***Job: A Study in Suffering…And Faith***

Lesson Five: Zophar’s First Speech and Job’s Reply

(Job 11:1-14:22)

***Objective(s):***

1. Be able to summarize Zophar’s counsel to Job.

2. Be able to summarize Job’s requests of God.

1. **Zophar’s First Speech**
   1. Zophar began his speech by rebuking Job sharply for his impertinence (at least as Zophar saw it) - (vv. 1-6).
      1. He used rhetorical questions to suggest that Job need not think that he had silenced others by his unwillingness to accept their arguments (vv. 1-3).
      2. Zophar expressed his wish that God would indeed confront Job. He believed that Job would find out that God was actually punishing him less than he deserved (vv. 4-6)!
   2. Zophar emphasized the inscrutability of God’s ways (vv. 7-12).
      1. God’s wisdom is too lofty for man and His power irresistible (vv. 7-10).
      2. God is able to recognize sin in men even if they are unable to see it themselves. To show the probability of men like Job becoming wise (perhaps to their own sin?), Zophar suggested that such an event would be as likely as a wild donkey giving birth to a man (vv. 11-12).
   3. Zophar ended his speech in a manner similar to that of Eliphaz and Bildad (vv. 13-20).
      1. He admonished Job to repent and spoke of the blessings available to Job upon repentance.
      2. Note the following comment by Jackson:1
         1. *Zophar’s admonition for Job is that he repent, even as the other friends had stressed (5:8f; 8:5-7, 20-22), and actually he gives a sterling view of what genuine repen­tance will involve: (a) a change of mind – “set thy heart right,” (b) asking for God’s pardon – “stretch out thy hands toward him,” and (c) a reformation of conduct – “let not unrighteousness dwell in thy tents” (13, 14).*
2. **Job’s reply to Zophar and his other two friends (12:1-13:19)**
   1. Job used sarcasm in the beginning of his reply (vv. 1-12).
      1. He suggested that although they might think that they had “cornered the market” on wisdom, he also knew the things they had suggested (vv. 1-3).
      2. He did, however, call their attention to the fact that their theory did not fit all the facts (vv. 4-6).
         1. Although Job was just, his friends mocked him and yet Job observed that the “tent of robbers are at peace.” Job’s use of the word “secure” in verse 6 may be a reference to Zophar’s comment in 11:18.2
         2. The ESV translates “misfortune” instead of “lamp” (NKJV) in verse 5. The thought seems to be that Job’s friends considered themselves to be superior because they were not suffering. The NKJV translation is understandable, but doesn’t seem to fit the context as well.
      3. Job continued his sarcasm by noting that his friends’ wisdom was possessed even by the animals (vv. 7-12). He didn’t seem to be depreciating the wisdom of the friends particularly, but rather he was suggesting that they didn’t need to teach him what was so universally known.3
   2. Job gave a description of the divine power (vv. 13-25).
      1. Although Job affirmed the wisdom and prudence of God, he focused on the destructive actions of God.
      2. Some commentators suggest that Job was saying that the moral principles behind the actions of God were indiscernible by man.4
   3. Job’s friends were “worthless physicians”; he wished to speak with the Almighty (13:1-19).
      1. Again reminding his friends that he had the same knowledge they possessed, he admonished them to be silent (vv. 1-12).
         1. He testified that their arguments were worthless.
         2. He rebuked them for showing partiality in their defense of God’s actions and suggested that God would punish them for their partiali­ty (vv. 7-11).
         3. Note the following comment:5
            1. *The friends had spoken unrighteously for God and talked deceitfully for Him, because they had refused to look facts in the face and twisted them so as to suit their theory of retribution. They had respected the person of God by showing partiality for Him, in jumping to the conclusion that Job must have been a sinner, because God was afflicting him so grievously.*
      2. Job intended to plead his case before God regardless of the consequenc­es (vv. 13-19).
         1. Some would suggest that he was already addressing God in this section!
         2. Job expressed his confidence that he would be vindicated.
3. **Job spoke to God (13:20-14:22).**
   1. Job made two requests in preparation for pleading his case (vv. 20-22):
      1. He asked for a respite in his suffering (v. 21a).
      2. He asked that God not overwhelm him with His majesty (v. 21b).
   2. Job asked God to reveal his sins to him and expressed bewilderment as to why God was treating him as an enemy (vv. 23-27).
   3. Job commented on the shortness of a man’s life (13:28-14:6).
      1. In view of man’s short life, why was God’s judgment so rigorous?
      2. Job asked that God “look away” from him and allow him to rest in what time he had left.
   4. Job noted the hopelessness of death (vv. 7-22).
      1. Unlike a tree which sprouts forth from its roots even after it has been cut down, man dies and “does not rise” (vv. 7-12).
      2. Job expressed the wish that God would hide him in the grave until such time as his anger had passed and he desired to “remember” him (vv. 13-17).
         1. Some commentators suggest that Job did not believe in a resurrec­tion and that, at best, he manifested a longing for one.6
         2. Archer, on the other hand, takes the view that Job was speaking of the renewing of physical life in verse 14. Job would then be saying that man cannot live another physical life (e.g., the tree illus­tration), but that he does not cease to exist in some way upon death.7
         3. Note the difference between the ESV and the NKJV in the verbs in verses 14-17. The ESV translates in the subjunctive (“would”; expresses a wish), but the NKJV translates in the future tense (“shall”; going to happen).
      3. Job ended his speech on a note of despair (vv. 18-22).
         1. Just as surely as erosion takes place, God destroys the hope of man.
         2. The point of verse 22 is obscure.

**Endnotes:**

1Jackson, p. 42. 2Andersen, p. 161. 3Driver and Gary, p. 114. 4Jackson, pp. 42-3.

5Gibson, p. 64. 6Gibson, p. 71. 7Archer, pp. 65-7.

***Study & Discussion Questions:***

1. What seems to be Zophar’s frame of mind as evidenced by his words in 11:2-6? Why?
2. What course of action did Zophar recommend to Job (11:13-15; see the NKJV)?
3. What was Job saying about God in 12:7-25?
4. What admonition did Job give to his friends (13:5) and why (consult verses 7-12)?
5. Compare the translation of 13:15 in the versions cited below. What differences do you see?

**Job 13:15 (ESV)** Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face.

**Job 13:15 (NKJV)** Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.

**Job 13:15 (KJV 1900)** Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: But I will maintain mine own ways before him.

**Job 13:15 (ASV 1901)** Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope: Nevertheless I will maintain my ways before him.

**Job 13:15 (NLT)** God might kill me, but I have no other hope. I am going to argue my case with him.

1. What requests did Job make of God in 13:23 and 14:13-17?

**Additional Discussion Questions:**

1. Was Job being sarcastic in 12:1-3?
2. Does God determine precisely how long each man will live (14:5)?
3. Was Job saying that there is no resurrection or that man has no eternal soul (14:10-12)?