In our last podcast, we covered ***Job 12*** where Job chides his accusers. The "boys" keep spouting of religious rhetoric, platitudes, which everyone knows, and to Job it is all so boring and exhausting. In contrast, Job reveals that God used to speak to Job and reveal to Job His mysteries. Job even uses the name **Yahweh** demonstrating that He does not just know about God, but that he knows God. In so doing, Job intimates that all that was, all that is, and all that will ever be, finds its origin and completion in Him. Job then declares **Yahweh**'s absolute sovereignty and rule over all aspects of creation and even comments on the inside-out, upside-down logic of God, in that in this life evil people seems to succeed, while those who live righteous suffer. The point Job makes is that God does things according to His will and not in some reaction to what we do. Let's pick back up in **EP36, Yahweh According to Job, Job 13:1-12**.

Job 13

Job 13:1-5

> Look, I have seen all this with my own eyes and heard it with my own ears, and now I understand. I know as much as you do. You are no better than I am. As for me, I would speak directly to the Almighty. I want to argue my case with God himself. As for you, you smear me with lies. As physicians, you are worthless quacks. If only you could be silent! That's the wisest thing you could do.

As with the boys, Job had heard all the wisdom of men, the wisdom of supposed sages and religious experts, he had heard it all with his own ears, but now he claims to have an understanding that the boys do not possess. At first look, I was thrown off by the statement, "*I know as much as you do. You are no better than I am*." It seems as if he is in some way validating their viewpoint. Then it dawned on me; Job is saying, "I am like you, I am no better—only a man—but the difference is now I understand. Now I have understanding that you do not possess."

Unlike the boys, Job was looking and so he saw. He was listening and so he heard, and his heart desired above all else to understand the ways of **Yahweh**; and he was given understanding. He sought for wisdom and He acquired it. He did not just stop at tradition or listening to the wise pontifications of the sages of old, and he did not acquire his insight from the murmurings of some demon in the dark of the night. Rather, he sought and listened to **Yahweh**, and the Holy Spirit of God brought to him understanding.

In a sly way (by comparing himself to them) he is making the point that wisdom is not hiding, she wants to be found; however, she only unveils herself to those who earnestly seek her out—to those who search for her as one would search for lost treasure.

Proverbs 1:20-23

> Wisdom shouts in the streets. She cries out in the public square. She calls to the crowds along the main street, to those gathered in front of the city gate: "How long, you simpletons, will you insist on being simpleminded? How long will you mockers relish your mocking? How long will you fools hate

knowledge? Come and listen to my counsel. I'll share my heart with you and make you wise.

And even though she is calling out with an unparalleled promise to share her heart and to make the one who comes wise, very few come. Few listen to her voice.

Proverbs 1:24-25

I called you so often, but you wouldn't come. I reached out to you, but you paid no attention. You ignored my advice and rejected the correction I offered.

Don't be naive, even though she calls loudly with an open invitation, she is not an easy woman. Like all women, she wants to be pursued, sought out, and most importantly understood and cherished. She is filled with mysteries and complexity and is of the utmost value. Those who can see this about her, desire her, and earnestly pursue her, will have her.

Proverbs 2:1-6

My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of **Yahweh** and discover the knowledge of God. For **Yahweh** gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

And he who finds her finds the treasures of God.

Proverbs 3:13-15

How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding. For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her.

Job has truly sought for her, and he has seen her ways. He listened as she talked and did not close his ears to her voice. Job inclined his heart to learning, cried out for discernment, lifted his voice for understanding, and sought her as silver, as for hidden treasures. And he now declares he "understands" and has discovered the knowledge of God and can speak of it authoritatively.

Job does not just quote the sages of old; he has first-hand knowledge for he has discovered the knowledge of God. Besides, here is another little amazing truth, the Holy Spirit tells us that God shares His

secrets with His friends—with those who fear Him.[1] And the fact that Job knows and uses the personal name of God, gives us insight to the friendship he has with **Yahweh**.

"*I know as much as you do. You are no better than I am. As for me, I would speak directly to the Almighty. I want to argue my case with God himself*." Job is confident in both his understanding of **Yahweh** and in his relationship with **Yahweh**. He knows he can go before the Almighty without fear and argue his case because he is sure of their friendship. And, keep in mind, Job has already said his confidence is not because he is without sin; rather, he has trusted himself to the relationship. Thus, he wants to understand deeper how his innocence plays into this situation. Job wants to know more about the thoughts of God and how the things in the heavenly realms work.

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The secret to surviving our dark days and nights of intense suffering is to trust ourselves to the relationship. We may never know the "WHY" of it all, Job never did. But we can know Yahweh and trust ourselves to His care, to His love, to His name, confident that we can go before Him in faith for He will be merciful to our iniquities, be caused to remembering our sins no more, and now cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.[2]

As for his friends, Job now chastises them for their empty wisdom and lack of true knowledge. He basically shames them and tells them to shut up. "*As for you, you smear me with lies. As physicians, you are worthless quacks. If only you could be silent! That's the wisest thing you could do*."

Job 13:6-12

> Listen to my charge; pay attention to my arguments. Are you defending God with lies? Do you make your dishonest arguments for his sake? Will you slant your testimony in his favor? Will you argue God's case for him? What will happen when he finds out what you are doing? Can you fool him as easily as you fool people? No, you will be in trouble with him if you secretly slant your testimony in his favor. Doesn't his majesty terrify you? Doesn't your fear of him overwhelm you? Your platitudes are as valuable as ashes. Your defense is as fragile as a clay pot.

The religious of heart always dare to speak on behalf of God. They fight for him, defend him, and even are willing to go to war to protect him. It is not because they are so in love with God, but because they are so in love with themselves and have found religion to be the way in which they can get on top and stay on top. Religion becomes the means through which they can control others and gain respect, position, and power. But not so with Job; he does not give their delusion any credit; he downright calls them liars. He knows the truth because he sought out wisdom, and he was given wisdom by God. But they just argue

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[1] ***Psalm 25:14***
[2] ***Hebrews 8:1, 9:14***

the same old religious diatribe of sin and goodness, all the while ignoring, if not downright dismissing, the weightier matters of true godliness: justice, mercy, and faithfulness.[3]

It amazes me that religion was so powerful in those days of old; and today it's as if nothing has changed. I guess if it is working, there is no need for change. After all, religion is the playground of the enemy. He is an angel of light, and his servants disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.[4] Thus, why would he want anything to change? Masses follow him doing his will in the name of God and even in the name of Jesus.

Revelation 17-18 portrays religion as a seductive woman (who stands in contrast to the woman of wisdom). She is called "Mystery Babylon." Apparently, this seductive woman has been with us since the beginning. One day she will mount the Beast (the demon who possesses the man we call the "Antichrist") and use his power to even further propagate her heresy in support of the Beasts' agenda, which is to wipe out the people of God.

Religion may be an opiate of the masses, but it is destructive attributes are far beyond that of a drug. It leaves people living a delusion, a lie, where they are fully convinced that they know God, love God, serve and worship God, yet they are true servants of this sultry woman.

Religion is a gathering of those who are dead and dying, not the living. We see this in the letters Jesus personally wrote to the churches in ***Revelation 2-3***. Out of the seven churches, only two were healthy in terms of those who were living by faith, the rest were deluded by their religion, and Jesus wrote intense words of correction to those five churches.

We must never underestimate the power and seductive capabilities of this woman who seduces us through religion. After all, religion, like a drug, is addicting. Those who have indulged from her cup simply want more.

In this regard, Job begins to plead with his friends for their own benefit. He proffers a stern warning. Job knows that God will not sit still while they are defaming the character of God, even though they think it is their responsibility to stand up for God and to protect God from morons like Job. Tragically, they are not even defending him with truth, but with tired philosophies—literally deceitful and wicked talk. They may be able to fool all the people who look up to them, but they clearly have not fooled Job; and they will not be able to fool God.

The Hebrew in ***Job 13:8*** is very powerful, much more powerful than the English translation. The translation says: "*Will you slant your testimony in his favor? Will you argue God's case for him?"* But the literal Hebrew is rendered, "*His face do you accept, if for God you strive?*"

Job argues that their efforts are not just misplaced, they don't really accept God for who He is. Hence, they strive to prove something else about God, something more palatable, more acceptable, lies which derives from their religion. They do not accept his face as it is, so they have, in effect, created another **Yahweh**, an idol that looks a lot like **Yahweh**, but is nothing more than a powerless substitute.

Sadly, this is what has happened within Christianity throughout the ages. The face of **Yahweh** is not accepted by His own people, so they create a Jesus that is more palatable to their desires, a God more fitting of the age; a God who has many attributes of the true God, the attributes we like and can

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[3] Matthew 23:23-24
[4] 2 Corinthians 11:14

understand, but who has many other characteristics as well that do not belong to the true god. We take the words of the Bible and use them to fashion our own Jesus and mold Him and shape Him into the God we want. We hammer on some of this, nail on some of that, and then glue on the fight finishing touches, and give it all a good polish until we get a Jesus who has clear rules that, if followed, will give us what we want.

Another way of explaining this is that we, in the religion of Christianity, have fashioned an "if/then" God much like the **Yahweh** that the boys profess. If you do this, then God will do what we want Him to do. If you are faithful, then God will…if you are holy and righteous, then God will…if you just confess your sin and repent, then God will…if you serve, the God will… if you give, then God will…if you pray harder, longer, more often, then God will…if you read your Bible and have daily quiet times, then God will…if you worship, then God will… This form of idolatry penetrates almost every aspect of the religion of Christianity.

But the true God is not the kind of "if/then" God whom we can manipulate to get what we want. He does not barter. The only "if/then" we find about the true God is that if we seek Him, then we will find Him. And He will give us the opportunity to see His face and accept Him for who He is and not who we want Him to be for us.

A word of caution, if we believe the truth, then He will live in and through our lives. However, if He lives through us, He can and will do whatever He wants. So, there is no formula that we can follow to get what we want from God, unless, of course, all that we want is more of Him.

The Believers Conundrum

God does whatever He wants, whenever He wants, to whomever He wants. It is not dependent upon man who acts, but upon God who wills.

Psalm 115:3

But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

Psalm 135:5–6

For I know that **Yahweh** is great, and that our lord is above all gods. Whatever **Yahweh** pleases, He does in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.

Isaiah 14:26,27

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

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?

Daniel 4:35

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the

hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, "What have You done"?

Matthew 5:45

For He **now** causes His sun to **now** rise on the evil and the good and **now** sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

God does whatever He wants—absolutely. He does not behave according to our requirements or standards, and He is not controlled by our behavior. That is why great things happen to evil people, and the worst atrocities happen to those who love God. For the most part, Christianity has taught us differently. We have adopted a "blessing" mentality, and in our definition of "blessing," we believe that we are supposed to have no lack, we are supposed to be healthy, and we are supposed to get what we want, when we want it.

Take an honest look at how we think. Someone gets a new job with higher pay, and we say he has been blessed. Someone gets a new car, and we say he has been blessed. A church grows larger and we say God is blessing the church, without regard to the true spiritual health of the body.

However, when someone gets sick with cancer, we don't consider it a blessing. Instead, we tend to react with an overwhelming sense of dread. When someone suffers at the hands of a cruel boss, we do not consider that a blessing either. When a church remains small, we think that God is not blessing them the way He blesses a large church. When suffering comes, when someone is sick, when a church fails to grow, we believe something must be wrong. We believe someone must be disobedient. *We believe there must be sin in the camp!*

It seems that we always need to find a cause for why things don't happen the way we want them to happen. We do this because we are not comfortable with the truth: God does whatever He wants, to whomever He wants, whenever He wants, and His will is not dependent upon whether that person has followed all the rules.

Romans 9:14–17

What shall we in the **future** say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never choose to be! For He **now** says to Moses, "I will in the **future** have mercy on whom I may **now** have mercy, and I will in the **future** have compassion on whom I may **now** have compassion." So then, it does not depend on the man who is **now** willing or the man who is **now** running, but on God who is **now** having mercy.

The reason we struggle with believing this is because God's goals are different than ours. We want everything to be comfortable. We want a stable and uncomplicated life. But God wants us to bear the image of His Son and be partakers of His suffering, His death, and His resurrection.[5] His priority is our transformation. Therefore, in His sovereignty, He allows even painful and uncomfortable things in our lives to accomplish that purpose.

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[5] ***See 1 Peter 4:13; Romans 6:5-11; Philippians 3:10-11***

Psalm 139:11,12

If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night," even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.

Isaiah 45:6,7

I am **Yahweh**, and there is no other; the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity {in Hebrew, literally "evil"}; I am the Lord who does all these.

To God, good and bad, light and darkness, well-being and evil, are all just tools that He uses, in His wisdom, to implement His will. You cannot use the presence or absence of difficult circumstances to determine whether you are doing it right. For example, in ***Luke***, Jesus addressed the wrong belief that if something really "bad" happens, it must be because of sin.

Luke 13:1–5

Now on the same occasion there were some present who were **now** reporting to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And Jesus said to them, "Do you **now** suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I **now** tell you, no, but unless you may **now** repent, you will in the **future**, by choice, all likewise in the **future** choose to perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were, by choice, worse culprits than all the men who are **now** living in Jerusalem? I **now** tell you, no, but unless you may **now** repent, in the **future**, by choice, you will all likewise in the **future** choose to perish.

In the *religion of Christianity,* we do not comprehend such mysteries as how bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people. We have a hard time reconciling the "bad" things that happen to believers with God's promise of love, care, and protection. We believe that "bad" circumstances are not fair, and that we do not deserve that kind of treatment. After all, we have been good, so we deserve good things. Since we don't get what we want, we fashion our own god and expect him to bless us the way we think we should be blessed. Thus, we end up with a powerless and impotent form of Christianity that is behavior- and sin-based and rife with failure, frustration, and disappointment. We are not willing to believe the aspects of God that we don't like, so we become content with pieces of Him.

In a discussion, a friend and I were talking about decision making and the will of God. He was saying that after he decides, he uses the outcome as a barometer to determine whether he listened to the voice of God. He believes that if the outcome was good, it was a "blessing" and therefore, it was from God. But if the outcome was less than what he had hoped for, or if it was filled with pain and suffering, then he made a wrong decision—it was not from God. He would stress himself out, trying to figure out what he did wrong, why he made the mistake, or for what "sin" God was punishing him. My friend was walking in serious error and wrong belief.

If the outcome of a decision is pain, struggle, and (from a human perspective) even failure, it does not mean that we made the wrong choice. God is responsible for the outcomes in our lives. In determining

whether we made the right decision, the only thing we should consider is whether we were in the Spirit when we made it. If we were abiding in the Spirit, then any decision will be a good one, regardless of the outcome. This is because if we are only doing what our Father tells us to do, then that decision was the Lord's.

Proverbs 3:4-5 and ***Proverbs 16:1–3*** say that if *by faith* we commit our works to **Yahweh**, He will establish our steps. Notice it is by faith—the uniting of true knowledge with an active belief, i.e., betting our lives on the truth. If we make decisions according to our own wisdom and authority rather than that of **Yahweh's**, then regardless of the outcome, it will be a bad decision because it will not be rooted in faith.

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God's objectives are not our circumstantial outcomes, but our character and image—or more accurately, His character and image reflected in our bodies.

Sadly, the "if/then" belief system has been infused into our very Christian DNA. We have been conditioned to think that an uncomfortable or painful outcome means something went wrong and we missed the will of God. Truth be told, suffering is as much a part of God's will as blessing is. This is stated in ***2 Timothy 3:12***, *"And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*." From a biblical perspective, there are times when we should be expecting painful outcomes. Peter says that we are not to be surprised by the difficult and fiery ordeals that we encounter as if something strange were happening (***1 Peter 4:12***). In other words, expect it! Suffering is necessary. In fact, the Spirit tells us that we were called for the purpose of suffering.[6] Now that is a mind-blowing truth.

God uses suffering as a way to draw us to Him and test or prove out our faith. Let me explain. The "testing of our faith," is not to be understood as a pass/fail type of exam; rather, it is an opportunity to exercise, or condition, our faith. Much as athletes do by working out and breaking down their muscles, God knows that if we let Him have His way, then suffering will produce endurance and a faith that does not waiver. If we let endurance have its perfect result, we will be, as it says in ***James 1:2-4***, "*complete, lacking in nothing*."

Yet our flesh screams, moans, and wages war against even the idea that painful outcomes and suffering can be an expression of God's love. That is the believer's conundrum, a mystery which Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar do not understand.

As I have said, God wants to be known and accepted for who He is and not for who we want Him to be for us. He reveals Himself to us that we might choose to get to know the brilliance of His personhood and the incredible nature of His being; for in Him is truth itself. Therefore, if we really want to know truth, we must know Him in all His ways.[7] It is tragic the way we refuse "to accept His face" and instead create a shadowy image of Him that we like better.

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[6] ***See 1 Peter 1:6-7, 2:21, 3:14, 4:1-2, 4:19***

[7] ***John 14:6***

Then in chapter ***13:9-10*** Job says, "*Is it good that He search for you, if as a person mocks a man you mock Him? He will surely reprove you if in secret you accept faces.*" In other words, they mock men by leading them in lies, religious lies, while at the same time accepting the praise and accolades of those who listen to their lies and who are beholden to their so-called wisdom. If they approach God in this manner, do they really think they are going to get away with it? Do they really think God will honor them and flower them with praise for their wisdom and understanding? I think not!

When Job asks (***13:11***), "*Doesn't his majesty terrify you? Doesn't your fear of him overwhelm you,*" he cuts to the core of their hearts. It is clear they do not have the Biblical fear of **Yahweh**, evidenced by their lack of wisdom, but they don't even fear God in the sense of shuddering before His power and Majesty.[8] Why? Because they are worshiping a God of their own fabrication; a God of their imagination. A God that they fabricated.

Now wait a minute! Isn't this the same type of comment and accusation they all made regarding Job? Yes, and it probably bounced off them in the same way that Job ignores these sorts of quips that spill out of their mouths.

(***13:12***) "*Your platitudes are as valuable as ashes. Your defense is as fragile as a clay pot*." What we have translated as "platitudes" literally says "*remembrances*." In other words, their memorable and trite little religious sayings, all they have been taught from their forefathers, are like burned up words, mere ashes—in effect, worthless. Job is stating that their arguments to defend God will crumble like clay, for they are as fragile as a clay pot.

Let's stop here and pick up again with the rest of ***Job 13***.

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

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[8] Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10