

13a JOB

This is Friday, the 11th of August, 2006. We continue tonight our study in the book of Job, resuming at chapter 24. Let's take a moment, as is our custom, to exercise our personal priesthood, to go before the Lord and ask His blessing on our study, and to ensure that there is no impediment in our souls to the witness and ministry of God's Spirit.

There is a lot more to the process of our coming to a knowledge of God's Word than just me talking about it. It is primarily all of us together looking at God's Word and God the Holy Spirit ministering it to our hearts. Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for this great Old Testament book and the truth that is contained within it.

We thank you for the opportunity to study it together in an environment where we can concentrate without distraction. We ask your blessing on us as we seek to discover the truths that were pertinent not only in Job's day, but now in our own, so that we can be knowledgeable, that we can grow in grace, and that we can be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. You are by now very familiar, or should be, with the overall structure of the book. Three great dialogue cycles followed by God's speech and the denouement at the end.

We are in the midst of the second dialogue cycle. By dialogue cycle, this is a series of exchanges between Job and his friends, each one speaking in turn. So we had Job Eliphaz, Job Bildad, Job Zophar for cycle one.

We had Job Eliphaz, Job Bildad, Job Zophar for cycle two. And Zophar, we know, is all done. We won't hear from him again.

And so we now find ourselves in the third dialogue cycle, where Job spoke, Eliphaz responded in chapter 22, and the contrast, there's sort of a juxtaposition here that is hard to miss, where viewpoint being expressed is either earthly and temporal and human, almost secular, and viewpoint that is spiritual and heavenly, and looking at God, looking for God, thinking about God, even in the midst of great earthly turbulence. And Job, the more you look at his speeches and the more you listen to his reasoning, the more surprising and the more impressive it is that in the midst of all of this loss, all of this personal suffering, he is continually talking about his favorite subject, which is God. You can just hardly get him off of that subject.

He's either wondering where God is, wondering what God is up to, or wondering why he can't speak with God, or claiming that once he and God do get back on talking terms, God is going to vindicate him because he knows that he's been faithful. This is what we saw in chapter 23 in our most recent study. One of our memory verse sections, Job spoke in verse 8 and following, he said, of course, again, in the ancient world, you're facing the east, that's your orientation, and so when he says, when I go east, when I go toward the rising sun, he's not there.

When I go west, I cannot perceive him. When he works on the north, I cannot behold him. When he turns to the south, I cannot see.

But he knows the way I take, and there is a great applicational truth there for all of us. Now, sometimes in our evening classes, it's easy to kind of pay better attention at the beginning, and then by the time we've gone a ways, all of us, the fatigue of the week catches up with us, and maybe we don't catch everything at the end. So, I'm going to make this point at the beginning in case anybody fades out.

Look at this point. Tomorrow, when you think back and say, what did we study on Friday night? I hope this is a point you'll remember. I go forward, backward, left, and right, and I can't always discern God.

I don't know if He's there. I can't perceive Him. I'm not sure what He's up to.

But, He knows the way that I take. And when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. Listen, it isn't nearly as important to know what God is up to in some given situation.

A lot of us want to solve that puzzle, and we just sit, and we think, and we think, what is God doing? Why did God let this happen? How come I don't have an answer? Why isn't the provision here? And we go around. It's like Billy Preston, we'll go around in circles, on and on and on, we just go round and round. Job says, look, I've already checked the four compass points, and I couldn't figure out what God was up to, but this is one thing I know.

He knows where I am. He knows the way that I'm taking. And that's enough for me.

He knows the way that I take. And I am aware of that all the time. And my surety, and my confidence, even in the midst of all of this, is that when He has tested me, I will come forth like gold.

It's almost as though, think about it, how many people look at the tsunami, or look at the Iraq war, or look at global warming, or look at whatever it is that's on their mind, and if they believe in God at all, they say, why is God letting this happen? Why are there starving children in Africa? Why are there abused children in America? Why does this happen? Why does that happen? As though to say, well, I need to see God's reasons for letting this happen, or I'm not sure it's right. I'm going to put God in my scales and make sure that He's meeting my expectations and my standards. What is God really up to? God took away my loved one.

God put me in this dead-end job, or in this dead-end town, or in this dead-end family, or in this dead-end school, or whatever we think. We think we don't see the point. We don't see the purpose.

We want to judge God, essentially, and put Him on the scale and see if He is found wanting or

not. Job says, look, I want to understand what God is doing. I've looked in the standard places where He can be found, and I couldn't perceive Him.

But, what I concentrate on is He knows the way I take, and when He has tested me, I will come forth like gold. That's the most important thing. Not will God stand up under our evaluation of His reasons and His purposes, but will we stand when He takes a look at our purposes and our reasons for doing what we do.

Our human nature wants to find the scapegoat, find the cause that's outside of ourselves. We're built this way, all of us. Nobody, by nature, unless they're just really strange, wants to say, oh, the cause of this problem, the source of this issue, the thing that made everything go haywire, that was me.

No, we look and say, well, I wouldn't have done that except for this. This is why I did it. Job says, God knows the way that I take, and my confidence comes from knowing that when He tests me, I will come forth like gold.

There is intrinsic value. There is intrinsic merit. There is survivable substance in the way that I take.

When God looks at it, He's going to find that which comes from Himself. Gold, so often associated with God, God's refining, the value, that which is going to last. It's a metaphor in many ways for divine righteousness.

I will come forth like gold, like that which surrounds God in His throne. Why? How can Job make this claim? Would you and I just casually make the comment, well, you know, any time God looks at me, I can tell you, He's going to find the good stuff. He's going to find the, I'm right up there with the apostles.

Why does Job have this confidence that when God evaluates him, God is going to be pleased, God is going to say, that's gold from Ophir right there. That's what I'm looking for. How can Job say that? Job knows what it takes to pass God's judgment.

And what is it? My foot has held fast to His steps. In order to do this, of course, you have to know God's steps. How many people today don't know God's steps? They know the steps of the lyrics of Christian music.

They know the steps of praise and worship. They know the steps of popular Christianity. How many believers today know God's steps well enough to be able to follow them? If you've ever read Sherlock Holmes stories by Conan Doyle, or if you've seen the dramatizations of them, many times when there's been some sort of a breaking and entering, Holmes goes outside the house, and he's looking around in the grass, and then he'll throw up his hands and he'll exclaim, he'll say, the police have let too many people in here.

You've trampled the evidence. I remember one time there was a guy that got knocked in the head by a riverbank. And Holmes went down there to figure out what happened, and he was just disgusted because 15 different policemen had been down there trampling all over the ground.

And he couldn't tell which steps belonged to whom. How do you know the steps to follow? This is why we spend our time in Bible class. This is why we spend our time in fellowship, and in speaking the truth to one another in love.

Isn't it a great thing when you have a spouse or a child or a parent or a close friend with whom you can discuss things from the Word of God and principles of the Word of God as they apply in everything from home economics to world politics, and things that have come up in Bible class have traction and they have applicability and they are illustrated and they show forth in the world around us? It's a great thing to have that to share, isn't it? It's a great thing to be walking that road together and have more than one set of tracks on this path. Job says, I will come forth like gold because my foot has held fast to his steps. I know what those steps are and I've been walking them.

Job doesn't say, I think God is going to be pleased with me because I've been looking around and I'm trying to find His steps. He says, I went north, east, south, and west and I didn't find God but I know how to walk in His sight and that's what I've done. I have kept His way and not declined, not turned aside.

I know what His way is. I know what the boundaries are. I know what's legitimate and illegitimate.

I know what the priorities are. I know what the values are. I know what the goals are.

I know what it is to walk in faith and that's what I've been doing. And Job has that confidence. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips.

I think I mentioned this last time but it's one of those things that just always intrigues me to think about the days before there was any Bible. No Genesis, no Ezekiel, no Daniel, no Gospels, no nothing. No Bible whatsoever.

And people talk about knowing God's way and about not forsaking the commandment of His lips. And I think, how did they get that? What was the mechanism by which Job knew the commandment of God's lips? You know how people, especially Italian people, say something like, you'll say something that they hope for and they say, well, from your lips to God's ears or something like that. Well, how did this get from God's lips to Job's ears? I would love to know the answer to that question.

Is it just tradition around the campfire going all the way back to Abraham? I think not. There is so much detail in what these men know and what they discuss with one another. Where did it come from? So there's a clue here when Job says, I have not departed from the commandment of His

lips.

I have treasured the words of His mouth in some way, shape, or form. Angels, early proto-prophets, somebody. You know, there was a family prophetic ministry before there was an office of prophets such as Elijah and others fulfilled.

Samuel is considered to be the first great prophet in Israel. But there was a family prophetic office much as there was a family priesthood before there was a Levitical priesthood. You remember this in the dying words of Jacob, for example, when he makes predictions about all twelve of his sons.

He crosses his hands and talks about Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's children and so on. And I wonder if in that role as family priest, family prophet, and family king. You know, those are the three great hats that Jesus wears, the three great roles that He fulfills as prophet, priest, and king.

And you have those divided out severally in the post-Exodus times of Israel. The united and divided monarchy in Israel. You have the prophets such as Nathan, Elisha, and so on.

You have the king in the Davidic line after Saul. And you have the priests who continue to be the Levites. But if you think about it, before that, where does the ruling authority reside? It's in the patriarch.

It's in the elder of the tribe or of the family descendancy. This is why you have those patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the great prototypical figures for Israel. And they serve as the priests.

They offer the sacrifices. They bless and curse and so on. And they, I think, you can find many places where they served a prophetic function as well to record and preserve the words that God gave them.

God spoke to Abraham. God spoke to Isaac. God spoke to Jacob.

So you have this all in the background when you hear Job saying, I have kept his way. I have not departed from the commandment of his lips. I have treasured the words of his mouth.

It's possible that as the family patriarch, as the family priest, Job may also have been the family prophet and have received more or less direct revelation from God. I don't think it's an unreasonable speculation. Because he is pretty clear on this.

He doesn't say, well, God as I understand Him, I've been sort of trying to move in that general direction, does He? He says, I've got the commandments of His lips. I've got the words of His mouth. And I have adhered to those and I have not deviated.

Now, the last phrase is kind of interesting. Some of your Bibles will have a text note there. I've treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

In the Hebrew here, I love the word order because it basically says that... Let me find it here so I don't... Here we go. More than my portion, I have treasured the words of His mouth. At the end of verse 12 there.

More than my portion, I have esteemed the words of His mouth. And the idea of portion there is where they get necessary food. The word that's translated as portion there is something that can also mean commandment or dictates or rules or my own statutes kind of a thing.

And so there's debate about what the last part of this verse actually means. Is He saying, I have esteemed the words... In fact, if you go to the Septuagint and the Vulgate, they by repointing this word come out with in my bosom. I have esteemed the words of His mouth literally in my chest, in my bosom.

I've taken them to heart in other words. So this is the kind of problem you have to solve when you're exegeting a book of this nature where the Hebrew is old and you've got a longer transmission history for this book than probably anything else in the Bible. So then you say, well, if you don't really know what it means, then how can you even... Well, we can say with a great deal of confidence, we know what's in Job's heart here, don't we? The rest of the context is very clear.

I have esteemed the words of His mouth. Suppose He does say more than my necessary food. Or He says in my bosom.

Or He says more than my own code of conduct, more than my own personal statutes. I put His words above my own. It all basically flows into the same locus of meaning, doesn't it? God's word is the most important thing to me.

That's what I walk in the light of. That is what I operate on. And that's why I have confidence that when God judges me, I'm going to come out like gold.

I'm going to literally be golden when God looks at me. Because that's the place that His word holds in my life. Now, we ask ourselves the question, in reviewing the past week, let's say, and our use of time, our use of energy, our brain cycles, our myths, like the measure of the work that computers do and millions of instructions per second, and all of the different little iterations that we've gone through this past week, can we really honestly review it in the harsh light of day and say, I have not departed from the commandment of His lips.

I have treasured the words of His mouth more than what most other people consider important. Their personal standard of conduct, their personal credo. I had a little bit of fun at someone's expense.

It's probably unholy of me, but I get into discussions every once in a while with a guy who's an atheist. He started going on and on about how Christian morality really isn't either moral or ethical. He made this big, long thing and quoted some article someplace where people were pointing at prominent Christians who have screwed up.

This fellow Ebers who was involved in the big financial misdealings and two or three others have made no secret of their church attendance and their support of conservative Christian values in terms of not wanting gay marriage and that kind of thing. So then when these guys are caught with their hand in the cookie jar, people say, Oh, well, so much for that Christian morality. That doesn't do you any good.

These guys are just as big of stinkers as anybody else. And so this atheist guy makes the argument, Well, conservative Christian morality isn't really moral at all. It isn't ethical.

And by that, you can kind of broad brush and say, Well, you Christians aren't to be trusted because we've seen a few of you really screw up big time. At sort of the end of this discussion, after several other points have been made, I said, By the way, let me ask you a question. Do you yourself subscribe to any identifiable system of ethics? I happen to know the answer to that question is no because he has said as much on several previous occasions.

Do you yourself subscribe to any system of ethics that's codified, that's known, that has a name somewhere? And if not, would it be fair to describe you as unethical? Because this is sort of a pot kettle black type of thing. If you're going to... Here's some vast hundreds of millions of people in every generation of history generally seeking to live their lives in the light of God's Word in some form or fashion. People who claim to be Christians and who are actively trying to actually live a Christian life.

Everybody fails. Some fail spectacularly and publicly. But at least here's the standard to which we are striving.

Here's the commandments of God's lips. Here's the words of his mouth. And we esteem them even if we can't always live up to it and we can't always be a reflection of it.

That's our value system. And somebody's saying, oh, but you've got these notable exceptions so the system is no good. There's a big difference in the person who messes up and the system which they claim to be trying to live under being bad or blaming that system for this person's failure.

We've got a great constitution in this country. We've got people that have flouted the constitution. That doesn't mean the constitution is bad because somebody violated it.

Think about it. The very definition of unethical is you claim an ethic and then you break it. Or you claim no ethic at all and you can't be held accountable to anything because you say, hey,

anything goes with me.

It feels good to do it. I have not departed from the commandment of his lips. We have to know those commandments.

Job knew them some way. I'm going to be intrigued to find out how he knew. I have treasured the words of his mouth more than something very important.

And honestly, I don't know which it is. To me, it's lost in the midst of time. I think necessary food is a bit of a stretch because the word here, chok, is somewhat related to hakmah, which is doctrine.

You've got a heit and a kot here. Heit and kot, rather. But chok has the idea of a statute or a standard and it comes to mean an allocation.

The rule says you get this much per day and from that they get daily bread, daily portion. But I think this is a little bit colored by give us this day our daily bread, man shall not live by bread alone, necessary food. I think there's a little bit of interpretive license being taken in the translation.

I tend to think that what Job actually said here, although we're not going to change the way we've memorized the verse because it's perfectly good as we've memorized it. But what is your daily bread? What is your necessary food? The true necessary food is God's word. As Jesus said, 40 days in the wilderness, you don't live by bread alone.

It's every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Rema, not Lagos. Very fascinating to me.

When I first got into Greek, I thought I'm going to go look up that verse that says man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word because I just expected it to be Lagos. And it wasn't. Lagos is the word that generally means doctrine or the system of thought, the word.

In the beginning was the Lagos. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the Lagos. I was sure that would be it.

And I can tell you where I was sitting and what I was thinking when I first cracked my Greek text and turned over to that verse. And it said, Jesus is saying man shall not live by lechem alone, but by every Rema. Rema is the spoken word.

They got Rema Bible Institute up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which is a charismatic institution of higher learning. Why do they call it Rema? Word of knowledge. Miraculous latter-day signs and wonders.

It's the Rema Bible Institute. It's God still speaking today in signs and wonders and tongues and so on is the idea. Man lives by every Rema that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And so I puzzled with that. I thought, well, you know, I always thought that you're in there and

you're getting the gnosis and the epinosis and the Lagos of God and all this and it's all of the doctrine and the principles and all of this, but you can't get around it. You live by the Rema.

And this is the same thing Job is saying here. It's the words of his mouth. It's the commandments of his lips.

And you know what that is to me? What came to me as I was thinking about that and what my conclusion was? If you are pros theos, if you are in God's presence, if you follow the Hebrews chapter 10 thing, you sprinkle your heart, you wash your body and you go into the throne room, you're not going to bury your nose in a book. You're going to look up at the face of God and those words are going to leap off the page and they're going to be God's spoken words. It's a relationship.

Remember that old thing, it's not a religion, it's a relationship. Lots of people have been in love, been separated from the loved one, gotten a letter, treasure the letter, read the letter over and over again. But when you're back in the company of that person, you don't say, oh, wait just one second and get the letter out and start reading it.

You look at their face and even when you're reading the letter, it is as though you're in their presence for a brief time and it is as though they're speaking and the words leap off the page and come out of their face, come off of their lips. And this is what Jesus is talking about. This is what Job is talking about.

It's the words of God's lips and God's mouth. It ought to be a living part of a living relationship. God is a person, not a system.

God speaks, He doesn't leave behind a constitution with bylaws and amendments. He speaks. He says, My son, if you will receive my words and lay up my commandments with thee, so that you incline your ear to wisdom and you apply your heart to understanding, if you will seek for a silver and search for a hidden treasure, and so on.

He speaks to us. And it ought to be in our minds and in our souls like it is to Job and like it is to Jesus. It's the words of His mouth.

It's the commandments of His lips. It can't be anything other than personal. That's what kissing is all about.

It's one of the most personal things you can do. Why? That's intimacy. That's familiarity.

That is close contact. And if you love the words of God more than anything else in the world, that's closeness. That's intimacy.

And it ought to be the words of His lips. So, he goes on and we saw the rest of this last time. When he performs what is appointed for me, he has a plan and has a purpose.

And Job says, I know this is a part of His purpose. And the reason I'm reviewing this a little bit is look back now at what we're studying tonight in chapter 24. Or, well, let me, what we just looked at in verses 8 and 9. When I go forward and go backward, He works on the left and the right, but He knows the way that I take.

So, this is all part of the same thought. He says, I know that this is what God has ordained. This is what God has planned.

He knows where I am and He's got a plan and a purpose for me right where I am. I don't have to understand it. I don't have to be able to make sense of it.

I don't have to be able to say, well, according to the angelic info board here, God is located at 32 degrees northeast. Here's His latitude and longitude and this is exactly what He's up to. It's silly for us to expect that God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

To the extent that He does reveal His plan and purpose, that's great and we should look for it and attempt to understand it. But Job says, I'm not stymied just because I've gone in all four directions and don't have it figured out. He knows where I am and I am good to go.

I'm in the path. I'm on the steps. I haven't deviated or departed from the words of His lips.

That's how well I'm acquainted with God. I know the words of His mouth. And then we look at verse 13 where He says, He is unique.

It's Baha'i here and I told you last time, I really think this is Baha'i. God has chosen. God has ordained.

God has settled a thing and who can make Him change? This is what God has chosen. I don't understand it. I went four directions and didn't figure it out.

There's no point in trying to make Him change. What He desires, that's what He does. And Job is not arguing with that.

He's not complaining about it. Many such things are in that category with him. You know, you want to tell God to rearrange the constellations.

You don't like the way the stars map out at night. You don't like the length of the day. You don't like the wobble of the Earth's axis.

You don't like the tide. You don't like the hurricane season or something. You want to go tell God to change His ways.

I mean, there's many things in this category. A pastor that I listened to for many years had a term

for this and he talked about believers having a need to adjust to God. We don't try to get God to adjust to us.

Lord, I just thought I'd let you know in my prayer today that the way I see things, this is how it ought to turn out. I see this as a problem and I see this as a good thing that I'd like a whole lot more of. So if you could really blow this thing up and kind of minimize this other, that would be great.

You'll be my God. I'll be your happy follower here. So see if you can figure that out for me.

In Jesus' name, amen. No. God is God.

God has chosen. God has ordained. And it is up to us to adjust and to conform ourselves to what God has chosen.

I mean, take a look at the rank structure here. If you look at the table of organization, God is at the top. We're at the bottom.

It doesn't work upside down. It seems like a simple concept. But think about the implications of a lot of the prayers that you hear today.

Oh, Jesus, bind Satan. I can identify eight errors in just that Satan. And you hear it all the time on TV.

Oh, dear Jesus, bind Satan. How many ways is that wrong? You're not praying to the right person. You're not asking for the right thing.

You don't understand the status of Satan. He is not going to be bound. It's not time for him to be bound.

God doesn't want him bound. Jesus didn't say to Peter, well, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you like wheat, but I'm going to bind him. So don't worry about it.

Peter, did you know that Satan's coming? Listen, I'll tell you a secret. If you ask me, I'll bind you. Then he won't be able to sift you.

It's an utter, complete ludicrousity. I haven't given you one of those in a while. He makes the decisions.

He sets the plan. We don't have to understand all of the plan. We just have to understand where we are.

Are we on his steps? Following a path and you've got steps there. You may not see where the steps came from. You may not see where the steps are going.

But you can see the steps right in front of you. You've got the Word that's a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. All you have to do is say, am I on the steps? Keep going.

He talks about how disconcerting it is. We left off right here at verses 16 and 17. Let me just finish up chapter 23 right quick and we'll be ready to start 24 after the break.

This is a bit tricky as is much of the language here. But take a look at this. In the English it says, For God made my heart weak, and the Almighty terrifies me.

Now this seems, doesn't it, to your eye and your ear a little out of keeping with what he has just said? Would God test me? I'm going to come out like gold. However, my heart is weak and limp and he makes me totally afraid. And I've been cut off in the presence of darkness and he did not hide deep darkness from me.

Now how can Job know that he's on the steps and in the way if he's in deep darkness and he's got a bag on his head and he's afraid and terrified of God when he just got through saying, would God test me? I'm going to come out like gold. God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power and love and a sound mind. Remember that? The God who is our provider is not supposed to be the one that's scaring the wits out of us.

And Job has not said this thus far. You may be thinking back, oh, but remember he said about the night terrors? He said, there are things that come in my dreams. I see visions in the night that terrify me.

He doesn't say, God himself terrifies me. I'm afraid of God. But that's what it seems to say here.

Well, we look at this in the Hebrew and he says, you have to go back a little bit to verse 15. It says, therefore I am terrified in his presence. In Hebrew this is achen, which means, therefore behold, basically.

Or actually just therefore. And then, from his face is what it says. You've got the preposition main, which is from, and then pene, same thing we just saw about the face of God.

Therefore, from his face I am terrified. Now, I think this is away from his face. I esteem the words of his mouth.

I've got the commandments of his lips. They're more to me than my necessary food, my allotted portion, my, I have them in my bosom. Whatever it is that that means, they're valuable to Job.

And they come from God's lips and God's mouth. We just talked about what a great thing it is to be in God's presence. Now he says, Therefore, from his face I am terrified.

If I can't see his face, I'm terrified. That's what this says. Away from his face I am terrified.

I consider, is the next word in the verse, and I tremble from him. I am perplexed, and I tremble apart from him. That's what this verse says.

Now, put that in the context of his way that I kept and not declined. I have kept the words of his mouth, the commandments of his lips. They're more to me than anything.

Therefore, away from his face, I am terrified. I am perplexed and I tremble away from him. And this is Job's whole dilemma, is he feels separated from God.

He's had all this disaster and God has not spoken. You almost get the idea that maybe Job has this prophetic as well as priestly and leading role. And God is silent.

And he's not, the channel is not bringing any traffic. Job's tuned in and he's not hearing anything at the moment. So then he says, and in verse 16, God, El, has made my heart faint.

And the almighty, Shaddai, has caused me to be terrified. Now, given the translation of the previous verse, while these words are pretty much the same as in your English, the import of them is slightly different, isn't it? This is more in the sense that God has done this in the sense of removing himself. God has made my heart faint and the almighty has terrified me by his silence, by the feeling that I am no longer in his presence.

Not God has come down there and is pulling the wings off the flies and squashing me like a bug and just seeing how he can toy with me. But because of his silence, because of this distance, I'm terrified and my heart is weak. Now, verse 17 says, for I have not ceased, I have not vanished, I have not disappeared because of or from, this is actually the very same type of phrase that was used before, of God.

From the face of, main, from, and then pene, the face of, koshek. We talked about koshek before. It's darkness.

Come from kashak. Because I have not ceased from the face of darkness. from the face and from my face thick darkness conceals.

Again, I don't have time to do a real detailed exegesis and explanation of this, but what is Job basically saying here? My heart is weak and my fear comes from this darkness that separates me from the presence of God. I value the words of his mouth and now I'm afraid because even though I know that if I can ever get back with him, I'm going to come out like gold. Right now, it's the darkness and it's the separation that is terrifying me.

I think you can find a close analog to this at the cross. When God the Father separated himself from the Lord Jesus Christ, what did Jesus say? He screamed out. It's very emphatic in Greek.

Jesus screamed out, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And I think one of the most extreme agonies that the Lord Jesus Christ went through was the

separation from his Father. And you have a prototype, a small foreshadowing of that.

It wasn't small to Job, but it's small compared to Christ on the cross. In this passage, Job says, it is a terrifying thing. It is a discouraging, disheartening thing to have darkness between me and the God whose words I treasure and whose commandments I seek to walk in at all times.

And it's kind of convicting, isn't it? Because we have such free access to God and we tend to be like the son who stayed at home while the prodigal went away to feed the swine. Well, he went away to spend the living and then he fed the swine. But the son who remains behind sort of takes his father for granted and when there's a great celebration at the return of the prodigal, he's kind of like, well, when did you ever kill the fatty calf for me? When did my friends ever get invited over? And so on.

And there's a lack of appreciation. Why isn't the stay-at-home son praising his father and saying, Father, you are such a role model for me. I don't know that I would have had the level of forgiveness and the level of understanding and the patience and the forgiveness that you have expressed toward my brother.

I hope that I can truly be a chip off of your block and following your steps in my future life. He's all self-centered. And what does the father say to him? Son, you've been here.

You've been able to partake of everything I've got. You've never been gone. What's stopping you? And he can't see it.

And I think in some ways we forget what a privilege and what a blessing it is to have the access through the veil. Jesus making that new and living way that the curtain has been ripped from top to bottom and we can walk into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God. We can experience like no one in history the commandments of God's lips and the words of His mouth.

How valuable is it? Do we treasure it? Do we esteem it more than our necessary food? More than our standard allotted portion? Do we want more? Job says, this presence of darkness and the deep darkness in my face, this is what distresses me. This is what makes me fearful. I can put up with anything as long as God doesn't hide His face from me.

Well, that's where 23 leaves off and that's where 24 begins. And of course, this is sort of an arbitrary division because in the original Hebrew there was no division here at all. But we'll pause here and take our break and when we come back there is going to be this new theme introduced in 24.1. What does it mean for the times to be hidden from the Almighty? We'll look at that when we come back.