

# CHAPTER 13

Job here comes to make application of what he had said in the foregoing chapter; and now we have him not in so good a temper as he was in then: for,

**I.** He is very bold with his friends, comparing himself with them, notwithstanding the mortifications he was under (v. 1, 2). Condemning them for their falsehood, their forwardness to judge, their partiality and deceitfulness under colour of pleading God's cause (v. 4-8), and threatening them with the judgments of God for their so doing (v. 9-12), desiring them to be silent (v. 5, 13, 17), and turning from them to God (v. 3).

**II.** He is very bold with his God.

**1.** In some expressions his faith is very bold, yet that is not more bold than welcome (v. 15, 16, 18) But,

**2.** In other expressions his passion is rather too bold in expostulations with God concerning the deplorable condition he was in (v. 14, 19, etc.), complaining of the confusion he was in (v. 20-22), and the loss he was at to find out the sin that provoked God thus to afflict him, and in short of the rigour of God's proceedings against him (v. 23-28).

## ⌘ JOB 13:1-12

### JOB'S REPLY TO ZOPHAR

Job here warmly expresses his resentment of the unkindness of his friends.

**I.** He comes up with them as one that understood the matter in dispute as well as they, and did not need to be taught by them, v. 1, 2. They compelled him, as the Corinthians did Paul, to commend himself and his own knowledge, yet not in a way of self-applause, but of self-justification. All he had before said his eye had seen confirmed by many instances, and his ear had heard seconded by many authorities, and he well understood it and what use to make of it. Happy are those who not only see and hear, but understand, the greatness, glory, and sovereignty of God. This, he thought, would justify what he had said before (⌘ Job 12:3), which he repeats here

(v. 2): “*What you know, the same do I know also*, so that I need not come to you to be taught; *I am not inferior unto you* in wisdom.” Note, Those who enter into disputation enter into temptation to magnify themselves and vilify their brethren more than is fit, and therefore ought to watch and pray against the workings of pride.

**II.** He turns from them to God (v. 3): *Surely I would speak to the Almighty*; as if he had said, “I can promise myself no satisfaction in talking to you. O that I might have liberty to *reason with God!* He would not be so hard upon me as you are.” The prince himself will perhaps give audience to a poor petitioner with more mildness, patience, and condescension, than the servants will. Job would rather argue with God himself than with his friends. See here,

**1.** What confidence those have towards God whose hearts condemn them not of reigning hypocrisy: they can, with humble boldness, appear before him and appeal to him.

**2.** What comfort those have in God whose neighbours unjustly condemn them: if they may not speak to them with any hopes of a fair hearing, yet they may speak to the Almighty; they have easy access to him and shall find acceptance with him.

**III.** He condemns them for their unjust and uncharitable treatment of him, v. 4.

**1.** They falsely accused him, and that was unjust: *You are forgers of lies*. They framed a wrong hypothesis concerning the divine Providence, and misrepresented it, as if it did never remarkably afflict any but wicked men in this world, and thence they drew a false judgment concerning Job, that he was certainly a hypocrite. For this gross mistake, both in doctrine and application, he thinks an indictment of forgery lies against them. To speak lies is bad enough, though but at second hand, but to forge them with contrivance and deliberation is much worse; yet against this wrong neither innocency nor excellency will be a fence.

**2.** They basely deceived him, and that was unkind. They undertook his cure, and pretended to be his physicians; but they were all *physicians of no value*, “idol-physicians, who can do me no more good than an idol can.” They were worthless physicians, who neither understood his case nor knew how to prescribe to him — mere empirics, who pretended to great

things, but in conference added nothing to him: he was never the wiser for all they said. Thus to broken hearts and wounded consciences all creatures, without Christ, are physicians of no value, on which one may spend all and be never the better, but rather grow worse, <sup><415></sup>Mark 5:26.

**IV.** He begs they would be silent and give him a patient hearing, v. 5, 6.

**1.** He thinks it would be a credit to them if they would say no more, having said too much already: “*Hold your peace, and it shall be your wisdom*, for thereby you will conceal your ignorance and ill-nature, which now appear in all you say.” They pleaded that they could not forbear speaking (<sup><394></sup>Job 4:2, 11:2, 3); but he tells them that they would better have consulted their own reputation if they had enjoined themselves silence. Better say nothing than nothing to the purpose or that which tends to the dishonour of God and the grief of our brethren. *Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is accounted wise*, because nothing appears to the contrary, <sup><478></sup>Proverbs 17:28. And, as silence is an evidence of wisdom, so it is a means of it, as it gives time to think and hear.

**2.** He thinks it would be a piece of justice to him to hear what he had to say: *Hear now my reasoning*. Perhaps, though they did not interrupt him in his discourse, yet they seemed careless, and did not much heed what he said. He therefore begged that they would not only hear, but hearken. Note, We should be very willing and glad to hear what those have to say for themselves whom, upon any account, we are tempted to have hard thoughts of. Many a man, if he could but be fairly heard, would be fairly acquitted, even in the consciences of those that run him down.

**V.** He endeavours to convince them of the wrong they did to God's honour, while they pretended to plead for him, v. 7, 8. They valued themselves upon it that they spoke for God, were advocates for him, and had undertaken to justify him and his proceedings against Job; and, being (as they thought) of counsel for the sovereign, they expected not only the ear of the court and the last word, but judgment on their side. But Job tells them plainly,

**1.** That God and his cause did not need such advocates: “*Will you think to contend for God*, as if his justice were clouded and wanted to be cleared up, or as if he were at a loss what to say and wanted you to speak for him? Will you, who are so weak and passionate, put in for the honour of pleading God's cause?” Good work ought not to be put into bad hands.

*Will you accept his person?* If those who have not right on their side carry their cause, it is by the partiality of the judge in favour of their persons; but God's cause is so just that it needs no such methods for the support of it. He is a God, and can plead for himself (~~166~~ Judges 6:31); and, if you were for ever silent, the heavens would declare his righteousness.

**2.** That God's cause suffered by such management. Under pretence of justifying God in afflicting Job they magisterially condemned him as a hypocrite and a bad man. "This" (says he) "*is speaking wickedly*" (for uncharitableness and censoriousness are wickedness, great wickedness; it is an offence to God to wrong our brethren); "it is talking *deceitfully*, for you condemn one whom yet perhaps your own consciences, at the same time, cannot but acquit. Your principles are false and your arguings fallacious, and will it excuse you to say, *It is for God?*" No, for a good intention will not justify, much less will it sanctify, a bad word or action. God's truth needs not our lie, nor God's cause either our sinful policies or our sinful passions. The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, nor may we *do evil that good may come*, ~~166~~ Romans 3:7, 8. Pious frauds (as they call them) are impious cheats; and devout persecutions are horrid profanations of the name of God, as theirs who *hated their brethren, and cast them out, saying, Let the Lord be glorified*, ~~166~~ Isaiah 66:5; ~~166~~ John 16:2.

**VI.** He endeavours to possess them with a fear of God's judgment, and so to bring them to a better temper. Let them not think to impose upon God as they might upon a man like themselves, nor expect to gain his countenance in their bad practices by pretending a zeal for him and his honour. "As one man mocks another by flattering him, do you think so to mock him and deceive him?" Assuredly those who think to put a cheat upon God will prove to have put a cheat upon themselves. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*. That they might not think thus to jest with God, and affront him, Job would have them to consider both God and themselves, and then they would find themselves unable to enter into judgment with him.

**1.** Let them consider what a God he is into whose service they had thus thrust themselves, and to whom they really did so much disservice, and enquire whether they could give him a good account of what they did. Consider,

**(1.)** The strictness of his scrutiny and enquiries concerning them (v. 9) “*Is it good that he should search you out?* Can you bear to have the principles looked into which you go upon in your censures, and to have the bottom of the matter found out?” Note, It concerns us all seriously to consider whether it will be to our advantage or no that God searches the heart. It is good to an upright man who means honestly that God should search him; therefore he prays for it: *Search me, O God! and know my heart.* God's omniscience is a witness of his sincerity. But it is bad to him who looks one way and rows another that God should search him out, and lay him open to his confusion.

**(2.)** The severity of his rebukes and displeasure against them (v. 10): “*If you do accept persons, though but secretly and in heart, he will surely reprove you;* he will be so far from being pleased with your censures of me, though under colour of vindicating him, that he will resent them as a great provocation, as any prince or great man would if a base action were done under the sanction of his name and under the colour of advancing his interest.” Note, What we do amiss we shall certainly be reprov'd for, one way or other, one time or other, though it be done ever so secretly.

**(3.)** The terror of his majesty, which if they would duly stand in awe of they would not do that which would make them obnoxious to his wrath (v. 11): “*Shall not his excellency make you afraid?* You that have great knowledge of God, and profess religion and a fear of him, how dare you talk at this rate and give yourselves so great a liberty of speech? *Ought you not to walk and talk in the fear of God?* ~~1689~~ Nehemiah 5:9. *Should not his dread fall upon you, and give a check to your passions?*” Methinks Job speaks this as one that did himself know the terror of the Lord, and lived in a holy fear of him, whatever his friends suggested to the contrary. Note,

**[1.]** There is in God a dreadful excellency. He is the most excellent Being, has all excellencies in himself and in each infinitely excels any creature. His excellencies in themselves are amiable and lovely. He is the most beautiful Being; but considering man's distance from God by nature, and his defection and degeneracy by sin, his excellencies are dreadful. His power, holiness, justice, yea, and his goodness too, are dreadful excellencies. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness.

**[2.]** A holy awe of this dreadful excellency should fall upon us and make us afraid. This would awaken impenitent sinners and bring them to

repentance, and would influence all to be careful to please him and afraid of offending him.

**2.** Let them consider themselves, and what an unequal match they were for this great God (v. 12): “*Your remembrances* (all that in you for which you hope to be remembered when you are gone) *are like unto ashes*, worthless and weak, and easily trampled on and blown away. *Your bodies are like bodies of clay*, mouldering and coming to nothing. Your memories, you think, will survive your bodies, but, alas! they are like ashes which will be shovelled up with your dust.” Note, the consideration of our own meanness and mortality should make us afraid of offending God, and furnishes a good reason why we should not despise and trample upon our brethren. Bishop Patrick gives another sense of this verse: “Your remonstrances on God's behalf are no better than dust, and the arguments you accumulate but like so many heaps of dirt.”

## ~~REF~~ JOB 13:13-22

### JOB'S REPLY TO ZOPHAR

Job here takes fresh hold, fast hold, of his integrity, as one that was resolved not to let it go, nor suffer it to be wrested from him. His firmness in this matter is commendable and his warmth excusable.

**I.** He entreats his friends and all the company to let him alone, and not interrupt him in what he was about to say (v. 13), but diligently to hearken to it, v. 17. He would have his own protestation to be decisive, for none but God and himself knew his heart. “Be silent therefore, and let me hear no more of you, but hearken diligently to what I say, and let my own oath for confirmation be an end of the strife.”

**II.** He resolves to adhere to the testimony his own conscience gave of his integrity; and though his friends called it obstinacy that should not shake his constancy: “I will speak in my own defence, and *let come on me what will*, v. 13. Let my friends put what construction they please upon it, and think the worse of me for it; I hope God will not make my necessary defence to be my offence, as you do. He will justify me (v. 18) and then nothing can come amiss to me.” Note, Those that are upright, and have the assurance of their uprightness, may cheerfully welcome every event. Come

what will, *bene praeparatum pectus* — they are ready for it. He resolves (v. 15) that he will *maintain his own ways*. He would never part with the satisfaction he had in having walked uprightly with God; for, though he could not justify every word he had spoken, yet, in the general, his ways were good, and he would maintain his uprightness; and why should he not, since that was his great support under his present exercises, as it was Hezekiah's, *Now, Lord, remember how I have walked before thee?* Nay, he would not only not betray his own cause, or give it up, but he would openly avow his sincerity; for (v. 19) *“If hold my tongue, and do not speak for myself, my silence now will for ever silence me, for I shall certainly give up the ghost,”* v. 19. *“If I cannot be cleared, yet let me be eased, by what I say,”* as Elihu, <sup><1827></sup>Job 32:17, 20.

**III.** He complains of the extremity of pain and misery he was in (v. 14): *Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth?* That is,

**1.** “Why do I suffer such agonies? I cannot but wonder that God should lay so much upon me when he knows I am not a wicked man.” He was ready, not only to rend his clothes, but even to tear his flesh, through the greatness of his affliction, and saw himself at the brink of death, and his life in his hand, yet his friends could not charge him with any enormous crime, nor could he himself discover any; no marvel then that he was in such confusion.

**2.** “Why do I stifle and smother the protestations of my innocency?” When a man with great difficulty keeps in what he would say, he bites his lips. “Now,” says he, “why may not I take liberty to speak, since I do but vex myself, add to my torment, and endanger my life, by refraining?” Note, It would vex the most patient man, when he has lost every thing else, to be denied the comfort (if he deserves it) of a good conscience and a good name.

**IV.** He comforts himself in God, and still keeps hold of his confidence in him. Observe here,

**1.** What he depends upon God for — justification and salvation, the two great things we hope for through Christ.

**(1.)** Justification (v. 18): *I have ordered my cause, and, upon the whole matter, I know that I shall be justified.* This he knew because he knew that his Redeemer lived, <sup><1825></sup>Job 19:25. Those whose hearts are upright with

God, in walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit, may be sure that through Christ there shall be no condemnation to them, but that, whoever lays any thing to their charge, they shall be justified: they may know that they shall.

(2.) Salvation (v. 16): *He also shall be my salvation.* He means it not of temporal salvation (he had little expectation of that); but concerning his eternal salvation he was very confident that God would not only be his Saviour to make him happy, but his salvation, in the vision and fruition of whom he should be happy. And the reason why he depended on God for salvation was because *a hypocrite shall not come before him.* He knew himself not to be a hypocrite, and that none but hypocrites are rejected of God, and therefore concluded he should not be rejected. Sincerity is our evangelical perfection; nothing will ruin us but the want of that.

2. With what constancy he depends upon him: *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,* v. 15. This is a high expression of faith, and what we should all labour to come up to — to trust in God, though he slay us, that is, we must be well pleased with God as a friend even when he seems to come forth against us as an enemy, <sup><3218></sup>Job 23:8-10. We must believe that all shall work for good to us even when all seems to make against us, <sup><2415></sup>Jeremiah 24:5. We must proceed and persevere in the way of our duty, though it cost us all that is dear to us in this world, even life itself, <sup><3115></sup>Hebrews 11:35. We must depend upon the performance of the promise when all the ways leading to it are shut up, <sup><4118></sup>Romans 4:18. We must rejoice in God when we have nothing else to rejoice in, and cleave to him, yea, though we cannot for the present find comfort in him. In a dying hour we must derive from him living comforts; and this is to trust in him though he slay us.

V. He wishes to argue the case even with God himself, if he might but have leave to settle the preliminaries of the treaty, v. 20-22. He had desired (v. 3) to *reason with God*, and is still of the same mind. He *will not hide himself*, that is, he will not decline the trial, nor dread the issue of it, but under two provisos: —

1. That his body might not be tortured with this exquisite pain: “*Withdraw thy hand far from me*; for, while I am in this extremity, I am fit for nothing. I can make a shift to talk with my friends, but I know not how to address myself to thee.” When we are to converse with God we have need



to be composed, and as free as possible from every thing that may make us uneasy.

2. That his mind might not be terrified with the tremendous majesty of God: “*Let not thy dread make me afraid; either let the manifestations of thy presence be familiar or let me be enabled to bear them without disorder and disturbance.*” Moses himself trembled before God, so did Isaiah and Habakkuk. *O God! thou art terrible even in thy holy places.* “Lord,” says Job, “let me not be put into such a consternation of spirit, together with this bodily affliction; for then I must certainly drop the cause, and shall make nothing of it.” See what a folly it is for men to put off their repentance and conversion to a sick-bed and a death-bed. How can even a good man, much less a bad man, reason with God, so as to be justified before him, when he is upon the rack of pain and under the terror of the arrests of death? At such a time it is very bad to have the great work to do, but very comfortable to have it done, as it was to Job, who, if he might but have a little breathing-time, was ready either,

(1.) To hear God speaking to him by his word, and return an answer: *Call thou, and I will answer; or,*

(2.) To speak to him by prayer, and expect an answer: *Let me speak, and answer thou me,* v. 22. Compare this with ~~KJB~~ Job 9:34, 35, where he speaks to the same purport. In short, the badness of his case was at present such a damp upon him as he could not get over; otherwise he was well assured of the goodness of his cause, and doubted not but to have the comfort of it at last, when the present cloud was over. With such holy boldness may the upright come to the throne of grace, not doubting but to find mercy there.

## ~~KJB~~ JOB 13:23-28

### JOB'S REPLY TO ZOPHAR

Here,

I. Job enquires after his sins, and begs to have them discovered to him. He looks up to God, and asks him what was the number of them (*How many are my iniquities?*) and what were the particulars of them: *Make me to*

know my transgressions, v. 23. His friends were ready enough to tell him how numerous and how heinous they were, <sup><825></sup>Job 22:5. “But, Lord,” says he, “let me know them from thee; *for thy judgment is according to truth, theirs is not.*” This may be taken either,

1. As a passionate complaint of hard usage, that he was punished for his faults and yet was not told what his faults were. Or,
2. As a prudent appeal to God from the censures of his friends. He desired that all his sins might be brought to light, as knowing they would then appear not so many, nor so mighty, as his friends suspected him to be guilty of. Or,
3. As a pious request, to the same purport with that which Elihu directed him to, <sup><832></sup>Job 34:32. *That which I see not, teach thou me.* Note, A true penitent is willing to know the worst of himself; and we should all desire to know what our transgressions are, that we may be particular in the confession of them and on our guard against them for the future.

**II.** He bitterly complains of God's withdrawals from him (v. 24): *Wherefore hidest thou thy face?* This must be meant of something more than his outward afflictions; for the loss of estate, children, health, might well consist with God's love; when that was all, he blessed the name of the Lord; but *his soul was also sorely vexed*, and that is it which he here laments.

1. That the favours of the Almighty were suspended. God hid his face as one strange to him, displeased with him, shy and regardless of him.
2. That the terrors of the Almighty were inflicted and impressed upon him. God held him for his enemy, shot his arrows at him (<sup><860></sup>Job 6:4), and set him as a mark, <sup><870></sup>Job 7:20. Note, The Holy Ghost sometimes denies his favours and discovers his terrors to the best and dearest of his saints and servants in this world. This case occurs, not only in the production, but sometimes in the progress of the divine life. Evidences for heaven are eclipsed, sensible communications interrupted, dread of divine wrath impressed, and the returns of comfort, for the present, despaired of, <sup><870></sup>Psalm 77:7-9; 88:7, 15, 16. These are grievous burdens to a gracious soul, that values God's loving-kindness as better than life, <sup><884></sup>Proverbs 18:14. *A wounded spirit who can bear?* Job, by asking here, *Why hidest thou thy face?* teaches us that, when at any time we are under the sense of

God's withdrawals, we are concerned to enquire into the reason of them — what is the sin for which he corrects us and what the good he designs us. Job's sufferings were typical of the sufferings of Christ, from whom not only men hid their faces (<sup>25B</sup>Isaiah 53:3), but God hid his, witness the darkness which surrounded him on the cross when he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* If this were done to these green trees, what shall be done to the dry? They will for ever be forsaken.

**III.** He humbly pleads with God his own utter inability to stand before him (v. 25): “*Wilt thou break a leaf, pursue the dry stubble?* Lord, is it for thy honour to trample upon one that is down already, or to crush one that neither has nor pretends to any power to resist thee?” Note, We ought to have such an apprehension of the goodness and compassion of God as to believe that he will not *break the bruised reed*, <sup>41B</sup>Matthew 12:20.

**IV.** He sadly complains of God's severe dealings with him. He owns it was for his sins that God thus contended with him, but thinks it hard,

**1.** That his former sins, long since committed, should now be remembered against him, and he should be reckoned with for the old scores (v. 26): *Thou writest bitter things against me.* Afflictions are bitter things. Writing them denotes deliberation and determination, written as a warrant for execution; it denotes also the continuance of his affliction, for that which is written remains, and, “*Herein thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth,*” that is, “thou punishest me for them, and thereby puttest me in mind of them, and obligest me to renew my repentance for them.” Note,

**(1.)** God sometimes writes very bitter things against the best and dearest of his saints and servants, both in outward afflictions and inward disquiet; trouble in body and trouble in mind, that he may humble them, and prove them, and do them good in their latter end.

**(2.)** That the sins of youth are often the smart of age both in respect of sorrow within (<sup>28B</sup>Jeremiah 31:18, 19) and suffering without, ch. 20:11. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin.

**(3.)** That when God writes bitter things against us his design therein is to make us possess our iniquities, to bring forgotten sins to mind, and so to bring us to remorse for them as to break us off from them. *This is all the fruit, to take away our sin.*

2. That his present mistakes and miscarriages should be so strictly taken notice of, and so severely animadverted upon (v. 27): “*Thou putttest my feet also in the stocks, not only to afflict me and expose me to shame, not only to keep me from escaping the strokes of thy wrath, but that thou mayest critically remark all my motions and look narrowly to all my paths, to correct me for every false step, nay, for but a look awry or a word misapplied; nay, thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet, scorest down every thing I do amiss, to reckon for it; or no sooner have I trodden wrong, though ever so little, than immediately I smart for it; the punishment treads upon the very heels of the sin. Guilt, both of the oldest and of the freshest date, is put together to make up the cause of my calamity.*” Now,

(1.) It was not true that God did thus seek advantages against him. He is not thus extreme to mark what we do amiss; if he were, there were no abiding for us, <sup><HDB></sup>Psalm 130:3. But he is so far from this that he deals not with us according to the desert, no, not of our manifest sins, which are not *found by secret search*, <sup><JES></sup>Jeremiah 2:34. This therefore was the language of Job's melancholy; his sober thoughts never represented God thus as a hard Master.

(2.) But we should keep such a strict and jealous eye as this upon ourselves and our own steps, both for the discovery of sin past and the prevention of it for the future. It is good for us all to *ponder the path of our feet*.

V. He finds himself wasting away apace under the heavy hand of God, v. 28. *He* (that is, man) *as a rotten thing*, the principle of whose putrefaction is in itself, *consumes, even like a moth-eaten garment*, which becomes continually worse and worse. Or, *He* (that is, God) *like rottenness, and like a moth, consumes me*. Compare this with <sup><KRD></sup>Hosea 5:12, *I will be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness*; and see <sup><EMI></sup>Psalm 39:11. Note, Man, at the best, wears fast; but, under God's rebukes especially, he is soon gone. While there is so little soundness in the soul, no marvel there is so little soundness in the flesh, <sup><RKB></sup>Psalm 38:3.