

Message #14

Job 12:1-13:2

I like the old “Rocky” movies that star Sylvester Stallone. It is a shame that these movies have to throw in a little cursing because they are good movies. I like the fight between Rocky and Apollo Creed. During that fight it looks like Rocky is going to be beaten to a pulp. He almost looks like a punching bag taking one shot after another. But then all of a sudden something clicks inside him and he gets up and starts on the offensive. He starts throwing one punch after another until finally Apollo doesn’t even want to fight anymore.

That is what happens right here in Job. Job has been knocked down by his friends and he is literally sitting outside the city in a pile of dried manure. But at this point in the story, something kicks in and Job gets up and theologically and verbally starts swinging back. This is a three chapter response (12, 13, 14). Although it will take several more rounds until he finally wins this thing, this is the point when he goes on the offensive and starts swinging hard at his “friends” who have been knocking him down.

God does not hold Job accountable for what he says about his friends, but he does hold them accountable for what they said about Job. In the end, it will be Job who wins this verbal battle (Job 42:7-9).

GOD’S FAITHFUL SERVANT DOES HAVE A RIGHT TO RESPOND TO THOSE WHO ARE MAKING UP LIES AGAINST HIM AND GIVE A DEFENSE OF TRUTH ABOUT GOD AND ABOUT THE FACT THAT THEY WERE HEADING TO JUDGMENT.

Make no mistake about this; Job’s friends were smearing his reputation with lies (13:4). What they were saying was worthless (13:4). What they needed to do was shut their mouths (13:5, 13) and realize they were heading to severe judgment (13:9-12).

I love a personal story told by Dr. Chuck Swindoll. His son was in the band and a bully kept dropping spit from his trombone on to his son. His son warned the kid not to do it again and the kid did it again, so Dr. Swindoll’s son slammed his elbow into the bully’s trombone and drove the mouthpiece into the kid’s mouth which loosened two teeth and made the bully look like Bugs Bunny. The bully couldn’t play the trombone for weeks. Dr. Swindoll said, I was so proud of my son, I raised his allowance. Finally he got fed up.

There is a place for getting fed up. There comes a time when you need to stop the mouth of the legalist that is robbing you of your freedom and joy. That is exactly what happened to Job; he is fed up and he responds five ways:

RESPONSE #1 – Job’s sarcastic response. **12:1-2**

People who don’t actually know what they are talking about can sound so pious at times. They can sound so wise. They think they really are higher and holier than what they really are. That is what these boys did and Job had heard enough.

Job is fed up with hearing the nonsense and so he sarcastically says you guys are the smartest people on earth and when you die, your wisdom will be gone. Job says you boys are so smart that when you leave this world all wisdom will surely be gone. Samuel Cox said in his commentary Job was so fed up with these guys that right here he turns upon them with an irony that is “fierce” (*A Commentary on the Book of Job*, p. 156).

There are Christians who boast of who they are, how spiritual they are and all they have done. Some of these people make it sound like they are so superior that when they are gone everything will fall apart.

RESPONSE #2 – Job’s personal response. **12:3-4**

To Job’s friends, he was a “joke” (sehoq). He uses this word twice in **verse 4**. That Hebrew word means these people were deriding Job, laughing at him and making jest and sport of him. He literally had become a laughing stock to them (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 787).

In this text he personally evaluates and defends himself in six ways:

(Personal Evaluation #1) - Job was just as intelligent as any around him. **12:3a**

The pronoun “you” is plural, which means Job is addressing them all.

(Personal Evaluation #2) - Job was not inferior to any around him. **12:3b**

Job says there is not one person here who has a better relationship to God than me. There is no one who is superior to me in knowledge.

(Personal Evaluation #3) - Job was as knowledgeable as any other person. **12:3c**

Job says anything you have said about God, everyone knows. Everyone knows that wicked people do not escape judgment and everyone knows that repentance leads to blessing. Job says there is not one person who has ever heard anything about God who doesn’t know what you guys are saying. These guys were pretending to be these great scholars, sharing profound truths and everyone knows what you are saying.

Mary and I sat in a Sunday school class one time in a university church. This class was led by a professor of physics at the university, who was probably brilliant in his field, but he didn’t know beans about the Bible. In the class the people were talking like this—“God is good,” “I mean God is really good,” “He is truly good.” We thought, boy this is deep, profound teaching.

Everybody with a Christian brain knows that but what they didn't know is what the text meant that they were taking this from.

(Personal Evaluation #4) - Job was a man who called on God and got answers. **12:4a**

Job's "friends" were forgetting something very important and that is Job was a man who had prayed many times to God and God had answered his prayers. No person on the earth had seen God do more than Job had seen. These guys were challenging Job and his relationship with God and Job says I have seen God answer many prayers for me many times.

I have told you this story before, but Mr. Miles used to walk by the old Calvin College and ask God to give him that school to train men and women for ministry and God answered the prayer. Now every now and then some idiot would question him on his philosophy of having a school that simply trained men in the Scriptures. They would question what he was doing. I used to think this man literally saw God give him this school in answer to his prayer. Who are they to even open their mouths?

(Personal Evaluation #5) - Job was a man who was just by God's classification. **12:4b**

Job was just in God's sight. He was right in his relationship with God and they were calling him a joke. Job did his best to line up his life with what was right before God.

(Personal Evaluation #6) - Job was a man who was blameless by God's classification. **12:4c**

Now when Job says he is just and blameless, we need to remember that this was also God's assessment of Job (Job 1:8; 2:3). Job lined up his life with God's Word and he lived it in a blameless way.

Job was a godly man. These men were criticizing and judging a man who had seen God do more than they had ever seen or would ever see. They were claiming that his secret sins had found him out, when in fact this man walked close with God. This man was closer to God than any of them would ever be.

RESPONSE #3 – Job's stinging response. **12:5-6**

Job says it is easy for you guys to talk about how calamity is always a judgment of God while you sit on the sidelines free from calamity. It was easy for them to look down their noses and piously discuss how ones' feet are slipping away into judgment from God, when life is sailing for you. They had their health and they had their wealth so it was easy for them to give their advice.

Job is quick to point out, however, in **verse 6** that the tents of the destroyers often prosper and those who are doing things to provoke God often seem secure. Zophar claimed the reason for Job's problem was because in his tent he was hiding sin (11:14).

Job's point is that wicked people with sin in their lives often prosper and God grants wicked people power and sometimes they don't suffer.

RESPONSE #4 – Job's illustrative response. **12:7-8**

The pronoun “you” in **verses 7-8** is singular, which would mean Job is aiming this straight at Zophar. Job illustrates his point to Zophar that sometimes God, in His sovereignty, permits ruthless and violent things to live seemingly secure for awhile. God is sovereignly in control of all that happens in the world. He is responsible for all creation.

Illustration #1 - The illustration of the beasts. **12:7a**

Isn't it true that you are much more afraid of a grizzly bear than a cow? Who is the king of the forest, a lion or a deer? The deer is a much kinder and gentler animal and is no match for the grizzly or lion. Yet, at times, God permits the beasts to rule, which doesn't mean the other animals have done anything wrong.

Illustration #2 - The illustration of the birds. **12:7b**

When you look into the sky, what is it that seems to be more secure, the vulture or the dove? God has ordained various birds and sometimes one dominates the other and it does not mean that the one being dominated is not right with God.

Illustration #3 - The illustration of the earth. **12:8a**

Look at the earth and see the weeds and the shrubs. You can plant beautiful flowers and shrubs, but sometimes the weeds win out. It is not the pretty plants that seem to be winning, but that does not mean there is something wrong with the pretty plants.

Illustration #4 - The illustration of the fish. **12:8b**

One of the smartest fish in the world is the dolphin and yet, in the ocean, the shark and whale lives far more securely. That doesn't mean there is something wrong with the dolphin.

In **verses 9-10**, Job says God is the one who has done this. In fact, notice that Job uses the name for God “LORD” (Jehovah). This name YHWH occurs 5321 times in the Hebrew Bible and is the sacred name for God. It refers to the fact that God is the self-existent, sovereign I AM who does what He wants.

Job's point in using this name is that God is the One who sovereignly ordains things. Every life of every being and every human is in His hand and often times it is not the most beautiful in His sight that get the upper hand. Calamities had hit Job and those calamities were controlled by God. This did not mean Job was not right with God and His plan; just ask the beasts, birds, earth and fish.

RESPONSE #5 – Job’s apologetic response. **12:11**

Job says I have every right to test what I am hearing and what you are saying. The purpose of a palate is to taste something and see if it is good. The purpose of an ear is to hear something and see if it is good and true.

Verse 12 either refers to Job or to his friends. If it refers to Job, Job is saying “I have a right to listen to your words and respond because I am an aged man who has walked with God for many years, and wisdom is gained by walking with God over long years of life.”

If he is referring to his friends, Job is sarcastically saying, “Wisdom is supposed to exist with elderly people who have walked with God for many years, so why are you saying things so stupid.”

On the basis of Eliphaz’ response in Job 15:10, it is probable that the former interpretation is the one Job had in mind. Job is defending his right to speak on the basis of his aged wisdom and years of walking with God.

RESPONSE #6 – Job’s theological response. **12:13-13:2**

Now Job takes this discussion into a realm that is far deeper than any of these men could even think. Job had a much higher and deeper grasp of truth than these three could imagine. Job knew God was the supreme ruler of everything.

Point #1 - God determines who gains deep insight into His truth. **12:13**

Now what Job says in **verse 13**, all three speakers agree. One who becomes wise does so by sovereign decree of God because God has all wisdom and power. The ability to understand His Word is not given to anybody. God determines who grows deep and who doesn’t. The fact of the matter is that Job knew God’s will and these guys did not.

Point #2 - God determines and does things which are irreversible . **12:14-15**

If God decides to tear something down as punishment, or if God decides to punish or imprison a man, no one can reverse His decision (**verse 14**). If God decides to put someone in hell, who can get him out? If God decides something is going to imprison a man, who can reverse it?

If God decides to send a drought, no one can stop Him. If God decides to send a flood, no one can stop Him (**verse 15**). God does things that are irreversible.

About ten to fifteen miles to the NE of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in the Teton National Forest, is a place called Slide Lake. If you visit this lake and look to the south to the top of the mountain you will see where the rocks collapsed and slid down the mountain. It is so steep that it would be nearly impossible to walk without killing yourself.

For some reason, in the sovereign scheme of God, He decided to permit this slide to occur and there is no man, no construction company or no machinery that could rebuild that mountain. When God decides to do something, it is irreversible.

Point #3 - God determines who won't understand His Word and will and who won't be able to truly lead. **12:16-25**

God determines who will mislead and who will be misled (**verse 16**). He can make some of the people who think they are the smartest look like fools (**verse 17**). He can topple any leadership (**verse 18**) and he can take away the pomp and discerning ability of the religious and political leaders and elders (**verse 19-20**). Those who think they are strong, God can break in a moment (**verse 21**). God reveals mysteries to those He determines (**verse 22**). He can make a nation great and then destroy it. He can make a nation large and then lead them away (**verse 23**). He can deprive the people who think they are the smartest and most powerful of His wisdom and He can make it so they walk in darkness as a "pathless waste" (**verse 24**). God can cause people who were once leaders to grope around like they are drunk out of their minds (**verse 25**).

According to **Job 13:1**, Job had seen all these things. He was not inferior to these guys; in fact, they were not even in his league. They could talk a little about God, but Job was way out of their league. He believed in God's sovereignty and He had seen God do more in his life than all of these guys combined.

Job is fighting mad, but he is also spiritually and biblically right. He knew God's Word better than anyone else, and in this text he told his friends just that.

Practical Lessons:

1. Spiritual people of God who are being attacked are still spiritual people of God. They haven't lost their status with God.
2. Sometimes people who are acting and talking like theological idiots need to be told exactly that.
3. God can shut a person's ability to understand His Word down and He can and will do it.
4. We must be people very quick to hear God's Word, but slow to speak.