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Sermon Notes

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Our Heavenly Witness, Advocate, and Intercessor

Job 15-17

Before the foundation of the world, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, planned our salvation. God planned that his children would be saved from their rebellion and their misery by the intervention of Jesus Christ, their Savior. This plan was in God's mind when God created the heavens and the earth, and when God said "Let there be light." This plan was also in God's mind when Adam and Eve fell into sin and doomed their children to sorrow and suffering through the relentlessness of evil. Even then God knew that his chosen people in every nation on earth would be saved through Jesus Christ.

However, despite the fact that this plan was formed in the mind of God down to the smallest detail, yet God revealed it only a little at a time over the centuries through his holy prophets. Their limited knowledge of the coming Savior was dim and distant...

Numbers 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel."

As the time drew nearer, the light grew clearer... the prophets were given bigger and bigger pieces of the mystery to write down and ponder.

Job, it seems, was at a very early stage in all this... his knowledge of the coming Savior and of the life and light he would bring was very limited... Paul speaks of

Ephesians 3:9 this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

So, Job went through his suffering yearning for things that we know now clearly by the open assertions of scripture in light of the past accomplishments of Jesus Christ.

And one of those is the role of Jesus as our heavenly witness, advocate, intercessor and friend.

Job yearned for that but didn't really know him. Jesus came to fulfill all those roles for all of us for all eternity.

I. When Will Windy Words End?

A. Job Has Become Utterly Disgusted with His "Friends"

Job 16:2-3 "I have heard many things like these; miserable comforters are you all! ³ Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing?"

"Miserable comforters are you all!"

Their counsel is actually shredding him, not healing him

He wonders when their long-winded speeches will ever end... their words are wind... chaff... empty of truth and nourishment for his soul

He chides them directly for their demeanor for the simple reason that they have not suffered as he has, so they cannot possibly understand what he is going through:

Job 16:4 I also could speak like you, if you were in my place; I could make fine speeches against you and shake my head at you.

He asserts that if he were in their place, he would do a much better job of being a friend and a counselor than they have done:

Job 16:5 But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief.

Okay... what brought that on? Well, Eliphaz's second speech

Remember, this section of Job is made up of three cycles of dialog between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

All three have spoken once, and Job has answered each of them.

Now, Eliphaz speaks for a second time, as recorded in Job 15

Remember the first time Eliphaz spoke, his basic proposition was "You reap what you sow!" Job's grievous troubles have come upon him from a just and active God who is dealing with Job in his sin

Now, Eliphaz has his second crack at Job... What did Eliphaz say?

B. Eliphaz's Second Speech (Job 15)

1. Eliphaz says JOB'S words are nothing but wind

Job 15:2-3 "Would a wise man answer with empty notions or fill his belly with the hot east wind? ³ Would he argue with useless words, with speeches that have no value?"

2. Eliphaz basically rebukes Job, saying his sinfulness is prompting his speech... he says it is ungodly to attack God (15:2-6)
3. He seeks to humble Job and lay him low

Job 15:7-10 Are you the first man ever born? Were you brought forth before the hills? ⁸ Do you listen in on God's council? Do you limit wisdom to yourself? ⁹ What do you know that we do not know? What insights do you have that we do not have? ¹⁰ The gray-haired and the aged are on our side, men even older than your father.

- a. Basically "Job, who do you think you are?"

Job 15:14-16 "What is man, that he could be pure, or one born of woman, that he could be righteous? ¹⁵ If God places no trust in his holy ones, if even the heavens are not pure in his eyes, ¹⁶ how much less man, who is vile and corrupt, who drinks up evil like water!"

4. Then, Eliphaz traces out in great detail the doom of the godless evildoer in 15:20-35... and APPLIES IT TO JOB!

Job 15:20-25 All his days the wicked man suffers torment, the ruthless through all the years stored up for him. ²¹ Terrifying sounds fill his ears; when all seems well, marauders attack him. ²² He despairs of escaping the darkness; he is marked for the sword. ²³ He wanders about-- food for vultures; he knows the day of darkness is at hand. ²⁴ Distress and anguish fill him with terror; they overwhelm him, like a king poised to attack, ²⁵ because he shakes his fist at God and vaunts himself against the Almighty

Job 15:30-32 He will not escape the darkness; a flame will wither his shoots, and the breath of God's mouth will carry him away. ³¹ Let him not deceive himself by trusting what is worthless, for he will get nothing in return. ³² Before his time he will be paid in full, and his branches will not flourish.

So... Eliphaz is getting more and more aggressive in calling Job a massive sinner, a wicked evil-doer

And just as Eliphaz called Job's words "wind", Job returns the favor and calls Eliphaz's words wind as well... empty of truth

II. Job's Complaint Against God (Job 16:7-17)

A. God Has Devastated Job's Household

Job 16:7 Surely, O God, you have worn me out; you have devastated my entire household.

B. God Has Assaulted Job's Body Through Disease

Job 16:8 You have bound me-- and it has become a witness; my gauntness rises up and testifies against me.

C. God Has Attacked Him Violently Like an Enemy

Job 16:9 God assails me and tears me in his anger and gnashes his teeth at me; my opponent fastens on me his piercing eyes.

D. Men Have Become Hateful Toward Job

Job 16:10 Men open their mouths to jeer at me; they strike my cheek in scorn and unite together against me.

E. God Has Assaulted Him in Wave Upon Wave

Job 16:12-14 All was well with me, but he shattered me; he seized me by the neck and crushed me. He has made me his target; ¹³ his archers surround me. Without pity, he pierces my kidneys and spills my gall on the ground. ¹⁴ Again and again he bursts upon me; he rushes at me like a warrior.

F. Job's Body is Repulsive

Job 16:15-16 "I have sewed sackcloth over my skin and buried my brow in the dust. ¹⁶ My face is red with weeping, deep shadows ring my eyes;

G. And All of This Has Happened to an INNOCENT MAN!!

Job 16:17-18 yet my hands have been free of violence and my prayer is pure. ¹⁸ "O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest!

III. Job's Bitter Lament: "Death is My Only Hope" (17:1-16)

None of these words are bringing Job any comfort at all... so Job launches into a deep and bitter lament in chapter 17:1-16

A. Job Feels Completely Shattered by This Trial

Job 17:1 My spirit is broken, my days are cut short, the grave awaits me.

Job 17:11 My days have passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart.

1. Job has reached the point where he sees nothing good left in his future
2. Everything he ever set his heart on in this world has been ripped from him violently
3. What else is left to hope for in this world? More sheep and oxen and camels?

4. He has lost all taste for life
5. Friends may try to give him hope:

Job 17:12 These men turn night into day; in the face of darkness they say, 'Light is near.'

BUT...

B. The Only Hope He Has Left is the Grave

Job 17:13-16 If the only home I hope for is the grave, if I spread out my bed in darkness, ¹⁴ if I say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother' or 'My sister,' ¹⁵ where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me? ¹⁶ Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust?"

1. We looked at this passage last time
2. It is plain that Job does not have a developed hope in resurrection
3. For him, the grave is a place of darkness, of cessation of all sensory input... all pleasure and all pain become obsolete
4. But that is still better than what he's going through now!
5. It would at least mean an end to his suffering
6. BUT if the only hope he has left is to have his mortal remains turn to corruption, what kind of hope is that?
7. Can such a hope sustain me from now until the day I actually do die?
8. Will such a hope hold my hand as I go down to the dark river of death and begin to cross over?
9. What kind of existence is really left for me here on earth?

IV. My Witness, Advocate, and Intercessor Is In Heaven (Job 16:19-21)

A. In the Middle of These Two Bitter Laments is One Shining Moment

***Job 16:19-21 Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.
²⁰ My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; ²¹
 on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his
 friend.***

1. Again and again, Job speaks words filled with prophetic insight
2. But (it seems) again and again, he lapses back into depression and the darkness of yearning for death
3. God the Spirit moved in Job to say things that even he did not fully understand
4. And now, in the fullness of time, we see their fulfillment in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

B. Prophets Often Did Not Understand Their Own Words

1. Peter's clear statement of this truth

1 Peter 1:10-12 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

In simple words, the Old Testament prophets spoke of the grace that was coming to all of us in Christ... they SPOKE with words moved along by the Holy Spirit

2 Peter 1:21 ... men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit

So, Peter says that the Old Testament prophets were moved along by the Holy Spirit to speak about the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow

He also says they tried to find out what their own words meant and were not able to... they were not ready to understand the fullness of God's purposes in Christ

God told them that the words for others, not for them

2. This happens often in the book of Job... I think Job says things that will be magnificently fulfilled in Jesus Christ; but though Job says them, he doesn't understand them, and they don't captivate his heart like they captivate ours now that Christ has come

3. For example, earlier, Job said this

Job 9:33-34 If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, ³⁴ someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more.

This is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus, the God-Man, who is the perfect mediator between us:

1 Timothy 2:5-6 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all men-- the testimony given in its proper time.

Notice that Paul says the testimony of Jesus was given "in its proper time" ... in other words, at the right time in redemptive history, the God-Man, the Mediator appeared who had the right to lay a hand on us both – to represent God to man, and to represent man to God

And because of this perfect Mediator, sinners like Job and you and I can have peace with God and freedom from the terrors of God's wrath and judgments:

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

So, as Job said, God's terrors will frighten us no more

4. And here in our chapter today is another example:

***Job 16:19-21 Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.
²⁰ My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; ²¹
 on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his
 friend.***

5. Let's extend this now beyond any comprehension Job could have had about this ministry of Jesus Christ

6. Job says that "even now" he has a witness in heaven, an advocate on high, an intercessor

7. But he didn't know Christ's activities on our behalf as we do now

C. What Job Wanted

1. Job wanted a witness for him in heaven... someone to testify in the heavenly courtroom, at his heavenly trial, that he was truly innocent of all these charges; someone to present the truth, the evidence on his behalf so he could be vindicated

2. Job wanted an advocate on high... someone to speak on his behalf

3. An intercessor... to plead for him with great passion, as he himself was weeping tears; someone who would actually care about him and his vindication as much as he did... someone who could plead for him as a man pleads for his friend

4. We have all these perfectly fulfilled for us in Jesus, our Great High Priest

V. Jesus Our Great High Priest

A. Christ's Priestly Ministry Asserted (Hebrews)

Hebrews 2:17 For this reason [Jesus] had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Hebrews 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

Hebrews 5:5-6 God said to him... "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

B. Jesus' Priestly Credentials (Hebrews)

1. Perfect and holy... does not need to offer sacrifices for his own sins
2. Eternal, unchanging, with a permanent priesthood... he is a priest forever, and not based on his genealogy... and he can never die again, so he is a priest forever
3. Perfect access to God... for he sits at the right hand of Almighty God over all the universe, and can speak to the Father at any time
4. Perfect sacrifice... his own blood

C. Jesus' Perfect Compassion

1. Job wanted someone to plead for him as a man pleads for his friend
 - a. We could imagine an advocate who was detached, aloof, uncaring, professional... in it for the money, like a public defender with an overwhelming case-load
 - b. Such a lawyer barely knows your name, has only lightly familiarized himself with your case, has no vested interest in your vindication
 - c. Jesus is nothing like that... he has staked his lifeblood to ensure your salvation
2. Jesus asserted eternal friendship to us

John 15:13-14 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

3. Hebrews tells us of his perfect compassion to our weaknesses

Hebrews 4:15 we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.

4. Jesus was moved again and again and again by the weakness and sufferings of the people

Mark 1:40-42 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

Mark 8:1-3 During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ² "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

Luke 7:12-13 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out-- the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."

Job poured out tears for his own griefs and sorrows... Jesus poured out tears and blood for the sorrows of others

His connection for us is deep and real and passionate

D. Jesus Our Witness

1. How is Jesus our witness?
2. Well, he will not stand up on our behalf and plead our innocence... not at all
3. He knows we have sinned and cannot answer once in a thousand times for our sins
4. NO! He witnesses instead that we are his sheep, he has chosen us, he has called us by name

John 10:3 He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me

Isaiah 43:1 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

He speaks our names to his Father, saying "He's one of mine." Or "She belongs to me." That's our witness on high!!

E. Jesus' Intercession Asserted

Hebrews 7:24-25 because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

He is constantly praying for us... he never stops... his energy in intercession is limitless

Romans 8:34 Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

F. Where Jesus Intercedes

1. Job said he wanted an advocate "on high"
2. This makes me think of this amazing verse

Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit

3. So Jesus does his intercession in the highest place

Hebrews 1:3 After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Ephesians 1:20-21 [God] raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Ephesians 4:10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe

Hebrews 7:26 Such a high priest meets our need-- one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

So Jesus is in a perfect place to do his intercession... at the right hand of God, infinitely higher than all the universe, higher than every power and ruler and creature in the universe

G. On What Basis Does Jesus Intercede for Us Sinners?

1. On the merits of his shed blood
2. Once for all sacrificed himself for our sins

Hebrews 7:27 He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

Hebrews 10:19 we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus

In the hymn "Come Ye Sinners Poor and Needy":

"Lo the incarnate God ascended pleads the merits of his blood
Venture on him, venture wholly... let no other trust intrude."

SO... Job wanted a witness in heaven, an advocate on high, an intercessor with the most High God. In Jesus, he had one

H. What Jesus Prays For

1. He prays for limitless things pertaining to our salvation
2. But especially he prays for this:

Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.

He prays for spiritual protection from the world and the devil that none of his sheep will be lost!!

John 17:11-12 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name-- the name you gave me-- so that they may be one as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost...

He prays for the unconverted elect throughout the world, that they may also be saved through the word of the gospel:

John 17:20-21 My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us

I. How Successful is Jesus' Prayer Life for His Sheep?

1. The Father delights in the Son

Matthew 3:17 a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

2. The Father reveals to the Son every aspect of his perfect plan

John 5:20 the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

3. The Son always does what pleases the Father

John 8:29 he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."

4. Whatever we pray for according to God's will, we will get

1 John 5:14-15 ...if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask-- we know that we have what we asked of him.

5. So, Jesus is 100% effective in his intercessory prayer ministry for us

a. All of the sheep will be converted by the Word of the gospel

b. None of the sheep will be lost

- c. None of the sheep will lose their faith... their faith will not fail, no matter how severe the trial is that they endure
- d. None of the sheep will be tempted beyond what they can bear
- e. All of the sheep will be protected from the Evil One

Do you see how marvelously Job's yearning has been fulfilled in Jesus... and infinitely better than Job could have asked or imagined:

***Job 16:19-21 Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.
²⁰ My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; ²¹
 on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.***

VI. Applications

A. Thank God for the Clearer Light of Christ

1. We have clearly revealed for us what Job only guessed at and yearned for and did not fully understand
2. Jesus is our heavenly witness... not testifying to our innocence, but rather that he is our righteousness
3. Jesus is our heavenly advocate and intercessor... pleading for each of us BY NAME with more intensity that we do for ourselves... and also with infinitely more understanding of God's plans
4. Jesus is our heavenly friend... whose love for us is wide and long and high and deep

B. Do You Know Him??

1. All of these roles Jesus fills for those who have trusted in him as Lord and Savior
2. Have you? Do you see his death as your atonement for your sins?
3. Do you trust in him to plead the merits of his blood for your forgiveness?

C. Rely on Jesus as your Great High Priest

1. Know that he is praying for you that your faith will not fail
2. Know that he is also praying for your spiritual protection in this world

D. Are You Suffering? Draw Near to the Throne of Grace!!