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Sermon Notes

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## **Though He Slay Me, Yet Will I Trust in Him**

**Job 13:15**

### I. Knowledge of God... and Of Ourselves

#### A. John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

"Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say true and sound wisdom, consists in two parts: the knowledge of God, and of ourselves."

BUT what should we know about God? And what should we know about ourselves??

#### B. Calvin's Sermon on Job 13:11-15

1. One of the most powerfully convicting sermons I have ever read
2. John Calvin has a way of simply levelling human pride
3. He spoke in the plainest way about the infinite majesty of God, and how the terror of God should slaughter our pride
4. I want to draw out some of his insights with you today, for your humbling and therefore for your healing
5. My goal is to buttress your souls so that you will trust God no matter what happens... though he slays you, yet will you hope in him
6. Essential to that is to STOP COMPLAINING against God... to stop murmuring and questioning and arguing and being angry at God

7. Essential to that is knowing how majestic God is, and how lowly we all are—we humans, we sinners
8. Ultimately... I believe the text we're going to study today is the whole point of the Book of Job for us Christians... no matter what Job himself believed: **THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I HOPE IN HIM!**

## II. Terrified by the Majesty of God

*Job 13:11 Would not his majesty terrify you? Would not the dread of him fall on you?*

### A. Job is Speaking to His Friends in chapters 12-13

1. We have been through one full cycle of dialog
2. Eliphaz has spoken... then Bildad had his chance... then Zophar
3. They are all coming from fundamentally the same point of view: the law of retribution, of sowing and reaping... “You, Job, are suffering because of your own sins. Repent and God will restore you!”
4. Job wants to come back at them... wake them up to the vastly greater sense he has of the infinite majesty of God

### B. He Wants them to Come Face to Face with the Reality of the Majesty of God

*Job 13:11 Would not his majesty terrify you? Would not the dread of him fall on you?*

He rebukes their shallow explanation of his sufferings:

*Job 13:12 Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay.*

### C. The Majesty of God OUGHT to Terrify All of Us! [John Calvin...]

1. Job is exposing his friends' faulty statements about God
2. Why are we all so impudent in falsifying the truth about God?

3. BECAUSE we do not see him in his lofty majesty and easily pull him down to our level... making Almighty God like ourselves
4. And what an infinite distance there really is between God and us!

***1 Kings 8:27 The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you.***

John Calvin: "Let us bow our heads and let God say whatever pleases him, and when we have heard his word, let him also do whatever he thinks is best, and let us adore him in all his works, especially when we enter into the consideration of our feebleness and frailty, saying 'WHAT ARE WE?!'"

***Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.***

Job speaks as one who truly understands the fear of the Lord... and senses that his trivial friends do not!

5. So, we should be better advised if we take it upon ourselves to speak of this holy God... BUT ordinarily, we humans proceed to speak of God STUPIDLY
6. We ought to repent of this lighthearted trivial manner of speaking of God a direct violation of this command:

***Exodus 20:7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.***

7. If we are going to speak about God, we should allow a holy reverence and fear to come over us... and learn to conceive of the infinite glory that is in him

Matthew Henry: "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. 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.”

8. So, how could we finite beings even begin to conceive of God?
  - a. If we compare him with any of his creatures, that would be to strip him of his majesty and make him nothing!
  - b. And what can we do now when we have been surrounded all our lives with people who have spoken empty words about God, have joked about him, lowered him, and stripped him of his majesty? We are so USED to this light-hearted trivializing of God! How shall we recover?
9. Begin by considering what WE are!
  - a. Meditate on the feebleness and poverty of our beings... that we are small and weak and made from the dust of the earth
  - b. Compare our smallness to the infinite dimensions of the cosmos

***Psalm 8:3-4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, <sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?***

Yet God is infinitely above the cosmos:

***Isaiah 40:12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?***

***Isaiah 40:26 Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.***

10. Compare ourselves to the glorious angels
  - a. If we had the glory of the angels, we would be able to approach nearer to God’s glorious throne as they do continually

b. But notice how they are... the radiant seraphim in Isaiah 6 covered their faces and covered their feet and cried aloud continually: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty... the whole earth is full of his glory!”

11. Calvin: “But what are we but rottenness?”

a. Not only are we of the dust of the earth, we are rebels against God’s holy rule, violators of his majestic kingdom, transgressors of his perfect law

b. We are not merely creatures from the dust, we are rebellious and arrogant!

12. And we are completely frail... weak... like sparks that jump up from a campfire and twirl in the updraft for a moment and would be instantly quenched were it not God’s will to sustain us... and that he does from his pure goodness and patient grace!

13. In and of ourselves, we could not sustain ourselves alive for one instant... but God preserves us alive by his mere good pleasure

14. We could not take another breath, our heart would not beat even one more time except that God wills it and sustains what he has made, because there is in ourselves nothing but smoke and vanity

15. It is beneficial for us to have a lively sense of who God is who created us and sustains us, that we are from him and that everything we see in any direction to which we look—whether up or down, left or right, front or back... we will see clear evidence of his powerful handiwork and wise loving care.

16. This should cause us to be astonished and abashed at ourselves and truly humble ourselves before this infinite majesty, adoring his lofty glory... and quiet ourselves from all murmuring and questioning of him

Calvin: “So then let us learn to know better who God is in order that we may be trained in all modesty and sobriety, and meanwhile let us examine what we are. When we see that our flesh does tickle us to applaud ourselves so that we are inclined to flatter ourselves and seek to stand in our own conceit, let us stir

ourselves to say 'Where does this conceit come from?' It is because you have not really known yourself. There we shall find that we have a bottomless pit of sin in us, and that we are wrapped in such ignorance that it is horrible to behold, which is as it were so thick a darkness that it utterly chokes and strangles us."

If the essence of all true and sound wisdom is knowledge of God and of ourselves, it seems we don't know either very well

That's exactly why we are so proud! If we had the experience of an encounter with the glory of Almighty God, we would react with the same trembling and fear and awe that all of the people in the Bible have had over the centuries...

In Calvin's *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he writes: "**Hence that dread and terror by which holy men of old trembled before God, as Scripture uniformly relates.**" It seems that the more righteous the person is described, the more he trembles when he enters the immediate presence of God.

Abraham:

*Genesis 15:12 As the sun was setting, a deep sleep fell on Abram, and suddenly a terror and great darkness descended on him.*

Jacob (at Bethel... the dream of the stairway to heaven)

*Genesis 28:17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."*

Moses... at the burning bush

*Acts 7:32 Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.*

... and when God caused the ground to shake beneath his feet and descended in fire upon Mt. Sinai:

*Hebrews 12:21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."*

Isaiah:

***Isaiah 6:5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."***

Habakkuk:

***Habakkuk 3:16 I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled.***

Ezekiel:

***Ezekiel 1:28 This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown***

Peter, James, and John:

***Matthew 17:5-6 a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"<sup>6</sup> When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.***

The Apostle John on the Island of Patmos (at the END of the New Testament!!), saw the resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ:

***Revelation 1:14-15 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. <sup>15</sup> His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.***

***Revelation 1:17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.***

Calvin said, "the uniform report of sacred Scripture is that every human being who ever is exposed to the holiness of God trembles in His presence."

Almighty God himself said:

***Isaiah 66:2 "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.***

I do believe one of the central purpose of the Book of Job is to bring us to the same kind of humbling Job had in his encounter with God in the whirlwind at the end of the book...

*Job 40:4-5 "I am unworthy-- how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. <sup>5</sup> I spoke once, but I have no answer-- twice, but I will say no more."*

*Job 42:5-6 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. <sup>6</sup> Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.*

This fear of the Lord is essential to us being humble in his presence and not sinning:

*Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."*

It is also essential to us not questioning God or murmuring against him when he wisely chooses to bring us through pain and sorrow for our good and his glory.

And ultimately, Jesus Christ came to take away all fear in the presence of God:

With John on the Island of Patmos:

*Revelation 1:17-18 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup> I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

When Peter, James and John were trembling on their faces on the Mount of Transfiguration,

*Matthew 17:7-8 Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." <sup>8</sup> When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.*

BUT we who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the affluent West, are used to a very casual form of religion, and are not used to having our



pride stripped away so roughly... we revel in the immanence of God (his closeness and love and gentleness and desire to be our friend and our loving Father) and we are not so familiar with the transcendence of God – his infinite majesty and holiness and the proper dread that should come on us in his presence

This was the profound basis of Job's astounding piety... and from this we see Job at his absolute best

### III. Job at His Best: Though He Slay Me, Yet Will I Hope in Him

#### ***Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him***

##### A. Understanding the Statement Plainly

1. Even if the worst possible earthly outcome were to happen to me, I would still trust in God
2. My faith and my hope in God go even beyond my own earthly life
3. Essential to this faith and hope are my belief in my own resurrection from the dead
4. I will be trusting in God even on my death bed... for I already know this:

***Job 1:21 "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."***

5. So, death is not some shock, some surprise, some stunning plot twist that I never expected
6. I will die hoping in God, I will die trusting in God, my faith reaches beyond the grave

##### B. BUT... What Do the Scholars Say?

1. All the English translations say essentially the same thing:

***KJV Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him***

***NASB, ESV Job 13:15 Though he slay me, I will hope in him***

***CSB Job 13:15 Even if He kills me, I will hope in Him.***

2. BUT there is some serious doubt as to whether that amazing assertion by Job, captured in all the major translations, is even right
3. There is a small Hebrew word “lo” which can either be translated “to/for him” or “not” (the negation)
4. So, one translation goes this direction:

***ob 13:15 “If he were to slay me, I would have no hope.”***

WOW! That’s radically different, isn’t it?

Like, “If I die in the end, all my hopes are gone!”

It seems like many scholars think Job has no hope except for this life alone... when he dies, everything he ever hoped for is entirely gone!!

They argue that the book of Job has no doctrine of the resurrection... that the grave is all there is!

***Job 17:11-16 My days have passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart. <sup>12</sup> These men turn night into day; in the face of darkness they say, 'Light is near.' <sup>13</sup> If the only home I hope for is the grave, if I spread out my bed in darkness, <sup>14</sup> if I say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother' or 'My sister,' <sup>15</sup> where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me? <sup>16</sup> Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust?"***

5. I don’t deny that Job’s theology of the grave and life beyond the grave is nowhere near what is revealed after Christ’s glorious resurrection from the dead!
6. We’re going to talk more thoroughly next week about Job’s view of the resurrection... and ours

7. For Job, I understand that he is battling with his feelings, and comes in and out of proper convictions... but his assertion here fits the overall context of the place of the Book of Job in the Bible

C. EITHER WAY...the Book of Job Makes No Sense Apart from Resurrection

1. If for this life only Job hoped in God, he would be above all men that lived most to be pitied!!
2. His children really were gone forever... he would never see them again
3. His possessions that were restored to him at the end of his trials... all the new camels and sheep and oxen... and yes, the ten new children as well... all these would only be taken from him again when he died!
4. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! If there is no resurrection from the dead, what's the point of any earthly blessedness?

D. Fully Embracing Job's Assertion

1. "Though he slays me, yet will I hope in him" comes even more alive for us as Christians!!
2. We realize that, in one sense, whenever a Christian dies, God is slaying him... God is choosing him to cease living, because the omnipotent God could have continued his life effortlessly!! He can bring anyone out of any illness or emergency through his sovereign power... ultimately, no Christian dies accidentally, such that God is shocked to see that person appear in heaven having left this earthly life

***Psalm 104:29 when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust***

3. We believe in a God who USES the death of Christians for his wise purposes

***Psalm 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.***

4. We follow a Savior who laid down his life for us, only to take it up again

***John 10:18 No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.***

5. We follow a Savior who calls us to do the same

***John 12:24-26 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. <sup>25</sup> The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.***

6. We see that some of our brothers and sisters in Christ willingly and gladly laid down their lives for the sake of the gospel

Tertullian: “The blood of martyrs is seed for the church”

7. We follow a cloud of witnesses that were willing to lead exquisitely difficult lives for the faith of the gospel... who did not always have the earthly WIN but were willing for immeasurable earthly LOSSES for the sake of the gospel

***Hebrews 11:35-38 Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- <sup>38</sup> the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.***

8. They were willing for God to slay them so that others might live

#### E. A Progression

1. Job said “Though he slays me, yet will I hope in him”

2. Shadrach Meshach and Abednego said effectively “Though he slays me, yet will I obey him!”

***Daniel 3:17-18 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."***

3. The Apostle Paul said, “Though he slays me, yet will I rejoice in him!”

***Philippians 2:17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.***

***Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.***

Job’s triumphant statement should inspire us Christians to SUFFER WELL and to DIE WELL for Jesus and for the spread of the gospel and for our own growth in godliness as well...

Trust in your Father at all times! Humble yourself and let him do his mighty work in you and through you, even to the point of him deciding it’s better for his glory and your salvation that you DIE and not live!!

#### IV. Job at His Worst: Yet I Will Challenge Him to His Face!

***<sup>ESV</sup> Job 13:15 Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face.***

##### A. Now We Go Back Full Circle

1. The first part of this sermon addressed a healthy fear of God’s infinite majesty
2. Job challenged his friends about their cavalier attitudes about God’s glory, his loftiness, his perfect holiness... saying they should fear the Lord vastly more than they do

3. The terror of the Lord should cause us to refrain from murmuring against him, arguing with him, questioning him, being angry at him
4. BUT JOB said he is still determined to ARGUE HIS WAYS TO GOD'S FACE!!!
5. And he actually will go on to do that... directly questioning God's justice
6. Job should have heeded his own words!
7. He will get stripped of that pride by God by the end of this book... when God appears in the whirlwind and speaks with awesome power to him and says "WHO IS THIS WHO DARKENS MY COUNSEL BY SPEAKING EMPTY WORDS WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE?!"
8. Job will be reduced to trembling silence before him

#### B. Fire and Smolder

1. Richard Sibbes classic "Bruised Reed and Smoldering Flax"... unfolds the amazing gentleness of Jesus Christ in dealing with fragile sinners like us... Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:3 and applies it to Jesus, the physician of souls

***Matthew 12:20 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory.***

2. We redeemed sinners are not mighty oaks but bruised reeds... weak, fragile things, hanging by a slender thread
3. Jesus knows how to bind up the brokenhearted and not break them...
4. We redeemed sinners are smoldering flaxes... like a flickering smoldering wick that is just about to be extinguished... we are not roaring bonfires of zeal and light and heat for the glory of God... we have some fire in us, but a lot of smolder too... a lot of noxious smoke

5. Job is like that here... making a triumphant statement of faith:  
“Though he slays me, yet will I hope in him.” But following it with a defiant determination to ARGUE with God TO HIS FACE concerning how God has treated him
6. We must see ourselves in this as well!! We are like this too!!
7. Let us humble ourselves before his infinite majesty and let the appropriate fear of the Lord cause us to quiet ourselves under his mighty hand

***1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.***