

DO YOU DESIRE A PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH GOD?

11 Then Zophar the Naamathite replied, ²Should a multitude of words go unanswered? Shall a man full of talk be acquitted? ³Will your idle talk silence men? Will no one rebuke you for your scoffing? ⁴You say [to God], “My beliefs are orthodox and I am pure in your sight.” ⁵I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you ⁶and reveal to you the secrets of wisdom, for God is manifold in understanding. Be aware that God is requiring of you less than your iniquity deserves.

⁷Can you fathom the depths of God, or approach the extremities of the Almighty? ⁸They are higher than the heavens—what can you do? They are deeper than Sheol—what can you know? ⁹The measure [of God’s wisdom] is longer than the earth and wider than the sea! ¹⁰When he passes through the land and imprisons a man and convenes the court, who can oppose him? ¹¹Surely he recognizes deceitful men; and when he sees evil, he takes note of it. ¹²A vain man gains understanding when a wild donkey’s colt is born a man.

¹³[But] if you would direct your heart [in the way of] righteousness, and stretch out your hands to him; ¹⁴if you would remove whatever sin is in your hand, and let no injustice reside in your tent, ¹⁵then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand secure without fear. ¹⁶You will forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters that have flowed past. ¹⁷Life [for you] will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will be like the morning. ¹⁸You will be confident, because there is hope; you will look around you and take your rest in safety. ¹⁹You will lie down and there will be no one to terrify you; on the contrary, many will court your favor. ²⁰But the eyesight of the wicked will become poor, and there will be nowhere for them to flee—their hope will be turned into despair.

12 Then Job responded, ²Without doubt you are the elite, and wisdom will die with you. ³But I have intelligence as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know these things? ⁴I have become a laughingstock to my friends—I who called upon God and he answered. The righteous, the blameless man, has become a laughingstock. ⁵Men who are at ease have contempt for calamity, [viewing it as the fate reserved] for those whose feet are slipping.

⁶The tents of marauders are safe; those who provoke God are secure—those into whose hand God brings [abundance]. ⁷But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; ask the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. ⁸Or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; even the fish of the sea will inform you. ⁹Who among all these creatures does not know that the hand of God has done this—¹⁰the one in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind? ¹¹Does not the ear test words as the tongue tastes food?

¹²With the Aged One is wisdom and with the Long-lived One is understanding. ¹³With him are wisdom and might; he possesses counsel and understanding. ¹⁴What he tears down cannot be rebuilt; the man he imprisons cannot be released. ¹⁵If he withholds the waters, there is a drought; if he releases them, they inundate the earth. ¹⁶To him belong [both] strength and wisdom; both the deceived and the deceiver are [under his control]. ¹⁷He leads counselors away stripped and makes fools of judges. ¹⁸He unbuckles the belt of kings and removes the waistband from their loins. ¹⁹He leads priests away stripped and overthrows those with secure temple positions. ²⁰He silences

the lips of trusted advisors and takes away the discernment of elders. ²¹He pours contempt on nobles and disarms the mighty. ²²He reveals deep things out of darkness and even brings the deep darkness into the light. ²³He exalts nations, and destroys them; he enlarges a people, and disperses them. ²⁴He deprives the leaders of the peoples of the earth of their reason; he causes them to wander through a wasteland without pathways. ²⁵They grope in darkness with no light; he causes them to stagger like drunkards.

13 My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it. ²What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. ³But I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case before God. ⁴You, however, whitewash my case with lies; you are worthless physicians—all of you! ⁵If only you would be completely silent, that would be your wisdom! ⁶Now hear my argument; listen to the plea of my lips. ⁷Will you speak unjustly on God's behalf? Will you speak deceitfully for him? ⁸Will you show partiality toward him? Will you argue the case for God? ⁹Will it turn out well [for you] when he examines you? Can you deceive him as you deceive men? ¹⁰He will surely rebuke you if you secretly show partiality. ¹¹Will not his majesty terrify you? Will not his dread fall upon you? ¹²Your maxims are proverbs of ashes! Your defenses are defenses of clay!

¹³Be silent! Let me speak!—then whatever happens to me, let it happen. ¹⁴Why do I put my flesh between my teeth and take my life in my hands? ¹⁵If he desires to slay me, I have no hope. Nevertheless, I will defend my ways before him. ¹⁶Surely this will prove to be my salvation, for a godless man cannot stand before his presence. ¹⁷Listen attentively to my words; let your ears take in what I say. ¹⁸I have prepared my case; I know that I will be acquitted. ¹⁹Who is he that can bring a charge against me? [If there is such a man], I will be silent and die. ²⁰Only spare me from two things, O God; then I need not hide from your face. ²¹Remove your hand far from me and do not let your dread terrify me; ²²then summon me and I will respond; or let me speak and you reply.

²³How many iniquities and sins have I committed? Show me my rebellion and my sin. ²⁴Why are you hiding your face and treating me as your enemy? ²⁵Will you cause a wind-driven leaf to tremble? Will you pursue dry chaff? —²⁶for you write down bitter things against me and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth. ²⁷You have fastened a chain and ball to my feet; you closely guard my every way of escape; you have branded the soles of my feet [like a criminal]. ²⁸I am wasting away like something rotten, like a garment that is eaten by moths.

14 Man, born of woman, has few days and is full of turmoil. ²He springs up like a flower and then withers away; he flees like a shadow and does not endure. ³Do you, indeed, fix your eyes on such a one? Will you bring him into judgment with yourself? ⁴Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing? No one. ⁵Indeed, [man's] days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed. ⁶So look away from him and relent, until he has put in his [time] like a hired laborer.

⁷[I plead this] because, [though] there is hope for a tree—if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not die; ⁸its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, ⁹yet at the scent of water it will bud and produce shoots like a sapling—¹⁰a vigorous man dies and lies prostrate; a man expires and where is he? ¹¹As water evaporates from the sea, or a riverbed becomes parched and dry, ¹²so man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens cease to exist, he will not awake nor be

roused out of his sleep. ¹³If only you would hide me in Sheol, and conceal me there until your wrath has passed; oh that you would erect a stela for me and remember me. ¹⁴If a man dies, will he live again? [If so, then] throughout all the days of my term of suffering I would wait until my discharge has come. ¹⁵You would call and I would answer you; you would yearn for the one your hands have made.

¹⁶But now, as it is, you count my steps. Do you not take close notice of my sin? ¹⁷My transgression is sealed in a bag, and you cover up my iniquity [for safe-keeping]. ¹⁸But as a mountain erodes and crumbles, or as a boulder is moved from its place [by an earthquake] ;¹⁹as water wears away stones and torrents wash away the earth's soil, so you [relentlessly] destroy man's hope. ²⁰You forever overpower him and he passes away; you change his expression and send him away. ²¹If his sons are honored, he does not know it; or if they are brought low, he does not see it. ²²On the contrary, he feels only the pain of his own body, and his soul mourns for himself. (Job 11:1-14:22)

Introduction

A lady explains what she does when she is dissatisfied with a purchase and finds it necessary to return the item to the store. She says she always seeks an interview with the person in charge—the store manager. She never brings her complaint to any of the sales personnel, because she knows they have no authority to refund her money or make an exchange. So she always requests an interview with the manager himself so that she may bring her complaint or concern directly to him.

In a similar way, when a Christian has a concern or “complaint”—when a Christian experiences a severe measure of incomprehensible suffering—he has the desire to request a personal interview with God. And Scripture indicates that the Christian may, indeed, draw near to God for such an interview. One such example is the prayer of Moses recorded in Exodus 5:22-6:1,

*Then Moses returned to Jehovah and said, “Lord, why have you dealt harshly with your people? Why have you sent me? ²³Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has been hostile towards this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.” **6** Then Jehovah said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; because of my strong hand he will let them go; indeed, [because of my] strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”*

Another example is the case of Job. Zophar charges Job with being a man “*full of talk;*” (the Hebrew word, רֵק, means “empty,” or “idle” talk; “babbling,”) and desires that God would speak. In other words, Zophar wishes that God would personally address Job and refute his charge that he is being treated unjustly (11:1-5.) Job responds by indicating his desire that he might, indeed, be granted a personal interview with God: “*I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case before God*” (13:3.)

The Christian may, indeed, draw near to God for a personal interview; but he must do so in accordance with the guidelines provided in Scripture.

I. You May Draw Near to God for a Personal Interview, But You Must Acknowledge His Unseachable Greatness

Zophar testifies that God is *“manifold in understanding”* (11:6.) The text literally reads, *“God is two-fold in understanding.”* The term *“two-fold”* connotes fullness or totality: God’s knowledge and wisdom are complete. God knows all things and He knows them exhaustively. As this applies to Job, Zophar asserts that God is dealing with him less severely than his iniquity deserves (11:6b.) God knows Job thoroughly, and at present He is administering a judgment that is tempered by mercy, such is Zophar’s assessment of Job’s situation. Note: Zophar is thinking in absolute terms, he is not taking into account the relative righteousness of a sincere and godly man. In absolute terms, Job would echo the words of the Psalmist: *“Hear my prayer, O Jehovah ... ²Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you”* (Psl. 143:2.)

Zophar goes on to recount the unfathomable depths and the unattainable heights of the greatness of the person of God (11:7-11.) He asks Job, *“Can you fathom the depths (חֲקֵר) of God, or approach the extremities (תִּבְלִית) of the Almighty?”* (11:7.) According to Hartley (p. 197), the Hebrew word, חֲקֵר, refers to the very heart and inner essence of a person or thing, while the term, תִּבְלִית, refers to the furthest boundary or extremity. To gain a full perspective about God’s ways, a person must have insight into the center of God’s being, along with knowledge as to the uttermost limits of the divine influence. A human being has a difficult time comprehending God’s ways, for he observes them only in part. He lacks the full picture that is necessary to understand how a particular occurrence fits within God’s comprehensive plan (Hartley, p. 197.)

Indeed, the whole created order—from the height of heaven to the depths of Sheol (the place of the dead,) from the length of the earth to the breadth of the sea—is not able to contain the person and wisdom of God (11:8-9.) Zophar’s argument goes like this: Since it is impossible for mortal man to comprehend the person and ways of God, how can a man legitimately rebuke the Almighty and charge Him with folly? The LORD Himself will make the same assertion when He reveals Himself to Job personally: *“Then Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest. He said, ²Who is this who darkens deliberations with words that lack knowledge?”* (Job 38:1-2.) In response, Job will humbly confess, *“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. ³Who is this that obscures deliberation with his lack of knowledge? Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, matters that are too wonderful for me to know”* (Job 42:1-3.)

Zophar asks, *“When [God] passes through [the land] and imprisons [a man] and convenes the court, who can oppose him?”* (11:10.) No one can withstand the Judge

of all the earth when He executes His judgment. Furthermore, no one can conceal his sin from God and assume that it will go undetected, for God recognizes, or, knows, deceitful men (11:11)—He is intimately aware of what they are and what they are doing, *“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account”* (Heb. 4:13.)

In contrast to the majestic all-knowing God, vain man is without understanding (11:12a.) Man is *“vain”* (the Hebrew word, נָבֵל, means “hollow;”) he is of no consequence; he is of no substance, especially in comparison to the Almighty. Man lacks understanding: he lacks comprehension of the divine purposes and does not perceive the way in which all things contribute to the accomplishment of the divine purpose and plan of God. Verse 12 appears to be a proverb: *“A vain man gains understanding [when] a wild donkey’s colt is born a man.”* The proverb stresses the impossibility of sinful man in his stubbornness, pride and self-will coming to a true understanding and knowledge of God and His ways. What Zophar is implying is that Job, so long as he adamantly maintains his present position of insisting that he is innocent, will never succeed in gaining an understanding as to the reason for his present situation, nor will he find relief from his present suffering—what Job needs to do is humble himself before God in repentance.

Thus it is that Zophar now calls upon Job to submit himself unto God in contrition and repentance (11:13-20.) Job must direct his heart in the way of righteousness and stretch out his hands to God (11:13.) He must give up his stubborn rebelliousness—his insistence on his personal innocence—and make supplication to God for His mercy. Job must repent of whatever iniquity he has committed; he must let no injustice reside in his tent (11:14.) If Job heeds Zophar’s counsel, then he will lift up his face without shame; he will stand secure without fear (11:15.) Job will be restored to fellowship with God, all shame and fear of judgment will be gone. Indeed, Job shall forget his misery and trouble, they will be like waters that have flowed passed—like “water over the dam” (11:16,) and his darkness will be like the morning (11:17)—his despair shall be replaced with the hope and joy of “a new day” (a new life.) That new life will be characterized by peace and security: Job will take his rest in safety (11:18.) Being restored to fellowship with God, Job will enjoy the peace of God and the protection provided by God (*“there will be no one to terrify you;”*) indeed, he will be restored to a position of honor: *“many will court your favor”* (11:19.) But, Zophar warns, *“the eyesight of the wicked will become poor, and there will be nowhere for them to flee—their hope will be turned into despair”* (11:20.) If Job refuses to repent, all that awaits him is the prospect of certain, inescapable judgment.

Job acknowledges the fundamental truth of Zophar’s testimony concerning the inscrutable majesty and justice of God; he declares, *“Who does not know these things?”* (12:1-3.) However, Job asserts that his present case is an anomaly; it is in apparent conflict with the basic truth expressed by Zophar, namely, that the

righteous are always rewarded and the wicked are always condemned upon the earth (12:4-11.)

Job testifies that he finds himself to be a laughing stock (an object of ridicule and mockery), he who was in fellowship with God ("*I who called upon God and he answered,*") he who is a righteous and blameless man (12:4.) From personal experience Job has discovered that those who are secure and free from affliction look with contempt upon the one who suffers calamity (12:5.) They look down upon him with disdain and are ready to condemn him, viewing his plight as the consequence of some sin in his life; they maintain that calamity is prepared "*for those whose feet are slipping.*" They fail to appreciate the anomaly of the righteous suffering, they maintain that all suffering is deserved and is in consequence of personal acts of transgression.

Turning from his own personal situation, Job points out a situation that is observed in the world at large and that supports his contention: "*The tents of marauders are safe; those who provoke God are secure—those into whose hand God brings [abundance]*" (12:6.) Note: Here is not the case of an apparently righteous man suffering, (Zophar and his companions would maintain that his suffering proves that he is not truly righteous at all;) rather, here is a case of truly unrighteous men prospering and enjoying security. What Job asserts in vs. 6 is indisputable: even the beasts and the birds and the fish and the earth itself can testify to this anomaly of the wicked prospering (12:7-8.) The ultimate cause of this anomaly must be attributed to God Himself: "*the hand of God has done this*" (12:9,)—the One who is the sovereign Lord over all the earth, "*[the one] in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind*" (12:10,) He has ordained it and He it is who permits the anomaly to occur. Job now invites (and urges) his friends to ponder what he is saying and consider the evidence he offers in support of his argument—they should examine Job's contention just as the tongue tastes food (12:11.)

Despite the presently incomprehensible anomaly he observes in the world (12:6) and even now is personally experiencing (12:4,) Job affirms God's infinite and absolute wisdom (12:12-25.) Verse 12 may best be taken as a reference to God and His divine wisdom and be translated: "*With the Aged One* (the Hebrew plural is the plural of excellence; Hartley, p. 210, footnote #1) *is wisdom and with the Long-lived One is understanding*" (Hartley's translation of vs. 12, p. 210.) Building on the accepted idea that wisdom resides with the elders of the community, Job takes two descriptions of the elders and turns them into titles for God, the Aged One and the Long-lived One. The longer one lives, the wiser one becomes. Since God is the oldest by far, he certainly is the wisest (Hartley, p. 213.)

Job asserts that with God "*is both wisdom and might*" (12:13.) The LORD God not only has the ability to conceive an infinitely wise and intelligent plan, He also has the ability—the might—to execute that plan and bring it to its final accomplishment. In ancient Near Eastern myths the qualities of wisdom and

power often resided in different gods. The strongest gods, not being the wisest, did things that often had terrible consequences. And since the wisest god was not the strongest, he could be rendered inept before the ferocity of the mighty gods ... But in the Old Testament, wisdom and strength are one in the true God (Hartley, p. 213.)

Job now offers evidence in support of his testimony that wisdom and might belong to God. When God tears down (a city or society,) it cannot be rebuilt (12:14.) In the world of nature, *“If he withholds the waters, there is a drought; if he releases them, they inundate the earth”* (12:15.) In verses 16-21 Job submits further evidence as to the power and wisdom of God, especially as God employs those divine attributes to confound the wise men of the world and overthrow the strong: *“He silences the lips of trusted advisors and takes away the discernment of elders”* (12:20.) Not only does God’s wisdom and power hold sway over the natural world (12:15) and over human society (12:14, 16-21,) His wisdom and power also extend over the mysterious realms of darkness and death: *“He reveals deep things out of darkness and even brings the deep darkness into the light”* (12:22.) Finally, Job reiterates God’s sovereignty over the nations: *“He exalts nations, and destroys them”* (12:23,) especially emphasizing His ability to deprive the leaders of wisdom and so reduce them to groping in darkness with no light (12:24-25.) Note: From the rest of Scripture we are made to understand that these acts of God are not capricious; rather, they are judgments enacted against proud and profane (or, secular) societies, Daniel 4:30-31,32b,

The king said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty? ³¹While the word was still on the king’s lips, there came a voice from heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: The kingdom has been taken away from you. ³²... until you acknowledge that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he desires. (Dan. 4:30-31,32b)

Job asserts that God does not need anyone to come to His defense; furthermore, any defense that fails to abide by the strictest standards of impartial justice will meet with His severe reproof (13:1-12.) Job declares that his friends have failed to contribute anything to his understanding of God and His inscrutable ways (13:1-2.)

Job desires to have a direct audience with the Almighty so that he might argue his case before God (13:3.) He would set forth his case before the LORD, namely, his innocence—as an innocent man, he would argue that he is not a legitimate object of judgment.

He must appeal to God directly because his companions have shown themselves to be worthless physicians (13:4.) The wisest thing they could do would be to keep silent (13:5.) Indeed, Job pleads with them to take his advise to keep silent (13:6.)

By supplying superficial answers, (namely, that God always and immediately punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous in this world,) answers that do not address and do not explain the moral anomalies of life (as presented in 12:4,6), Job's friends have spoken unjustly on God's behalf (13:7.) In an effort to defend God's righteous character, they have shown partiality toward him (13:8a,) as though the Almighty in His majestic greatness needed anyone to contend for Him (13:8b.)

Job charges his friends with seeking to deceive God (13:9,) doing so by secretly showing partiality (13:10.) Job's friends appear to be objective champions of truth and justice, when in fact they are prejudiced against Job—refusing to even consider his claim to innocence for fear that if they do acknowledge Job's innocence that fact will call into question God's justice, for it will raise the question: If God is just, how can He do this to an innocent man? So, in order to “defend” God's justice, the friends are prejudiced against Job.

Job warns his friends, “[God] will surely rebuke you” (13:10;) and he asks, “Will not his majesty terrify you?” (13:11.) Addressing his friends very bluntly, Job declares, “Your defenses are defenses of clay” (13:12.) Their efforts to defend God's integrity and justice by denying Job's claim to innocence is of no value and cannot stand the test of truth; it cannot endure the scrutiny of the One who is absolutely just and who demands perfect, impartial justice. As the Apostle Peter reminds us, “the Father ... judges impartially according to each one's work” (1 Pet. 1:17.) Job is testifying that because God is absolutely just, He condemns the effort on the part of Job's friends to “defend” Him by being prejudiced against Job and thereby failing to abide by the standard of strict, impartial justice. Thus, despite his present intense spiritual struggle, Job continues to display a deep reverence for God, acknowledging His absolute justice and His inscrutable greatness.

We are encouraged by Scripture to draw near to God for a personal interview; but as we do so, we must ever be mindful of His unsearchable greatness: “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (Rom. 11:33.)

II. You May Draw Near to God for a Personal Interview, But as You Do, Humbly Plead for His Mercy

Job is determined to draw near to God no matter what may be the consequence: “Let me speak! —then whatever happens to me, let it happen” (13:13.) In his present state, Job possesses no confidence that the LORD will receive him without destroying him; in approaching God he views himself as putting his flesh between his teeth and taking his life in his hands (13:14.) He views his endeavor to approach God as self-destructive, for how can a mortal man—indeed, one who is sinful by nature—stand in the presence of the Almighty? Job expects the worst: “If he desires to slay me, I have no hope” (13:15a.)

Nevertheless, despite his doubts and apprehension, Job is determined to defend his ways before God (13:15b)—this determination is based upon his confidence in the covenantal faithfulness and integrity of God (13:16-19.) Job knows that a godless man cannot stand before God (13:16b;) a man who willfully forsakes God and who defies His holy law cannot stand before God, such a man will be condemned by God. Job is certain that he is not a godless man; on the contrary, he boldly asserts, *“I know that I will be acquitted”* (13:18b.) No one has been able to successfully bring a charge against him (13:19.)

Now, as he apprehensively, but determinately, prepares to approach God, Job requests two things of the Almighty (13:20.) He requests that God would remove His hand far from him (13:21a;) this is a request that God would suspend the afflictions to which He has subjected Job. The Psalmist makes a similar request of God: *“Remove your scourge from me; I am overcome by the blow of your hand”* (Psl. 39:10.) He further requests that God would not let His dread terrify him (13:21b.) Here is a plea that God would spare Job from a direct encounter with the awesome fullness of God’s divine presence. Consider the testimony of the Apostle John when he had a direct encounter with the LORD: *“When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man”* (Rev. 1:17a.)

If God is gracious to grant Job’s two-fold petition, then Job is prepared to enter into a session of interrogation with the Almighty (13:22.) If Job is granted the opportunity of interrogating God, he will submit two questions that weigh heavily upon his heart: *“How many iniquities and sins [have I committed]? Show me my rebellion and my sin. ²⁴Why are you hiding your face and treating me as your enemy?”* (13:23-24.) If Job can come to know what he has done that has apparently aroused God’s righteous indignation, he can repent and be reconciled with God, knowing that God is merciful to the contrite, as the Psalmist testifies: *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise”* (Psl. 51:17.)

Job seeks to induce God’s pity and mercy by appealing to his human frailty before the Almighty (13:25-28.) He asks God, *“Will you cause a wind-driven leaf to tremble? Will you pursue dry chaff?”* (13:25.) By comparing himself to the autumn leaf and the dry chaff, Job is emphasizing his utter inability to stand in the presence of God or to withstand the awesome power of the Almighty. He is an object to be pitied, a candidate for God’s mercy, as he acknowledges his frailty and in no way seeks to exert himself in defiance against the LORD.

Further seeking to move God to be merciful to him, Job asserts that God has *“written down bitter things against me”* (13:26;) here is a reference to the present sufferings of body and soul that God has consigned Job to experience. He goes on to assert, *“you have fastened [a chain and ball] to my feet”* (13:27.) Job charges that God is treating His faithful servant like a common criminal.

Job portrays himself in his present condition as a thing that is rotting away or as a garment that is moth-eaten (13:28.) His is a pitiable condition, one that should solicit the mercy and compassion of the LORD.

Job goes on to declare that man *“has few days and is full of turmoil”* (14:1.) Indeed, like a flower, his life is quickly withered or cut down (14:2a.) Again, his life is compared to a shadow (14:2b) that has no substance and quickly vanishes as the wind blows the clouds along.

Job then inquires as to why God so intensively scrutinizes such a frail, transitory creature, why does God bring such a one into judgment? (14:3.) Once more there is the unspoken implication that God should have mercy on such a one and view him with pity.

Since man cannot change his nature—*“who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing?”* (14:4), and since his time on earth is so very short—Job measures man’s lifetime in terms of months (14:5,) Job pleads with God to look away from him and *“relent”* (14:6.) Job is requesting that God, in pity, would give man a brief moment of relief before man departs this world, instead of intently and constantly scrutinizing man’s every moment.

While Job hesitantly solicits God’s pity and mercy, we, in the light of Calvary, may confidently plead for His mercy as we seek a personal interview with Him:

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 ¹⁵We 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. ¹⁶Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Heb. 4:14-16)

III. You May Draw Near to God for a Personal Interview, With Confidence and Hope

Job declares that there is hope for a tree (14:7-9.) If it is cut down and reduced to a stump, the tree can sprout again; even if its root becomes old, it can be resuscitated by water and so be restored to life. But in contrast to a tree, man dies and lies prostrate (14:10.) Unlike a tree, a man expires, *“and where is he?”* When in death man’s spirit/soul is severed from his mortal body, there is no hope for his revival. Just as surely as the waters of the sea evaporate and the rivers dry up, so man, when he lies down in death, does not rise again *“until the heavens cease to exist”* (14:11-12.)

Job testifies that if he had the hope of the resurrection, he would patiently wait out his present life of trial and suffering, confident that in the resurrection he would be restored to fellowship with God (14:13-15.) If Job could possess the

hope of the resurrection, he could view Sheol, (the place of the dead,) not as the eternal abode of darkness and despair from which there is no return, but as a temporary hiding place (a place of refuge) where he could be secure until the storm of God's wrath has passed (14:13a.) Then, after the storm has passed, God would call Job to come out of the refuge of Sheol back to life, a life of restored fellowship with God (14:13b, 15.)

But once again Job's faint glimmer of resurrection hope gives way to despair (14:16-22.) Job views God as taking close notice of his sin: "*my transgression is sealed in a bag*" (14:16-17.) God consciously reserves Job's sin so that He may bring Job into final judgment and condemnation; such is Job's present assessment of his situation.

Just as a great mountain will eventually erode as the forces of nature act against it, and just as the incessant flowing of the waters wear down the stones, so God in His eternal being wears away any hope that mortal man might entertain, for there is no possibility of outliving or outlasting God and thereby attaining deliverance from His righteous opposition to sinful man (14:18-19.) Far from enduring, man passes away (14:20;) he has no knowledge as to the fate and the future of his sons (14:21,) he passes away into oblivion. While on earth, man's short life is characterized by pain of body and mourning of soul (14:22.)

Unlike Job, who at this point possesses only a fleeting glimmer of the resurrection, we as New Testament era Christians can draw near to God for a personal interview with full confidence of a future hope:

Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection, and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.*" (Jn. 11:25)

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep [i.e.; those who die as believers in Jesus], or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first; ¹⁷after that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ⁸Therefore comfort each other with these words. (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

Conclusion

When a Christian experiences a severe measure of incomprehensible suffering, he has the desire to request a personal interview with God. Scripture indicates that the

Christian may, indeed, draw near to God for such an interview; but as he does so, the Christian must adhere to the guidelines provided in Scripture: 1) he must acknowledge God's unsearchable greatness; 2) he must humbly trust in God's mercy; and 3) he should approach God with confidence and hope: *"I know the plans I have for you, declares Jehovah, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"* (Jer. 29:11.)