

JOB

Chapter 13

Job Continues: Still I Will Hope in God

“Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it. 2 What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. 3 But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God. 4 As for you, you whitewash with lies; worthless physicians are you all. 5 Oh that you would keep silent, and it would be your wisdom! 6 Hear now my argument and listen to the pleadings of my lips. 7 Will you speak falsely for God and speak deceitfully for him? 8 Will you show partiality toward him? Will you plead the case for God? 9 Will it be well with you when he searches you out? Or can you deceive him, as one deceives a man? 10 He will surely rebuke you if in secret you show partiality. 11 Will not his majesty terrify you, and the dread of him fall upon you? 12 Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay. 13 “Let me have silence, and I will speak, and let come on me what may. 14 Why should I take my flesh in my teeth and put my life in my hand? 15 Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face. 16 This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him. 17 Keep listening to my words, and let my declaration be in your ears. 18 Behold, I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be in the right. 19 Who is there who will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die. 20 Only grant me two things, then I will not hide myself from your face: 21 withdraw your hand far from me, and let not dread of you terrify me. 22 Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and you reply to me. 23 How many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin. 24 Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy? 25 Will you frighten a driven leaf and pursue dry chaff? 26 For you write bitter things against me and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth. 27 You put my feet in the stocks and watch all my paths; you set a limit for the soles of my feet. 28 Man wastes away like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten.

13:1–5 These verses may fit better with what precedes them than with what follows. Job summarizes his claims to wisdom and understanding, in distinction to Zophar (and the other two friends). Job overstates his knowledge. He wants desperately to show that his insights are as good as or better than those of his friends. (TLSB)

13:1 *all this*. God’s sovereign actions as described in ch. 12. (CSB)

13:2 Job is quite defensive. Given everything he has been through, his attitude is understandable, esp since his friends have shown little sympathy and even less understanding. (TLSB)

13:3 *the Almighty*. Hbr *’el-shaddai*, “God Almighty.” All of Job’s friends have now spoken against him. Finding no support, Job appeals to the omnipotent God. (TLSB)

argue my case with God. Job’s sense of suffering unjustly is so deep that he wants to argue with God (cf Ps 44). In this he was not—and is not—unique. When confronted with hardships, we all have a tendency to think we are getting a worse deal than we deserve. (TLSB)

13:4 *whitewash with lies.* Cover the truth with lies to make themselves look good. (TLSB)

worthless physicians. They had come to help him, but they only make things worse! (TLSB)

13:5 See v. 13. The friends' silent presence had ministered to Job earlier (see 2:13), but Job's current retort is intended as sarcasm (cf. Pr 17:28). (CSB)

keep silent. Job wishes that instead of opening their mouths in worthless and untrue advice, his friends would simply keep silent. Job's wish was not to be granted. (TLSB)

Their approach has been legalistic, the law approach, instead of evangelical, the gospel approach. Their argument has been from effect to cause. They had little awareness of his problem, and even less true sympathy for him. Their words only made Job feel worse, and had the effect of irritating him and arousing him to strike back at them. Using the language of medicine, Job accused them of smearing him with lies and of being quack doctors whose diagnosis was wrong and whose prescription was worse than useless. As counselors they did more harm than good. The best thing they could do from now on would be to keep silent. (PBC)

13:6 *Hear now my argument.* Job asks for his friends' attention as he makes his case. (TLSB)

13:7 *Will you speak falsely for God.* Job admitted that he did not fully understand God's ways. The friends, however, had presumed to speak for God. Yet, as Job showed in his response, what they had said did not square with reality. (TLSB)

13:8 *show partiality.* Lit, "lift up the face to someone." Refers to the granting of a special favor from the wrong motives. (TLSB)

This means to try to gain favor from someone by bribery or some other improper motivation. (PBC)

Will you plead the case for God? Job asks if they are trying to win God's favor by acting as His lawyers and arguing His case for Him. Human beings, esp those who consider themselves very religious, can make the mistake of thinking that God needs them to defend Him. Job shows that this is not at all true, for God is in control of everything and perfectly capable of defending Himself. He calls us to confess Him, not to defend Him. Job acts as a lawyer probing his accusers with a series of questions. (CSB)

Job asked if they were trying to curry God's favor by downgrading him, and if they were attempting to act as God's lawyers. (PBC)

13:9 *can you deceive Him.* Answer to this rhetorical question is no. Job implies that his friends think their accusations against Job will please God. God sees through all human duplicity. "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Gal 6:7). (TLSB)

13:10 *if in secret you show partiality.* People see only outward appearances, but God looks into hearts and sees secret motives. He sizes up people accordingly (1Sm 16:7). (TLSB)

13:11 *majesty terrify*. As the Israelites experienced at Mount Sinai, no one can stand in God's glorious presence without being terrified. Toward the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Peter experienced the same terror when he saw Christ's supernatural power in the miraculous catch of fish. Peter exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (Lk 5:8). It is our own sin and accusing conscience that make us tremble when confronted with the glory of the almighty and holy God. (TLSB)

13:12 *defenses*. Arguments in their defense of God's judgment. (CSB)

Picturesque way of saying that their advice and arguments will not hold up in the light of truth. Like ashes, they blow away; like a clay pot, they shatter. Job has been right in asserting that God was not pleased with their behavior and their arguments (42:7–9). (TLSB)

Their arguments would crumble like pots of clay. (PBC)

13:13 *let come on me what may*. After Job is finished, he will welcome God's verdict. The friends are merely spouting conventional wisdom, without testing it against reality. (TLSB)

13:14 *take my flesh in my teeth*. Figure of speech; occurs only here in the OT. It may refer to a person in such pain that he or she bites his or her own flesh to keep from screaming or complaining. While the meaning is uncertain, the parallel line of the verse suggests that it is another way of saying that he is taking his life in his hands by his boldness in confronting God. (TLSB)

13:15 *I will hope in Him*. Could be translated either as an expression of hope or of hopelessness. Given Job's confidence in God's power and his own willingness to confront God, the positive and bolder rendering is more likely. Other passages commend this understanding (19:25–27). (TLSB)

argue my ways. Job's determination to present his case borders on self-righteousness. He has not yet appreciated God's use of suffering as discipline (cf Heb 12:6), but he is confident that he can trust God even in his dire condition. (TLSB)

This is a remarkable expression of Job's faith in God. Regardless of what might happen to Job, he would still hope and trust in God. (PBC)

13:16 *salvation*. Hbr *yeshu'ah* (also translated as the names Joshua and Jesus). Job's salvation—his deliverance from pain, dishonor, and even God's apparent anger—can only come from God. His only hope is to turn to the very One who seems hostile toward him! (TLSB)

13:17–28 In this section, Job is appealing to God. He wants to speak, even to argue, with God and find salvation in God. (TLSB)

13:17 Job asks his friends to listen to what he is going to say to God in 13:20–14:22. (CSB)

Keep listening. Job knows that his friends are more interested in asserting their preconceived ideas than in hearing his case. He repeatedly appeals for silence (vv 5–6, 13) over the cacophony of their debate. (TLSB)

13:18 *I know that I shall be in the right.* Some might see this as pride on Job's part. However, Job constantly looks beyond himself. Although he erroneously thinks he can argue with the Almighty, he is right in wanting to communicate with the one source of help in time of trouble. (TLSB)

13:19 *who will contend with me?* Apart from God, there is no one who can dispute Job's case. (TLSB)

be silent and die. If someone could argue against him, Job would simply give up. (TLSB)

13:20 *two things.* Job wants God (1) to withdraw his hand of punishment (v. 21), and (2) to start communicating with him (v. 22). (CSB)

Job makes special requests of the Almighty. (TLSB)

not hide myself from Your face. Job does not want to be separated from God, as when Cain exclaimed, "Behold, You [God] have driven me today away from the ground, and from Your face I shall be hidden" (Gn 4:14). (TLSB)

It can be literally translated, "Only don't do two things to me." Those two things are mentioned in verse 21. (PBC)

13:21 *withdraw Your hand.* Job pleads for God's mercy. God's hand can be either a blessing (e.g., Ne 2:18) or an affliction (Ps 139:5); here, Job views it in the latter sense. (CSB)

let not dread. Freedom from suffering is not enough. Job asks that it be accompanied by freedom from dread of God. To be physically comfortable yet spiritually terrified is a horrible condition. "The Gospel teaches that through faith in Christ the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation are received, and the terrors of sin and of death are overcome" (Ap V 170). (TLSB)

13:22 *answer ... reply.* What Job longs for is to communicate with God, to speak with Him and to hear from Him. As Christians, we know that we enjoy exactly that privilege: God speaks to us in His Word, the Bible, and we reply as we speak to Him in prayer. (TLSB)

13:23 Job's words are based on the counselors' point that suffering always implies sinfulness. He does not yet understand that God has a higher purpose in his suffering. (CSB)

iniquities ... sins ... transgressions. The three most important OT terms for sin. (CSB)

Job asks God to show him his sin. At the end of Jb, this request will be granted, as Job will come to true repentance (ch 42). (TLSB)

13:24 *hide your face.* Withhold your blessing. (CSB)

God is, in Luther's words, the "hidden God." We catch glimpses of His power and wisdom in nature. We learn of Him as our Savior only as He reveals Himself through His Word. (TLSB)

13:25 *driven leaf ... dry chaff.* Job refers to the process of winnowing grain: the light leaves and useless husks of chaff blow away, while the heavier, good grain falls to the ground (cf Ps 1:4). Job wonders why God wants to frighten what is already fragile. (TLSB)

13:26 *iniquities of my youth*. Since Job feels that he is not presently guilty of a sinful life, God must still be holding the sins of his youth against him. (CSB)

Job admits he is not sinless. His words are reminiscent of the psalmist's prayer "Remember not the sins of my youth" (Ps 25:7). (TLSB)

write bitter things against me. See Ps 130:3; Hos 13:12; contrast 1Co 13:5. (CSB)

Job sees God as writing up an indictment against him. (TLSB)

13:27 *watch my paths*. Elihu later quotes Job's words (see 33:11). (CSB)

stocks. Device for restraining slaves, criminals, or captives. Job feels hemmed in. Sufferings remind us of how limited we are and how dependent we are on God for every breath we take. (TLSB)

the soles of my feet. The Babylonian code of Hammurapi (18th century B.C.) attests to the practice of putting marks on slaves. Job feels that he is being harassed by a God who has taken him captive and is tormenting him (see v. 25). (CSB)

God has either treated Job like a prisoner by limiting where he can go or has tattooed or branded his feet, as might happen to a slave (the latter is mentioned in the legal Code of Hammurabi). In either case, Job is stating that he is held in check by the Almighty. (TLSB)

13:28–14:1 The introduction to ch. 14, expressing the pessimistic theme that man's legacy is trouble and his destiny is death. (CSB)

13:28 *rotten thing*. Human beings are in a state of decay and death. (TLSB)

Ch 13 Job rightly sees that the world is in a state of frustration; sin is still so powerfully at work in our world, and even in our lives as believers. St Paul wrote, "The whole creation has been groaning together" (Rm 8:22). We long for deliverance. That deliverance cannot come through our own frail efforts. Only God can bring it about. He has done this through His Son, Jesus Christ, who "has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" so that "with His stripes [of suffering] we are healed" (Is 53:4–5). • O Lord, amid life's sufferings and sorrows, show us that in Christ we are assured of Your love both now and for eternity. Amen. (TLSB)