In our last podcast, we covered ***Job 10*** and discussed our vain attempts to manipulate God through guilt trips to pleas for mercy, justifications, and so on. We often try to convince God that there must be a better way, that our suffering is either not necessary or not necessary to the extent that He is directing it. We try and convince Him that the paths He has established for our lives is not right and that there is a better way.

Yet God's has a different perspective on our lives. Every bad choice, every sin, as well as every tender choice of love was set forth before we even took a breath. He saw it all. So, we need get over it; it is what it is. It had to be this way, for there was no other plan.

Being outside of time, God knew our thoughts, He knew our choices, He knew which direction each of us would take given each-and-every circumstance He appointed, and He now works out all His detailed plans for the good of all who are now loving Him, called according to His purpose. And yes, purpose is singular and not plural. His purpose.

Therefore, instead of spending our time kicking and screaming, moaning and bemoaning and trying to manipulate God to change His mind, we ought to search out the heart of God to understand what He desires us to learn through each-and-every step we have taken and will take. He is a Great Teacher. He desires us to learn this about Him, to learn all that He has hidden in His heart. And we must not forget that we are His workmanship, His masterpiece, and every moment of our life provides for us an opportunity to know our God intimately.

As the teacher in ***Ecclesiastes 7:12*** wisely stated, "*Consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent?*" It is best to learn how to go through these times trusting that our God, who has personally woven every aspect of our being, is now doing what He needs to do to accomplish His **Plan-A** for our life.

Let's pick back up in **EP34 Yahweh According to Job, Job 11:1-20**.

Job 11

Zophar Speaks

Before we jump into the words of Zophar, let's set the stage for his discourse by understanding a bit about religious legalism. Legalism is the heartbeat of religion, and it has two main characteristics in terms of its relationship with the truth: 1) It *distorts* the truth to gain advantage over others; or 2) it *misapplies* the truth to gain advantage over others. For legalists, the truth is used as a weapon to pull off a power play that is intended to elevate one and put down another.

When it comes to *distortions* of the truth, the best way to avoid a power play is by having a solid foundation built upon the knowledge of truth. You may still get pounded with the distortions by those who think they are smart and wise, but when you have a solid foundation built on the truth, their distortions tend to buckle and their power play to gain advantage over you fails.

However, when it comes to a *misapplication* of the truth, that is a bit trickier. It is often hard to distinguish when the truth is being misapplied, after all, it is the truth. In addition, you tend to look like a

defensive fool if you try to fight their misapplication of truth by explaining that they have the facts wrong and that they do not understand. Any argument you make just confirms your guilt in everyone else's mind.

Legalism is such a powerful tool used by those who love power and love to exalt themselves while putting others down. With even a casual read of the gospels, this is apparent in how the religious elite talked down to Jesus and tried over-and-over to distort and misapply the truth with the aim of proving that He, Jesus, was a fraud and a heretic.

Religious legalism is a dangerous poison that unfortunately lives in the hearts of all. We will see these distortions and misapplication of the truth in Zophar's discourse, as he is a man captured by legalism.

Job 11:1-6

> Then Zophar the Naamathite replied to Job: "Shouldn't someone answer this torrent of words? Is a person proved innocent just by a lot of talking? Should I remain silent while you babble on? When you mock God, shouldn't someone make you ashamed? You claim, 'My beliefs are pure,' and 'I am clean in the sight of God.' If only God would speak; if only he would open His lips against you! If only he would tell you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom is doubled. Know that God is doubtless punishing you far less than you deserve!"

Wow! Without hesitation Zophar just pours out the condemnation. As with Eliphaz and Bildad, there were no niceties expressed, he just went for the throat: "Know that God is doubtless punishing you far less than you deserve!" or more specifically in the Hebrew, "*God allows to be forgetting a part of your iniquity!*" Can you imagine the nerve of this man? No compassion, no mercy, no understanding, just judgment and condemnation.

Zophar is very careful in terms of what He speaks about God, but like Eliphaz he lacks wisdom as to the application of truth. Legalism will do that to a person. He speaks of "*wisdom doubled*," (meaning that true wisdom is always more than we can imagine) as if he has a grasp on "*true wisdom*" and poor Job is not much more than a silly fool. Legalism blinds a person to God's wisdom and narrows their field of view such that they are unable to see the big picture and so they must resort to exalting one and putting down another.

Legalists tend to think that they are God's chief advocate, and they fend off any threats made by fools like Job. Clearly their God is not big enough to take care of Himself, so they must step in and defend his honor. "… *shouldn't someone make you ashamed?*" "*If only God would speak; if only he would open His lips against you!"*

This sort of behavior is beyond arrogant-and-offensive, it is ever so sad. In the legalist, there is such a huge disconnect between a statement like this and the commandment for us to love one another. For some reason, they ignore the one thing God says matters above all else and they convince themselves that fighting for their religion is a form of loving one who is so lost, pathetic, and confused as Job.

<u>Who Are You? What Do You Know?</u>

Job 11:7-12

Can you solve the mysteries of God? Can you discover everything about the Almighty? Such knowledge is higher than the heavens—and who are you? It is deeper than the underworld—what do you know? It is broader than the earth and wider than the sea. If God comes and puts a person in prison or calls the court to order, who can stop him? For he knows those who are false, and he takes note of all their sins. An empty-headed person won't become wise any more than a wild donkey can bear a human child.

Can a person discover the depths of God or solve His mysteries? Of course not! In this Zophar speaks truth.

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has by choice become His counselor?[1] Or who has first given to Him that it might in the **<u>future</u>** be caused to be paid back again?[2] For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Although one may not be able to solve the mysteries of God, Job is not trying to nor is he intimating he can. He is not trying to discover everything; He just wants to know what is going on with his life, that's all. It is not so unreasonable given that in one day (literally in one day) his life took a sudden left turn over a cliff. Now, unlike the others, Zophar is not twisting or distorting the truth, but he is guilty of something just as terrible, and that is misapplying the truth. Technically, the things he is saying about God are right, but the things he is saying about Job and God are not. And when he combines these two things it results in insults and empty exhortation. This is just as dangerous to the human soul as is twisted truth. For example, "*If God comes and puts a person in prison or calls the court to order, who can stop him?"* Once again, Zophar makes a theologically accurate statement.

Daniel 4:35

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What

[1] Isaiah 40:13
[2] Job 41:11

have You done?'

Isaiah 43:13

Even from eternity I am He, and there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?

Isaiah 14:27

For **Yahweh** of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?

Zophar corrupts this truth by once again making what is happening to Job all about Job's sin: "*For he knows those who are false, and he takes note of all their sins*." In effect, Zophar accuses Job of lying, claiming God has taken note of his sins ("for He knows those who are false") and the assumption is that Job's falsehood explains why all this tragedy has happened to Job. But that is not what we know to be true about God. Consider the following declaration from King David.

Psalm 103:2-3, 8-14

Bless **Yahweh**, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; ... **Yahweh** is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive [with us,] nor will He keep [His anger] forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on [his] children, So **Yahweh** has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are [but] dust.

That is a very different God than the one Zophar knows. Zophar is wrapped up in legalism unable to see much less understand God's mercy, kindness, patience, and grace.

He then puts an exclamation mark on his accusations by calling Job a complete idiot, a fool who in effect just needs to man up, shut up, and take his punishment. The word translated "*empty-headed*" means hollow, as if there is a big hole running through the head. The legalistic person always makes things very personal, and their statements are downright mean. They seem to always find a way to spear their prey right through the heart.

Court & Prison

Let's circle back to the statement: "*If God comes and puts a person in prison or calls the court to order, who can stop him?*" I want to quickly take note of this idea of "*prison*" and the "*court*," for Zophar makes a statement about the unseen world and **Yahweh's** heavenly court, or His Assembly, where the fate of man is addressed and His servants, His agents, the angelic forces (both good and bad), are called into

action to carry out the decisions made in the courtroom. Let's first address the Court and then we will talk about the prison.

The Court

We talked about the heavenly courtroom in both ***Job 1*** and ***Job 2*** where the sons of God came to present themselves before **Yahweh**, but let's do a refresh since this understanding of the heavenly reams is something we rarely are in touch with, yet, what happens in this courtroom drives our very lives.

In those prior chapters, we learned that God carries out His purposes through His agents, His ministers, the "*sons of Gods*" (who are also called "*watchers*," "*stars*," "*ministering spirits*," "winds," "flames of fire," "burning coals of fire," and even "*gods*"[3]). He includes them in His planning and in the execution of His plans. The forum for authorizing action is the divine council or the "assembly," the heavenly courtroom, where the angelic, both good and bad, attend and discuss what God wants to do on earth with peoples, nations, and individuals.

One of the most profound examples was found in ***1 Kings 22:19-23 and 2 Chronicles 18:18-22*** where God had determined that King Ahab needed to die, and He enlisted the spirits to formulate a plan of action to accomplish this judgment. Another example is found in ***Zechariah 3:1-2*** where the Satan stood in the courtroom and made accusation against Joshua, but unlike the situation with Ahab, **Yahweh** rebuked the Satan and did not let the Satan's accusations be entered into evidence, so-to-speak, for **Yahweh** had decided to pardon all of Joshua's iniquities.

Psalm 89:6-8

> For who in the skies is comparable to **Yahweh**? Who among the sons of Gods is like **Yahweh**? A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all those who are around Him? O **Yahweh** God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty **Yahweh**? Your faithfulness also surrounds You.

As stated in the **Lessons of the Heavenly Realms 13**, "In the majestic court room of the Heavenly Assembly, **Yahweh** presides as supreme Monarch and Judge. He alone decides what will or will not be done in the realm of humanity, and the "buck stops" with Him. He takes responsibility for what plays out in our lives and how it plays out in our lives."

The Prison

So, what about this prison. Since Zophar was speaking about the heavenly courtroom, it is reasonable for us to assume that he was not speaking of a physical human prison, but a prison of spiritual origin, a prison of the soul.

In Matthew 5, Jesus uses language of a judicial system to give us a visible picture of a heavenly proceeding. His warning begins in God's court and ultimately culminates in a guilt worthy of fiery hell. And the examples He uses of behavior that is worthy of being dragged to prison and brought before the court seems to come straight from the words and behaviors of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

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[3] ***Daniel 4:17; Isaiah 14:12-14; Hebrews 1:7, 14; Psalm 8:6, 58:1, 104:4; Ezekiel 1:13-14***

Matthew 5:21-26

You have heard that the ancients were told, 'IN THE **FUTURE** YOU SHALL NOT IN THE **FUTURE** COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever may commit murder will in the **future** choose to be liable to the court.' But I **now** say to you that everyone choosing to **now** being angry with his brother will in the **future** choose to be guilty before the court; and whoever may say to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' will in the **future** choose to be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever may say, 'You fool,' will in the **future** choose to be guilty [enough to go] into the fiery hell.

Therefore, if you may **now** be presenting your offering at the altar, and there you. May be caused to remember that your brother **now** has something against you, you are commanded to leave your offering there before the altar and you are commanded to **now** go; first you are commanded to be caused to be reconciled to your brother, and then coming you are commanded to **now** present your offering. You are **now** commanded to **now** be making friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are **now** with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you in the **future** will be caused to be thrown into prison. Truly I **now** say to you, you may not come out of there until you may have paid up the last cent.

It is important to not miss the bigger picture here. People are not dragged to earthly courts because they are angry with their brother or because they call their brother a fool, or good-for-nothing. There are not enough prisons in the world to accommodate that sort of judgment. Something more is going on in Jesus' discourse, something relating to the spiritual realms, a spiritual courtroom, and a spiritual imprisonment that is tied to how we treat each other here on earth.

Jesus is telling us that the heavenly courtroom presides over the affairs of man and it encompasses how mankind treats one another. We have already learned that the prosecuting attorney, the one who makes accusation, is the Satan. And we are judged based on our individual choices to be guilty before the court.

As for the prison guards, in ***Matthew 18:21-35***, Jesus tells a story that deals with the issue of unforgiveness. He indicates that spiritual forces of wickedness, literally "tormentors," are those who preside over those who have chosen to be guilty. As for the guilty, this story concludes: "*And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the tormentors until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also in the **future** do the same to you, if each of you may not possibly forgive his brother from your heart.*" Those are chilling words that most of us seem to ignore.

Interestingly, ***Revelation 18:2-4*** speaks of another prison of sorts, one that is ruled over by the Woman who rides the Beast, the spirit who rules over the realm of religion. We are told that her prison is a dwelling place of demons, and the prison guards are every unclean spirit and unclean and hateful bird. *"And she has [by her own participation] become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every unclean spirit, a prison for every unclean bird, and a prison for every unclean beast— [caused to be] detested and remaining so*."

But the twist is that these spiritual beings are not the captives, rather, the prisoners are the people of God and they have volitionally entered this prison and have chosen to remain under the rule of these spiritual forces of wickedness, all because they love their religion, indulging in what is called "*the wine of the passionate fury of her immorality [literally "porneia" in the Greek, or sexual immorality used as a picture of worshipping another God, another Jesus]*."

This is the reason why God commands: "*My people, you are commanded to come completely out of her, so that you may not participate together in her sins, and so that you may not receive any part of her plagues*." This command is in the Greek aorist active imperative. This tells us that this is a decisive command to separate completely, not merely to begin gradually withdrawing.

Sadly, most people who call themselves "Christians" are not even aware of their self-imprisonment. Like Zophar, they are far too drunk with the wine of this woman's legalism and religious traditions, and they are unaware that they worship in a dwelling place of demons, and that their prison guards are unclean spirits, unclean birds, and detestable unclean beasts. As a result, so few of God's people obey the command to come completely out of her.

The takeaway is that there are real spiritual prisons that whether due to unforgiveness, our love for religion, our anger, or calling our brothers "good-for-nothing" or "fool," where the tormentors will have their way with us and we may not come out of there until we have paid up the last cent.

Once again, Zophar stated the truth "*If God comes and puts a person in prison or calls the court to order, who can stop him?*" Still, he misapplies the truth and uses the truth as a weapon to put Job in his place, to prove Job's guilt. That is what a legalist does to another, no matter how distressed that other person may be. In the heart of a legalist, there is no compassion, no mercy, no kindness, and patience, and no understanding, except of course when it comes to their own shortcomings. There is only law.

Job 11:13-20

> If only you would prepare your heart and lift up your hands to him in prayer! Get rid of your sins, and leave all iniquity behind you. Then your face will brighten with innocence. You will be strong and free of fear. You will forget your misery; it will be like water flowing away. Your life will be brighter than the noonday. Even darkness will be as bright as morning. Having hope will give you courage. You will be protected and will rest in safety. You will lie down unafraid, and many will look to you for help. But the wicked will be blinded. They will have no escape. Their only hope is death.

Can it be any clearer? Zophar started with one huge if/then. If Job were to repent, suddenly his life would be all sunshine and butterflies. Once again Zophar takes a truth but applies it terribly, as it is not fitting for this situation. When David sinned by having an affair (and a child) with Bathsheba (the wife of Uriah the Hittite), and then subsequently murdered Uriah as he tried to cover up his sin, he agonized in pain because he was attempting to hide his sin from both God and man. And when he finally repented, he was able to breakout in joy and worship at the release in his soul; and he praised God for His mercy. On that day, David chose to release his pride, release his shame, release his fear, release his guilt, and

turn to the God who loves him and forgives him and just wants him to come back into relationship, so he can abide in that love. This is a very different notion than what Zophar was stating.

Psalm 32:1-7

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record **Yahweh** has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to **Yahweh**." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone. Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment. For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory.

So yes, if Job was guilty of some great sin against God, naturally his soul would be in torment as he would be trying to hide his sin. In that case, the answer is repentance, a turning away from sin and not just a confession of sin. But that is not the case with Job; and unlike David, Job's suffering is far from just internal torment. Job has been afflicted both on the inside and outside. Thus, Zophar's exhortation for Job to get rid of his sin and leave his iniquity behind him and then he will forget his misery, "*it will be like water flowing away*" is worthless instruction. Zophar acts as if he knows the secrets of wisdom, but his understanding has been darkened by his legalism. Zophar can only see through the eyes of his if/then God, and so he is blind as he blankets Job with the judgment of sin.

Still, Zophar professes truth when he says, "*having hope will give you courage*" but it is erroneously applied. He is essentially saying to Job, "It is ok, confess. You will be ok. Look to the freedom that is available to you if you come clean and confess. The outlook for you is so hopeful, so have the courage to step up here and be done with all this silliness. We all know you are guilty; God knows you are guilty, so you might as well admit it. For if you don't, things can still get worse, and then your only hope will be death."

"*You will be protected and will rest in safety. You will lie down unafraid, and many will look to you for help*." Beyond being a manipulative statement, this is a flat out lie. Even if each of us were to lift up our hands to **Yahweh** in prayer and, if it were even possible, get rid of our sins, and leave all iniquity behind us, that does not mean that life will be all sunshine and roses where we are protected and rest in safety without fear. It is a nice fiction, but it is simply not true. We live in a fallen world that is ruled by the Prince of the Power of the Air.[4] Besides, when it comes to matters of our life, there is always more at play than our sin, for instance, all that transpires in the heavenly realms and **Yahweh's** courtroom. These kinds of empty statements are just cruel.

"*But the wicked will be blinded. They will have no escape. Their only hope is death*." Who is the blind one? Zophar cannot see the truth for he is blinded by his legalistic worldview; therefore, he cannot minister to Job in the wisdom of mercy, compassion, and love. Zophar is obsessed with sin., as are all legalists. It is terribly sad.

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[4] *See* ***Ephesians 2:2***

Matthew 12:7

But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.[5]

Legalism, the heartbeat of religion, has two main characteristics in terms of its relationship with the truth: 1) It distorts the truth to gain advantage over others; or 2) it misapplies the truth to gain advantage over others. It is important to always know that legalism will come at you from one or even both directions solely to gain an advantage over you.

Legalism is sneaky by nature and often it is hard to distinguish when the truth is being misapplied, after all, it is the truth. And you tend to look like a fool if you try to fight their accusations and remedies by explaining that they have the facts wrong. Any argument you make just confirms your guilt in everyone else's mind. It is almost impossible to reason with a Legalist.

Still, notwithstanding Zophar's rude conjecture, and despite having been pushed into a corner of legalism, Job gets his chance to fight back.

Let's stop here and we will pick back up in Job 12.

I am glad you tuned in and have been ready to listen.

[5] *See* ***Hosea 6:6***