not a sin to reason with God. In fact, He invites his people to come and reason with Him. God is not so unreachable, that he will not hear our plea to Him.

Verses 4-19: Job addressed his ineffective counselors.

In verses 4-5, Job couldn't hold back from a blistering denunciation of his useless counselors, telling them that their silence would be true wisdom (verse 13).

Job 13:4 "But ye [are] forgers of lies, ye [are] all physicians of no value."

I.e. authors of false doctrine, to wit, that great afflictions are peculiar to hypocrites and wicked men.

"Physicians of no value": Unfaithful and unskillful; prescribing bad remedies, and misapplying good ones.

His friends had pretended to come, so they might comfort him and help him. Instead, they have made him feel worse than he did before they came.

Job 13:5 "O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom."

Since what they said of him was not true, nor anything to the purpose, or that tended to the comfort of his afflicted soul, but the reverse. And therefore he could have wished they had never broke silence, but continued as they were the first seven days of their visit. And now, since they had spoken, and had done no good by speaking, but hurt, he desires for the future they would be silent, and say no more.

"And it should be your wisdom": It would be the greatest evidence of it they could give. They had shown none by speaking; it would be a proof of some in them, should they hold their peace; a very biting expression this is (see Prov. 17:28).

They would have been much wiser to have just sat with him without saying anything, than to have criticized him and made matters worse.

Job 13:6 Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips.

Job entreats his friends that they would be no longer speakers, but hearers; that they would graciously agree to sit still, and hear what he had to say. Though he was greatly afflicted, he had not lost his reason and wisdom was not driven out from him (Job 6:13). He had still within him his reasoning powers, which he was capable of making use of, and even before God, and desires that they would attend to what he had to say on his own behalf.

"And hearken to the pleadings of my lips": He was capable of pleading his own cause, and he was desirous of doing it before God as his Judge. And begs his friends to be silent, and hear him out, and then let judgment be given, not by them, but by God Himself.

The friends of Job might listen to these pleadings, but they were really addressed to God. He was asking God to hear his reasoning.

Job 13:7 "Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him?"

"Wickedly for God ... deceitfully for him": He accused them of using lies and fallacies to vindicate God, when they asserted that Job was a sinner because he was suffering.

The so called friends of Job asked the question above. They were thoroughly convinced that Job had sinned, and that the calamity that came upon him was a judgement from God. They did not want him to sin further by reasoning with God.

Job 13:8 "Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God?"

"Will ye accept his person": "Are you wise enough to argue in God's defense" he asked? To think that is very brash and really mocks God by misrepresenting Him (verse 9), and should lead to fear of chastening (verses 10-11).

God did not need Job's friends to take His side. He was perfectly capable of deciding this for Himself. They were automatically assuming that God would not listen to Job.

Job 13:9 "Is it good that he should search you out? or as one man mocketh another, do ye [so] mock him?"

Will it be to your credit and comfort?

"Search you out": I.e. narrowly examine your hearts and discourses, whether you have uttered truth or falsehood. And whether your speeches proceed from true zeal for God, or from your own prejudices and passions, and from a desire to curry favor with him.

"Do ye so mock him": To wit, by covering your non-charitableness and corrupt affections with pretenses of piety, as if God could not discern your cunning or clever devices. Or by pleading his cause with weak and foolish arguments, which is a kind of mockery to him, and an injury to his cause. Or by seeking to flatter him with false praises, as if he did distribute the things of this world with exact justice, prospering only the good, and severely afflicting none but wicked men?

Job now turned to the friends and asked them of their own motives. He would like to know if they were examined as closely as he had been, would they be able to stand. They were mocking Job, and perhaps would have had an even worse time had they been found wanting in any area. They should consider their own faults, before they began to find fault in others.

Job 13:10 "He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons."

Even though it is his own person which you accept, his own cause that you unduly favor, He, as the God of truth, and Maintainer of right, will assuredly reprove and condemn you.

This was a statement against the friends that they had become his friends, because of his high standing. He had been a wealthy man, when they became his friends. He was questioning their motives in becoming his friends. Had they been his friends because of their great admiration for his belief in God, or were they his friends because of his wealth?

Job 13:11 "Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you?"

Will not the very Excellency and perfection of God cause you all the more to fear, since they will be arrayed against you? God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, who is no respecter of persons, and hates those who are respecters of persons. Will by his very purity and truth be offended at your conduct, and induced to punish it.

His Excellency is speaking of God. God is Truth and Purity to the utmost. He is no respecter of persons. He has no respect for those who are respecters of persons. These three friends of Job should be afraid of God judging them for their respect of persons.

Job 13:12 "Your remembrances [are] like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay."

“Ashes ... clay”: Ineffective and worthless.

Ashes are easily blown away. They had forgotten the good that Job had done. They were too earthy for Job. He spoke of them as a clump of clay without spirit.

Job 13:13 "Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what [will]."

That I may freely utter my whole mind.

"Let come on me what will": For the event of my discourse with God, wherewith you threaten me, I am willing to submit myself to Him, to do with me as He pleaseth. For I know He will not judge so severely and partially of me, or my words, as you do, but will accept what is good, and pass by any circumstantial defects in my person or speech. Knowing that I speak from an upright heart.

Job was asking his friends to leave him alone, so that he could speak with God. Job explained to them that he would take his chances with God. Job trusted God completely.

Job 13:14 "Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand?"

A proverb meaning “why should I anxiously desire to save my life?” Like an animal who holds its prey in its mouth to preserve it or a man who holds in his hand what he wants to secure, Job could try to preserve his life, but that was not his motive.

Job was saying that the words that come from his mouth might devour him. He realized also, that he is taking his very life in his hands when he spoke to God, but he was willing to take that chance. Frankly it could not be worse for Job than it already was.

Job 13:15 "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him."

“Though he slay me, yet will in trust in him” expresses the unquenchable faith of one who lives by faith, not by sight. Even when it appears that God Himself has turned against Job, he will still trust in God.

Job assured his accusers that his convictions were not self-serving, because he was ready to die trusting God. But still he would defend his innocence before God, and was confident that he was truly saved and not a hypocrite (verse 16).

Because he had not been present to hear the interaction between God and Satan, Job could not know the significance of these words, which delivered a direct answer to Satan's taunts (in 1:9-12 and 2:4-6). Job's declaration proved his unconditional "trust" in God. Ultimately for Job, God was enough.

Job was placing his trust in God. He would not change the ways that he had been, because he had no guilt of sin in his life. He would present himself to God the same as he had been all along. His trust in God was greater than any fear that he might have. He knew that God was just and fair. He had nothing to fear.

Job 13:16 "He also [shall be] my salvation: for a hypocrite shall not come before him."

I rest assured that he will save me out of these miseries, sooner or later, one way or other. If not with a temporal, yet with an eternal salvation after death; of which he speaks (Job 19:25). "For a hypocrite": Or, rather, "but a hypocrite shall not come before him". If I were a hypocrite, as you allege, I dare not present myself before him to plead my cause with him, as now I desire to do. Or could I hope for any salvation from or with him in heaven.

Job was absolutely assured that God would save him in due time. He might die in his misery, but God would save his soul. Job was saying, "I will not be a hypocrite and try to be something that I am not". God would not have any time for a hypocrite.

Verses 17-19: "Declaration ... cause ... justified ... ordered". The language of a courtroom came out strongly. Job could not just be silent and die (verse 19). He finished strongly before turning to God in prayer (13:20 – 14:22).

Job 13:17 "Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears."

This he desired before (Job 13:6), and now repeats. Either because they manifested some dislike of his speech, and some desire to interrupt him; or, because he now comes more closely to the question. The foregoing verses being mostly in the way of preface to it.

"And my declaration": That is, the words whereby I declare my mind.

David cried out to God to hear him so many times. Every believer sometime or other, has cried out to God to hear his prayer. This was basically the same thing. Job wanted God to listen carefully to his request.

Job 13:18 "Behold now, I have ordered [my] cause; I know that I shall be justified."

To wit, within myself. I have seriously and sincerely considered the state of my case, and what can be said either for me or against me. I am ready to plead my cause.

"Justified": I.e. acquitted by God from that hypocrisy and wickedness wherewith you charge me, and declared a righteous and innocent person, human infirmities excepted.

We do not justify ourselves. It is God who justifies. Justification means just as if we had never sinned. Job had carefully planned what he would say to God, and would take full responsibility for what he said.

Job 13:19 "Who [is] he [that] will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost."

A marvelous confession, equivalent to, "If I give up my faith in Him who is my salvation, and my personal innocence, which goes hand-in-hand therewith, I shall perish. To give up my innocence is to give up Him in whom I hold my innocence, and in whom I live."

Job was not absolutely sure whether God Himself would hear him, or whether He would send an angel to hear Job out. Job felt that if he had to wait any longer, he would die.

Verses 13:20 – 14:22: Job transitions here from reply to lament, pleading with God for an audience. Job turned to reason with God (verse 3), and pleaded his case.

(In verses 20-22), Job asked God to end his pain and stop frightening him with such terrors (verse 24), then speak to him. He was concerned with his misery, but even more with his relation to the God he loved and worshiped.

Job 13:20 "Only do not two [things] unto me: then will I not hide myself from thee."

This is an address not to Zophar as in the place of God, as to me, but to God himself. By this it appears, that though in modesty he does not mention him, yet he it is having the main, if not the sole regard unto (in Job 13:19). For his desire was to speak to the Almighty, and reason with God, and have nothing more to do with his friends (Job 13:3). But before any pleadings begin on either side, he is desirous of settling and fixing the terms and conditions of the dispute. He requests that two things might be granted him, which are mentioned in (Job 13:21).

"Then will I not hide myself from thee": Through fear or shame, but boldly appear before God, and come up even to his seat, and plead with him face to face.

Job 13:21 "Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid."

I.e. "thy afflicting hand." Job views all his physical suffering as coming directly from the hand of God. Momentarily caused by Him, and therefore removable by Him at any moment. He has no thought for secondary causes.

"And let not thy dread make me afraid": Job speaks here and elsewhere of spiritual terrors. Those vague and impalpable fears which suggest themselves inwardly to the soul, and are far more painful and dreadful, than any amount of bodily anguish. Unless he is free from these, as well as from physical pains, he cannot plead his cause freely and fully.

We see that Job was asking for a temporary stop of the pain in his body, while he talked with God. He also wanted his great fear of God to be momentarily removed, so that he could speak without trembling. He wanted to be able to boldly come to God with his statement. He was asking permission, and not demanding it.

Job 13:22 "Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me."

Either call him by name in open court, and he would answer to it. Or arraign him at the bar, and exhibit charges against him, and he would make answer to them and clear himself. His sense is, that if God would take upon him to be plaintiff, and accuse and charge him with what he had to object to him, then he would be the defendant, and plead his own cause, and show that they did not of right belong unto him.

"Or let me speak, and answer thou me"; Or he would be plaintiff, and put queries concerning the afflictions he was exercised with, or the severity of them, and the reason of such usage, and God be the defendant, and give him an answer to them, that he might be no longer at a loss as he was for such behavior towards him. This is very boldly said indeed, and seems to savor of irreverence towards God. And may be one of those speeches for which he was blamed by Elihu, and by the Lord himself. though no doubt he designed not to cast any contempt upon God, nor to behave ill towards him. But in the agonies of his spirit, and under the weight of his affliction, and to show the great sense he had of his innocence, and his assurance of it, he speaks in this manner. Not doubting but, let him have what part he would in the debate, whether that of plaintiff or defendant, he should carry the cause, and it would go in his favor. And though he proposes it to God to be at his option to choose which he would take. Job stays not for an answer, but takes upon him to be plaintiff, as in the following words.

Whenever the Lord was ready, he could call for Job and Job would be ready. If God did not prefer to call Job, Job would speak and God could answer.

Job 13:23 "How many [are] mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin."

"How many are mine iniquities and sins?" Job wanted to know how many so that he could determine if his measure of suffering matched the severity of his sin, and he could then repent for sins he was unaware of.

This was not a statement that he had no sin. This was a true statement, that if he had sinned he was unaware of what the specific sins were. Job truly did want to repent of any sin he had committed, and make it right with God. He just did not know what to change.

Job 13:24 "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?"

I.e. withdraw your favor and help which you did use to give me; as this phrase is commonly used (as Deut. 31:17; Psalm 13:1; 102:2).

"Holdest me for thine enemy": I.e. deal sharply with me as if I were your professed enemy.

Job had always enjoyed the presence of God. He suddenly had that taken away from him. It seemed to Job that God was hiding from him. He did not understand why he seemed to be God's enemy.

Job 13:25 "Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?"

Job compares himself to two of the weakest things in nature, a withered leaf, and a morsel of dry stubble. He cannot believe that God will employ his almighty strength in crushing and destroying what is so slight and feeble. A deep sense of God's goodness and compassion underlies the thought.

A withered leaf that had fallen from a tree and dry stubble are some of the most helpless things in the world. A little puff of wind can blow them away. Job was feeling as helpless as both of them. It seems, he could not help himself.

Job 13:26 "For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth."

"Writest bitter things against me": This a judicial phrase referencing the writing down of a sentence against a criminal used figuratively for the extreme suffering as if it were a divine sentence as just punishment for extreme sin. Job felt God might be punishing him for sins committed years earlier in his youth.

Job seemed to say to God, that He was drawing up papers full of accusations against him that he might be tried with. Job had possibly been a sinner in his youth, and the only thing that Job could think of that God might accuse him of were those past sins.

Job 13:27 "Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet."

"Lookest narrowly unto all my paths": In another context, these words would speak of protection, but here, Job questioned whether or not God had held him on too tight a leash. The comment amounts to saying that God is being overly rigorous toward Job's sin, as compared to others.

God had not actually put him in stocks. The disease that he had possibly, kept him as immobile as he would have been, had he been in stocks. There were marks on Job's feet, and in fact, on every other part of his body as well. What Job did not know, was that Satan had put the marks there.

Verses 13:28 – 14:12: Without the benefit of the New Testament Scriptures, Job had no knowledge of resurrection or the age to come. Still, he well knew the fixed nature of death in this life, that once people die, their physical bodies do not wake up. His understanding was consistent with the New Testament, which teaches that the bodies of those who die in this age remain in the grave until the coming of Christ in the last days (1 Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 20:4-6).

Job 13:28 "And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth eaten."

“He, as a rotten thing”: He refers to man in general, who is here compared to a rotting garment, an apt illustration of his corruption.

This general comment on the plight of man should not be separated (from 14:1), which it introduces.

Job was speaking of the disease that was ravishing his body. His skin was rotting away. Soon his flesh would be like a moth-eaten garment.

Job Chapter 13 Questions

1. Job's patience with his friends was growing a little _____.
2. Many of the things they accused Job of he had _____.
3. What did Job tell his friends in verse 2?
4. Who did Job desire to reason with?
5. Is it a sin to reason with God?
6. What did Job call his friends in verse 4?
7. His friends had pretended to come to _____ him.
8. What should they have done, instead of what they did?
9. Who was verse 6 addressed to really?
10. Who was asking the questions in verse 7?
11. What were Job's friends automatically assuming in verse 8?
12. Job asked his friends of their own _____.
13. Did they have a right to mock Job?

14. Why had they become Job's friends in the first place?
15. Who is "his excellency", in verse 11, speaking of?
16. What does the reference to ashes, in verse 12, mean?
17. Why did Job tell his friends to hold their peace?
18. What was Job saying in verse 14?
19. Job was placing his trust in _____.
20. What was Job absolutely sure that God would do for him?
21. Who was Job speaking to in verse 17?
22. Who justifies us?
23. What does "justification" mean?
24. Job would take full _____ for what he said to God.
25. Who did Job think God might have to listen to him, rather than God, Himself?
26. What two things did Job ask God for immediately?
27. Why did he want those two things?
28. What was verse 23 saying?
29. What did a withered leaf and dry stubble have to do with Job?
30. In verse 28, Job was speaking of what?