

Don't Fear The Future

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[0 : 0 0] In John 33, we read the verses 23 and 24. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious unto him and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit.

I have found a ransom. Like all of the Old Testament, effectively, as we've mentioned so many times in the past, the purpose of the Old Testament is to point us forward to Christ in the fulfilment of all the Old Testament scriptures.

In some of these scriptures, it is more clear than others. And this finding of a ransom is one of those moments of extreme clarity in the Old Testament that so clearly points us forward to the Redeemer and the one who pays the price of sin, as it needs, perhaps you might say, very little expounding to declare that this speaks of Christ.

But in many ways, the entire chapter, of course, like all of the Book of Job, and like all the Old Testament scriptures, also speak to us of Christ. But this chapter, in particular, would like us to recognise and to think upon.

It is part of the ongoing speech of Elihu. Elihu is not one of Job's three main friends, who, of course, are seeking to comfort him, in inverted commas, by basically telling him, well, he must be bad, he must be wrong, because if he wasn't a bad guy and a sinner, God wouldn't be punishing him.

[1 : 3 3] And they've each had a go at him in different ways. They've tried to explain to him. They've tried now to say things that they hoped would open up his understanding.

And these, of course, Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and so far the Neolathite, that came to try and be friends to Job, to comfort him. But we read at the beginning of chapter 32, So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachah the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram. Against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.

And against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he.

And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled, and then he began to speak. And so on. Now Elihu is a kind of strange character in the book of Job, because he sort of pops up out of nowhere.

[2 : 4 2] He appears out of nowhere there in chapter 32, and he appears to speak, almost as it were, in the place of God. He's not simply trying to tell Job how wrong he is, although he does that too, but he's also, as it were, speaking for God, and almost in the place of God.

And one reason why we might say that is that at the end of Job in chapter 42, that we read in verse 7, It was so that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends.

For ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks, seven rams, go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you.

For him will I accept, lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite, they'll let the shoe out, and so forth and Amethite went and did according, as the Lord commanded them.

And the Lord accepted Job. And there's sort of no mention there. What about Elihu? What about this guy here who's been doing so much of the speaking, from chapter 32 on through towards virtually chapter 40?

[4 : 01] He's got a huge chunk of what he speaks here, but he's sort of not mentioned at all. It's almost like he's going to airbrush out of the picture, because he is not one of the three adversarial friends to Job.

He's not. He's got a huge chunk of what he's got. The three main characters here, and yet he has significant input. It's almost as though he is a sort of person who appears, almost like, you know, after the order of Melchizedek, who suddenly appears out of nowhere, and then disappears again into obscurity.

And it's not for nothing, I think, that we really then hear speaking, and saying, The Spirit of God hath made me. He's made all of us, of course. The breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

After again, he said to me just, If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me. Stand up. Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead.

I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee. Surely thou hast spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy works and so on.

[5 : 14] So in other words, every year is saying, Look, I'll stand here in the place of God. Say to me what you want to say to God, and I will speak. Then after, I'm approachable.

I'm not inaccessible. Here I am. I'm just made of the clay and the dust of the earth, just like you are, Job. I am a man like you. I only have my life, my breath, because of the Spirit of the Almighty God that's given me life.

If you can answer me, set your words in order before me. Stand up. I am according to thy wish in God's stead. I also am formed out of the clay. In other words, if we might say that any of you is being used of the Lord here to put the words of God, almost as were, the mouth of God, in an accessible format to Job, so that he can pour out his heart.

He can say what he wants to say. He can speak to man the words that he might want to speak to God. Is this not the Lord demonstrating in advance? That this is how he intends to make himself known to men.

This is how he intends to make himself known to the saints of the Lord. He will appear as a man as they are. We cannot, I suppose, in all reverence, say that Jesus himself is formed of the dust of the earth.

[6 : 29] Obviously, he's of the seed of God. The Holy Ghost conceived in the womb of the Virgin, and so on. He is holy man and holy God, but he is, we can say it reverently, a man like us, a human being like us.

He walks the earth as we walk the earth. He is humanity personified. He is accessible. People are able to come to him with their problems, with their difficulties, to spell out to him their needs, even though he already knows them.

If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me. Stand up. And there's not a single one of us that doesn't really want to pull out our complaint before the Lord, who doesn't really want to say, Lord, this is what's on my heart.

Maybe we can't find the words, and maybe we hesitate to do so for fear we might be struck down for our ingratitude, but every saint of the Lord has wanted to cry out to him in the midst of their need, has wanted to pour out their soul to him in some ways.

Look at Jeremiah, the prophet, chapter 12. Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Wherefore did the way of the wicked prosper?

[7 : 50] Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them. Yea, they have taken root. They grow. Yea, they bring forth fruit.

Thou art near in their mouth and far from their race. But thou, O Lord, knowest me. Thou hast seen me and tried my heart toward thee. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter.

Prepare them for the day of slaughter. How long shall the land mourn and the herbs of every field wither for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. The beasts are consumed and the birds, because they said, ye shall not see our last end.

And Jeremiah is pouring up to the Lord. We don't doubt how good you are, but Lord, let me just, let me just tell you how I'm feeling here. Let me just bring you my complaint here, because I don't understand why wickedness gets to prosper in this world.

Why do you let it happen, Lord? Why do you let it happen? And the Lord's answer is entirely reassuring in the circumstances. If thou hast run with the footmen and they have weary thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?

[8 : 57] And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustest, thou they weary thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? Even your own brother, even your own family have turned against you.

In other words, you might see the Lord's answer is, you know, this is a problem, Jeremiah. You ain't seen nothing yet. It's going to get worse before ever it gets better. That's not the kind of answer Jeremiah wants.

But rather, the Lord is spelling out to him, things are far more serious even than you know. But he has to pour out his heart to him.

He has to articulate it to him. Because God has made himself accessible. He's accessible to Jeremiah. And he's accessible to Job. And Job, remember, is in a time long before the Lord ever appears to Moses in the burning bush.

He is probably from the time maybe around or before the time of Abraham. After the flood, but before the times of Abraham. So it is the earliest narrative, if you like, almost, the earliest book, certainly, written book in the Old Testament Scriptures.

[10 : 05] But just as the Lord makes himself accessible through the person of Elihu, so, of course, ultimately he makes himself accessible in the person of his son. When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

God intends to be accessible. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee. Come on, tell me what's in your heart.

And I would suggest to you this is the first thing we should take out of this passage, out of this chapter. Whether it is in the mouth of Elihu, or whether it is from the heart of God, and remember, God is the one who has caused this to be written down.

He has caused us to be able to read these words, as though the Lord is saying, not only to Job, but to us and to his people in every generation, look, tell me what's in your heart.

Tell me what's wrong. Tell me your burdens. And we might think, well, Lord, you already know it anyway. So I shouldn't even say, no, but spell it out. You know, in a secular context, of course, people are following the benefit from this.

[11 : 14] You get the classic picture of the patient lying on the couch and the psychiatrist or whatever sitting beside him with his little notebook or whatever, just listening to them articulate their feelings because sometimes it helps people to actually put into words and to form the thoughts in their minds rather than just say, oh, I know everything's wrong, everything's a mess and so on.

You might say, okay, well, tell me what's a mess. Tell me what's bothering you. Tell me what's really on your heart. Why are you so cast down, Job? Why is it you think that God is against you?

Why do you think you're getting a rough time? What is it that you want God to do? And sometimes, you know, the Lord might ask us that, what is it you would like me to do in the midst of your problem, in the midst of your difficulty?

What is it you would like me to do? Well, I don't know, Lord. I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do. Well, ask. How can we ask if we don't know what we want? So we are compelled to stop and think, okay, if I could ask God for help in this situation, what would I ask?

What are the things I really need him to do for me here? And so when we form a petition, we take it to the Lord. Ask. And it shall be given. Because what we see here with this accessible God, God who makes himself accessible, is first of all, he brings down pride.

[12 : 35] And we see this here in verses 16 onwards. He opened up the ears of men and seaeth their instruction that he may withdraw man from his purpose and hide pride from man.

He keepeth back his soul from the pit and his life from perishing by the sword. Grace, the free gift of grace, destroys pride. How can we be proud when we recognize it is only the Lord that brings us back from death, brings us back from the pit, enables us to see like the Lord shows Jeremiah.

Things are actually an awful lot worse than you realize. You think you've just got problems for the day. Let me tell you about the problems of eternity. Let me tell you about the problems of the world and the flesh and the devil and judgment to come.

You can't see the half of it. I can see it all. Jeremiah, you don't know you're living. You don't know the problems. Job, you think you've got problems? This is problems.

So we have it revealed to us just as serious the situation is or a fracture of it rather. And yet the Lord draws us back from the pit, back from the mouth of the abyss.

[13 : 47] He redeems, he saves, and in doing so he destroys our pride. Because human nature tends to have one of two problems. Either by thinking we are righteous because I do this, I do that, I do the next thing, I'm a good person.

Look at all the good things I do, look at all the bad things I don't do. God should be pleased with me. Human pride, which tends to be of course only a symptom of human blindness where righteousness is concerned, where God is concerned, that's the one extreme.

The other end of the spectrum is of course seeing how bad we are and feeling hopelessly. Well, what's the use of it? I'll do anything at all. There's no hope at all. God must have given up on me.

That is no use. There's no hope for me in anything. There's no point trying. Grace not only destroys pride, it also destroys despair because of what Christ has done, all our wrongdoing, all our sin, is actually taken away and all his righteousness is actually given to us.

So all that we do for the Lord, all that we do by way of obedience or obeying his word out of love, not out of slavish fear or not trying to tick boxes, not trying to gain points, but rather just because of what he's done for us, just because we love him so much, we are set free from the dread and the hopelessness of thinking, there's nothing I can do.

[15 : 13] I can never do enough to wear salvation. I can never do enough to be saved. No, you can't. You never will. And this destroying of our pride also destroys despair at the same time because we no longer have cause to despair because although we are brought low and this is what we see verses 19 to 22 here, he does bring us low sometimes.

He is chasing with pain upon his bed the multitude of his bones with strong pain so his life abhorreth bread. His soul, dainty me, his flesh is consumed away. His soul drawed near unto the grave and his life to destroy it.

He feels hopeless. Despair is only a breath away but grace destroys despair if there be a messenger with him.

Now of course the literal meaning of messenger or translation of messenger is angel. An angel is a messenger of God. That's what it means. There is a messenger with him.

An interpreter who is able to explain God's word to them. One among a thousand. One to show unto man his uprightness.

[16 : 25] Now there is an interesting phrase which we can either take to mean he'll show man his uprightness in other words he hasn't got any. He thinks he's upright but he doesn't have any uprightness at all.

Or he'll show to what can mean he will show to man his uprightness the messenger the angel the interpreter will show his own uprightness to man and say you don't have any uprightness.

This is uprightness. This is righteous. He'll show him his righteousness his uprightness in other words that of the angel the messenger or perhaps more likely a kind of combination of both in this verse.

He will show him where the divine righteousness and uprightness is. Look it's in me the messenger the angel the messenger of the covenant the representative of mankind.

There's my uprightness and this is where your uprightness is to be found as well. If man in his fallen condition is to have any uprightness at all it's not going to be in his grovelling in the dirt from it fulfilled commands and laws and legal righteousness.

[17 : 34] It's not going to be in anything he can do. His uprightness is in God. His uprightness is in Christ. His uprightness is in the messenger of the covenant one among a thousand.

What is thy beloved more than another beloved although fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou is so charged? My beloved is white and ruddy the cheapest among ten thousand.

He is a rarity. He is unique. One among a thousand. It doesn't mean literally count up to one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine and then a thousand and pick one. It doesn't mean just in that anathmetical sense.

It means such a rarity. Such a unique character. There's only one of them. There is only one such redeemer. One such messenger of the covenant.

One such interpreter who interprets God to man. Who makes man accessible to God. To show unto man his uprightness.

[18 : 40] He will show man where man's uprightness is to be found. He will show man the uprightness of God, of the messenger himself. And he will bring the two together. As it says in Ephesians so you know reconciling them both together to make himself of twain one new man.

So that he reconciles fallen man and righteous God into this one perfect uprightness. He will show unto man his uprightness and our uprightness is only in Christ.

Only in the messenger of the covenant. Only in the redeemer. Then he is gracious unto him and saying deliver him from going down to the pit. I have found a ransom.

And here we have almost this kind of courtroom scenario where the son speaks to the father and says don't let this soul be lost. Don't let this individual go down to the pit.

Don't let them be condemned for their sin because I have found a ransom. A ransom has been paid. I have shown them where uprightness is to be found. There is a redemption to be had.

[19 : 51] Now we know of course that redemption is costly. Psalm 49 tells us this. Let's read a few verses in Psalm 49. Verse 6 verse 6 verse 6

Now in that Psalm 49 look at this verse 15.

God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave. And compare that with verse 8. The redemption of their soul is precious. And it ceaseth forever. It can never be repeated.

It's a once and for all achievement. It's a once and for all accomplishment. It is precious. It is costly. It is such a redemption, such a ransom as man himself can never accomplish.

It is that which can only be done by the once and for all redeemer. Then he is gracious unto him. Gracious means full of grace, giving of a free gift.

[21 : 56] That's what grace means, gratis, freely given. He is gracious unto them and said, deliver them from going down to the pit. Don't let this soul be lost because their price is paid.

Bring them back from the pit, set their feet on the rock. I have found the ransom. I have found the payment. In the sense of the word that's translated being found, literally it is, I have obtained, I have got hold of.

But that doesn't convey it because the sense is not simply I have obtained, I have procured, yes I have it now. But rather the sense is of such alacrity, such delight and such a big boost in having found it because it conveys the sense of having searched and searched and having looked and longed for and finally come across.

It's like the sense of what Jesus describes in the parables of the woman sweeping her house for the coin that's been found and then the shepherd searching and searching and searching and finally finding the lamb and bringing it home on its shoulders.

Although it's literally I have obtained, it doesn't convey that sufficiently in translation. I have found the ransom. It implies I have searched, I have looked the whole world over there.

[23 : 16] At last I have discovered I have found a ransom. now there is no ransom to be found saved in Christ and of course when every soul is finally brought to recognize Christ as their personal saviour, it is the end of our long search because every such soul has either been searching for the meaning in their life, the fulfilment that was always absent, no matter what they did, whether they looked for it in the things of the world or whether they looked for it and going through the motions and the formalities of the church or mere religion, they have searched and searched and never gone anywhere to it until they have found it in Christ who has himself found them.

I am found of him, I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth.

What does this convey? If not, he shall be given a complete new start. He shall become as a little child, he shall effectively be born again.

Except you be born again and become as little children, he shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth, he shall pray unto God and he will be favourable unto him.

He shall see his face with joy. For he will render unto man his righteousness. Now you could read that and say, well I'll give man his due like the person gets paid the labour in the vineyard.

[24 : 55] At the end of the day, here's man's righteousness. If that was what we were getting, then it would be a lost eternity. Hell forever and ever is what we would receive. But rather he will render unto man his righteousness.

I would suggest to you, again, think of Jeremiah chapter 23 verse 6, he renders unto man the Lord our righteousness. His righteousness is what he gets.

He will render unto man his righteousness. He looks upon men, if anyone will say, I've sinned and perverted that which was right, it profited me not. He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the like.

Lo, all these things work with God, oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the lights of the man.

If thou hast anything to say, answer me, speak, for I desire to justify you. And another instance whereby Elie here is almost in the place of God, I desire to justify you.

[26 : 00] This is what God is effectively saying to sinners, I desire to justify you. Whatever your grievance is, whatever your anxiety is, whatever you want to pull out before me, speak, tell me your heart, tell me what's in your soul, pour it out.

If you think you've got a complaint against me, let's hear it. If you think you've got a problem with the way I've run the world, let's hear it. If you think you've had a hard time in your life, you tell me about it.

Let's hear what you have to say. Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me, all thy peace that I will speak. If I was to anything to say, answer me, speak, for I desire to justify thee.

If not, hearken unto me, hold thy peace and I will teach thee wisdom. And no doubt, I imagine, there's plenty of us that think, well, in the presence of God, just wait till I tell all the things that are in my heart, wait till I start speaking and I start sending out all the complaints I got.

And then when we come, as it were in a spiritual sense, face to face with Christ, there is nothing to say. We are stuck down, we are compelled by Job to hold our peace and just soak up the presence of Christ, of his love, of his kindness, of his mercy, of his deliverance, of his grace, of the ransom that he has paid, that sinners might be redeemed.

[27 : 32] The ransom of their souls is precious and is costly. It is the highest price ever paid, and yet this is what the Lord pays for sinners.

If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious and then and say, deliver him from going down to the pit.

I have found a ransom. We may have been seeking long, but it may be that Christ has been seeking for us as for the lost sheep, the lost lamb that he desires to bring home upon his shoulders.

I have found the ransom. If we have found our ransom in Christ, then we need not fear the future. We need not fear the present and the turmoil of the world just now.

We may not fear the day to come if we be spared to see it, because he will be with us in it. If thou hast anything have you have to complain to tell them about it, they will not turn you away.

[28 : 42] Remember how when we were at school and maybe we had a question and we thought, will I put my hand up or I just be slapped down. A good teacher doesn't want to slap down a child that finally asks a question because they would always tell you if you ask a question you can guarantee five other people want to ask that question as well so ask ask how it shall be given seeking you shall find not how it shall be opened unto you deliver him from going down to the pit I have found a ransom not only has our Lord found the ransom but he is the ransom why would he do that why would he spend that costly gracious gift simply because he loves us at the end of the day Christ loves lost sinners this is what he does because this is what he is God is love and this is who we are called to put our trust in this is who we are called upon to believe in and sometimes he brings us very low so that we have nowhere else to go we have nowhere better to go than into the arms of the one who loves us more than any in heaven or earth to do so he is the one who brings us back in the pit

I have found a ransom got to Bye to the