

JOB 11

ZOPHAR SPEAKS: "JOB DESERVES WORSE!"

It is sad to see the unrestrained passions that even wise and righteous persons are sometimes betrayed into by the heat of an argument. Such is what we see of Zophar in this chapter. When Eliphaz spoke to Job, he began with a very modest preface (chapter 4:2); and Bildad was a little more rough in his speech (chapter 8:2); but Zophar fell upon his friend without mercy, and gave him very hard language. "Should a man full of talk be justified?" he asked. "And should thy lies make men hold their peace?" Was this the way to comfort poor Job? No, indeed; nor to convince him, either.

Zophar attacked Job with great vehemence. He falsely represented him as a man who loved to hear himself speak, although he could say nothing relevant to the point under consideration; and also as a man who uttered falsehoods. He desired for God to show Job that less punishment was being exacted upon him than what he really deserved. It is truly awful to hear speeches like this dropping from people's lips – not only among those who are ungodly and profane; but also among some who profess to obey the Lord's commandments, and yet call upon Him to be a witness to the truth of their idle assertions. We sometimes seem to think that if the Lord would only audibly speak, then we would surely hear Him take our side in an argument. But those persons are not *always* right, who are the most eager to appeal to Divine judgment.

Of all three of Job's friends, Zophar seems to have been the most unfriendly. The others had, in some measure, softened their speeches with fair words; but this man was outrageous to an excess! He called Job's reasoning lies and mockery. Poor Job! Surely Satan must have had a hand in this. Alas! When other temptations fail, the arch-fiend and great enemy of our salvation sometimes even makes use of our friends to try our faith and patience.

"Canst thou by searching, find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Zophar asked in verse 7. When the Apostle Paul was thinking upon the same subject, he applied it very differently (Rom. 11:33). He was overwhelmed by the thought of God's mercy when he exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Zophar, Eliphaz, and Bildad seem to have only taken delight in denouncing the judgments of Jehovah upon Job – forgetting that if "the Lord should mark iniquity," none of us could stand (Ps. 130:3). Nevertheless, Zophar did speak well concerning God's greatness and glory, and man's vanity and folly. He drew a most beautiful and striking contrast

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Zophar brings a charge against Job of pride and self-justification– verses 1-4
- ❖ He appeals to God for Job's conviction – verses 5-12
- ❖ He assures Job that if he repented and reformed, God would restore him to his former prosperity; but if he were wicked, he should not expect it – verses 13-20

between them. He pointed to several of the distinguishing attributes of Jehovah – such as His sovereignty, His eternity, and His incomprehensibility. Then he described how poor and empty human beings truly are in the eyes of God. Man desires to be wise, and he wishes to be thought of as such – even though he is very much like a wild donkey's colt, which is wildly unteachable and untamable. Man is a vain and empty creature, and yet he is a proud and self-conceited one. He longs to be wise, although he will not submit to the laws of wisdom. He reaches after forbidden wisdom, and – like his first parents, Adam and Eve – he loses the tree of life so that he may eat from the tree of knowledge that is outside the boundaries. Is such a creature fit to contend with the Almighty God?



In verses 13-20, Zophar exhorted Job to repentance; and he did give him a little bit of encouragement, although it was mixed with hard thoughts of him. Zophar imagined that worldly prosperity was always the lot of those who are righteous; and therefore, he supposed that Job ought to be deemed a hypocrite unless

his prosperity was restored. Thus he urged his friend to repent and reform his life – to prepare his heart, stretch out his hands in prayer to God, and put away iniquity. It is true that there was some good counsel in this advice of Zophar, although it was less applicable to Job than he thought. Job had confessed himself to be a sinner, but he would not allow himself to be labeled as a hypocrite; and that was the point of contention. By his speech, Zophar implied that he thought there was some secret dreadful sin that Job was guilty of, which was known only to the Lord and Job's own conscience; and therefore, he urged him to make confession, and to put it away. All the rest of his discourse was founded upon the same arguments which had been pressed upon Job before – namely, that great sins require great punishment, and that Job's calamities were a direct result of his sins. So Zophar reasoned that Job could expect no relief until a reformation took place in his life; but he believed that when this was accomplished, God's mercy would follow. "Then," he said, "shalt thou lift up thy face without spot" – that is, "You may come boldly to the throne of grace, and not with the terror and amazement expressed in the 34th verse of chapter 9." By nature, we are polluted and stained with sin; but being now washed with the blood of Jesus, our faces may be lifted up to our heavenly Father without spot. We may confidently draw near to the throne of grace in full assurance of faith, because we have been sprinkled and cleansed from an evil conscience! (Heb. 10:22)

Lord, we thank You that You look upon us in favor because we are dressed in the perfect merits and righteousness of Jesus; and therefore, our faces which were cast down because of our sins and iniquities may be lifted up! Amen.