

## A Proudful and Arrogant Approach Job 11-14

Over the past few weeks we have examined the counsel of Job's friends – first with Eliphaz, then Bildad, and tonight we are going to wrap up the first round of responses by looking at the counsel of Zophar. It is interesting that the common thought is that these three men spoke in turn from the eldest to the youngest. As you grow old and more experienced, you tend to become more soft-hearted. While not always true, that tends to be generally true and the remarks of Job's three friends tend to back that up. While all three are very direct and accusatory, the lack of sympathy grows with each speech. Tonight we will see that Zophar's response is quite prideful and lacking in mercy.

### Zophar's Response

#### I. Immediate Accusations (v.1-6)

Zophar doesn't waste any time getting directly to his point. I imagine once ice was broken, he was ready to get this off his chest. He waited his turn (according to age) and then let loose. Much like Bildad, Zophar accuses Job of blowing hot air. He essentially tells Job that his words are worthless. Zophar views Job's comments to this point as an attempt to silence his critics. In a way, Zophar tells Job he is wasting his time. All of his self-righteous talk isn't going to make things better or silence anyone. Not only does Zophar see Job's words as useless but he goes as far as accusing Job of mocking God. What does he mean here?

Zophar is accusing Job of being self-righteous. Job is defending himself and Zophar views all of his words as lies. His defense is worthless before God. For one to stand before God and spew known lies is a bold position – this is what Zophar accuses Job of. God knows the truth. He cannot be fooled.

Zophar's position can be best described as "holier than thou." Already he is insinuating that he knows the mind of God far better than Job does. What we know from Ch. 1 proves this to be false. However, Zophar is going to double down on his position as he continues to speak.

His accusations become direct in verse 4. "For you say." Zophar tells Job, I have sat back and listened to you now for quite some time and I'm sick of listening. You have argued that all of your ways are pure and that you are clean before God. However, look at the situation you find yourself in. If you were so pure, you wouldn't be here (trash dump) and we wouldn't be here attempting to console you! It's all a lie, Job. Zophar doesn't say it here, but he insinuates – why don't you just come clean man!

We continue to see the poor theology of Job's friends on display here – that the righteous are always blessed and the wicked are always judged. Eternally – yes 100%, In the temporal/immediate – not always so. However, something else is on display here that we must take note of. Notice what Zophar says about Job's claim – "My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in God's eyes."

Where has Job claimed this?

6:24

7:20

9:21

10:14-15

Job has never claimed to be perfect. To this point, his argument has been one of confusion as he doesn't know of any wrongdoing that fits the perceived judgement he has received. In his own words, he has asked for specific accusations (what have I done) and Job has even asked God to reveal anyone unknown sin. The words, "if I sin" and "if I am guilty", are not the words of a man who clings to the idea or notion that he is completely perfect. In fact, Job just finished arguing that no man is perfect and he questioned how anyone could stand before God in the right?

Job had to have been hearing the words of Zophar while thinking – Have you even been listening to me?

In verses 5-6, Zophar's pride and arrogance are put on full display. "But oh, that God would speak and open His lips to you." Do you realize what Zophar is saying here? I wish God would speak because if He would, you would quickly realize that I am right! You are mocker of God – a liar – this type of calamity doesn't fall on one who is righteous. Therefore, you aren't righteous Job – no matter how hard you try to defend yourself. It's a waste of time. Shut up, come clean, and repent.

In fact, Zophar tells Job that he should be grateful God hasn't taken it out on him worse! In verse 6 he argues that God has shown some mercy and has withheld some judgement from Job. There is some truth to this that God is merciful and at times stays his hand – offering us every opportunity to come back into fellowship with Him. However, we must remember that God is just and in time, the payment will come due. Thanks be to God that our payment was made full in Christ! I find it ironic here that Zophar pays tribute to the mercy of God while showing no mercy himself.

Zophar is right – Job is wrong – this isn't about comfort or counseling.

## II. Legalism (v.6-20)

In the remainder of Zophar's counsel, he takes a very legalistic approach. His arrogance really shines through. Again, he is correct and Job needs to listen – at least that is his view.

Similar to his companions, in verses 7-11, Zophar tells Job - let me tell you a little something about God. You can sense the condescending tone.

Zophar appeals to the deep wisdom of God. In a condescending and accusatory tone, he asks Job if he can understand the deep things of God. Do you know His limits? Can you control him? The things He knows stretch higher than heaven, deeper than death, and measure longer than the length of the earth or depth of the sea. God's knowledge and wisdom is immense – and you claim to know it?

While there is no direct mention of it in the text and I couldn't find any commentaries that support this thought (this is Dave's view), it appears to me that Zophar could possibly be taunting Job with the idea that he knows God better than Job does. Almost as if to say "Do you know the depth, knowledge, and wisdom of God like I do?"

If this isn't the case then another argument can be made – that Zophar argues you can't know these things! You can't know God. We have to be really careful here. Can we know the intricacies and the depth of God's knowledge and wisdom? The answer is clearly No. However, can we know some things about God? Yes. Just because we cannot know everything about God does not mean we cannot know some things about God.

Regardless of which of these points is true, Zophar is providing false counsel here.

His prideful jabs continue in verse 11 and 12 and perhaps are the most hurtful comments that we have seen up to this point.

“For He knows worthless men: when he sees iniquity will he not consider it?”

Translation: Job, God knows worthless when He sees it and you know when He sees it most? When He looks at you. Are you so stupid to think that when God looks on your sin he isn't going to deal with it? Get over yourself.

“But a stupid man will get understanding when a wild donkey's colt is born of a man!”

Translation: Oh wait! That's right, you are stupid – you don't get it and may never get it.”

In some ways, Zophar's argument draws comparisons to the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18:9-14. Zophar plays the part of the Pharisee while Job plays the part of the Tax Collector.

Zophar follows up his brash comments with his plan – almost as if he is doing a favor for Job – “here is what you need to do.”

Zophar's plan is very similar to that of the previous two friends – Repent and get right with God. If you do so, he will bless you. There is some truth to Zophar's plan but it just doesn't apply to Job.

Zophar makes the mistake of assumption – he knows Job's situation completely (which he doesn't). He also lets his pride and legalistic attitude get in the way. He knows what is right and Job just needs to fall in line and listen. He presents himself as holier than thou which is one of the least ways to be effective. There is no attempt at comfort and sympathy here – only an attempt to assert his perceived authority and wisdom. While there is some truth in what he provides, Zophar completely dismisses the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. There is no love and no mercy – Job needs comfort and he gets everything but leaving Zophar with no chance of being an effective counselor. In addition, one final key mistake that Zophar makes is another assumption – that he must speak for and defend God. God needs no defense.

### III. True Wisdom (ch.12)

Job begins his reply to Zophar rather sarcastically. Zophar has ridiculed him as a man lacking basic understanding and wisdom but Job pushes back on that.

“I have understanding as well as you.” You think you are all wise – as though all of the earth's wisdom lies in you and will be lost when you die, but that is not the case. You are not as wise as you think you are. All of these truths that you and your friends have spoken (whether they are applicable to me or not) are widely known – there are no secrets here.

Job continues and questions why he is the one being mocked. He is the one that is blameless and upright. He is the one speaking to God, and yet he is the one being mocked by his friends while it appears as though those who provoke God don't experience what he is experiencing.

Remember, the theology presented by Job's three friends is based upon all the righteous being blessed and all the wicked being judged. It is probable that while Job experienced good times, he would have agreed with them. However, in his newfound situation, Job is saying that his views have changed. The way he sees the world has changed but the way Job sees God has not!

In verses 7-25, Job speaks about the power and might of God while belittling the speech of Zophar. All the things Zophar has said can be attested to by the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and even the plants. Zophar's wisdom is not as lofty as he claims. He has no inside information. In fact, the theology he claims (righteous blessed and wicked judged) doesn't match the world we live in.

In verse 13, Job declares that true wisdom and strength come from God. Zophar's wisdom is the one that is lacking.

It is God alone that has power over:

- Men
- Minds
- Rulers
- Darkness
- Nations

#### IV. True Authority (ch.13)

In chapter 13, Job really pushes back on what all three of his friends have said. He has had enough. He tells them that he is the one that has experienced all of this. He has seen it with his own eyes. He has also seen all that they speak of – What they know, he also knows (Most of it just doesn't apply to him!)

"I am not inferior to you"

All these friends have done is lie to Job – some intentional and some unintentional but lies nonetheless. Job describes them as worthless physicians. They do not have the ability to truly diagnose what is going on in Job's life. Job wishes that they would be silent – he declares that would be their true wisdom. In other words – your words have been worthless. Why did you come here again? Some comfort you are.

Verses 7-8 are very interesting.

- Would you speak falsely for God?
- Will you plead the case for God?

Why do you feel the need to defend God? Is he not capable of defending Himself? Does it make you feel better?

- If he searched you out, how would you feel?
- You try to deceive me with your lies and poor counsel, do you think you can deceive God as well?

Your defense would be and is worthless! (v.12)

Job argues that he should be able to present his case before God. Why? Because God is the one with true authority. All three of Job's friends have pranced around as if they held the authority but Job

knows that is not the case. God is the one with authority and Job declares that he is ready to take his case before God, regardless of what the result will be.

Verse 15 is key here – very key! “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.” Again, Job leans on the sovereignty and majesty of God. His friends counsel is of no benefit to Him. They provide Job no hope. Even though Job recognizes that God’s hand has been at work in his devastation, he also recognizes that God alone is his only hope.

Job longs to be right before God.

#### V. True Life (ch. 14)

In chapter 14, Job begins to ponder life after death and hope for true life full of peace with God.

In verse 4, Job declares, “Who can bring a clean thing out of and unclean? There is not one.” Job appears to be speaking about the fate of man here. It is as if he is saying, I am not clean and don’t claim to be contrary to what Zophar has said. All of man is unclean.

In verses 7-10, Job asks the question, Is there life after death? Is there any hope. He argues that a tree which is cut down to nothing more than a stump will eventually bud again – there will be new life. Job’s question is “What about me?” If a man dies and breathes his last, what then? Job has been longing for death in his misery but it is as if now he is unsure of what follows.

In verses 11-12, Job laments that death could possibly be it. He compares man to a river that dries up. Once it is gone, it is gone, never to return. These seem to be the cries of a hurting man that isn’t really sure where to turn. He desperately wants hope but doesn’t find or know of any.

He cries out in verse 13, “Hide me in death but remember me!” He is saying, don’t let this be – don’t let life simply end in death – remember me beyond death – provide for me a renewal.

In verse 14, we get the same question again – this time asked directly – “If a man dies, shall he live again?” Job says, “All the days of my service, I would wait, til my renewal should come. In other words, my only hope is in you. (To me this is very reminiscent of John 6:68 – “To whom shall we go?”)

I am willing to wait!

In verses 15-17, Job says that in this – renewal after death – God would not remember the sin of man, it would be sealed up and covered.

These are some powerful words. There is foreshadowing of Jesus all over this book and perhaps none greater than here!

Quickly, Job reverts back to despair. As he closes out this prayer he basically says, this is my hope but I don’t see it and it doesn’t feel like that will happen.

Although Job is in a dark place and feels this way, we know that his hope is a reality through the work of Christ on the cross. God does cover our sin and remember it no more!

## VI. Personal Implications

1. Listen!
2. You are to be on God's side, not the other way around!
3. Just because we don't know everything about God doesn't mean we can't know something about God.
4. Counseling without love and mercy isn't often effective counseling.
5. God alone possesses true wisdom and authority.
6. True life is found in Christ.