

**Job 11:1-22****The Suffering Need God, Not Guilt**

<sup>1</sup> Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said:

<sup>2</sup> “Should a multitude of words go unanswered,  
and a man full of talk be judged right?

<sup>3</sup> Should your babble silence men,  
and when you mock, shall no one shame you?

<sup>4</sup> For you say, ‘My doctrine is pure,  
and I am clean in God’s eyes.’

<sup>5</sup> But oh, that God would speak  
and open his lips to you,

<sup>6</sup> and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!  
For he is manifold in understanding.

Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.

<sup>7</sup> “Can you find out the deep things of God?  
Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?

<sup>8</sup> It is higher than heaven—what can you do?  
Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?

<sup>9</sup> Its measure is longer than the earth  
and broader than the sea.

<sup>10</sup> If he passes through and imprisons  
and summons the court, who can turn him back?

<sup>11</sup> For he knows worthless men;  
when he sees iniquity, will he not consider it?

<sup>12</sup> But a stupid man will get understanding  
when a wild donkey’s colt is born a man!

<sup>13</sup> “If you prepare your heart,  
you will stretch out your hands toward him.

<sup>14</sup> If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away,  
and let not injustice dwell in your tents.

<sup>15</sup> Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish;  
you will be secure and will not fear.

<sup>16</sup> You will forget your misery;  
you will remember it as waters that have passed away.

<sup>17</sup> And your life will be brighter than the noonday;  
its darkness will be like the morning.

<sup>18</sup> And you will feel secure, because there is hope;  
you will look around and take your rest in security.

<sup>19</sup> You will lie down, and none will make you afraid;

*many will court your favor.  
<sup>20</sup> But the eyes of the wicked will fail;  
 all way of escape will be lost to them,  
 and their hope is to breathe their last.” – Job 11:1-22 ESV*

After Job finished his gloomy response to Bildad’s less-than-encouraging speech, he had to hear from the third friend who had been waiting in the wings and eagerly biding his time until he could put in his two cents. And Zophar wasted no time in delivering a stinging indictment against Job, filled with carefully worded one-liners that he hoped would shake his friend out of his self-righteous self-denial and force him to confess his obvious guilt.

Zophar, like his friends before him, had taken a look at Job's circumstances and concluded that Job had done something terribly wrong. He was being punished by God for his sins and all Job had to do was confess and change his behavior. According to Zophar, if Job follows his advice, God will forgive and restore him.

Sounds great, but there's only one problem. Job is innocent. He has done nothing wrong to deserve all that has happened to him. He has done nothing of which to repent. He is confused, hurt, alone, and suffering from unimaginable grief. And all he gets from his friends is accusations of his guilt.

Zophar takes the rhetoric to a whole new level, accusing Job of being deceitful, evil, and witless.

*"Surely he [God] recognizes deceitful men; and when he sees evil, does he not take note?  
 But a witless man can no more become wise than a wild donkey's colt can be born a  
 man." – Job 11:11-12 NIV*

In Zophar's mind, Job is nothing more than a dimwitted, stubborn sinner who refuses to admit his guilt. In Zophar's world, all pain and suffering were tied to sin. Righteous men don't suffer. Good men don't lose all their worldly wealth. Sinless men don't have all their kids killed in a single freak accident. Therefore, Job was NOT a righteous man. Case closed.

But once again, Zophar didn't have all the facts. He was operating off of conjecture and faulty conclusions. The one thing he should have known or at least assumed is that God is in control. But the issue was not whether God had caused what had happened to Job; it was that God was aware and that He cared. Zophar would have been much more helpful if he had simply reminded Job that only God knew the real reason behind his suffering. He should have counseled Job to take his situation to God because only He could provide answers and assistance. The simple truth is that if Job had sinned, God would reveal it to him. If Job was innocent, God would ultimately disclose the reason behind his suffering. Bottom line? There was a purpose behind it all, and God was the key to discovering that purpose.

But instead, Zophar continued to berate and belittle his friend, accusing him of mocking God with his false claims of innocence. Zophar was completely convinced that Job was an

unabashed liar who refused to acknowledge his obvious guilt. And he is so self-assured in his assessment that he has the audacity to tell Job, “Listen! God is doubtless punishing you far less than you deserve!” (Job 11:6 NLT). His analysis of the situation has produced an iron-clad guilty verdict.

Zophar had reached what to him was a logical conclusion. God was all-wise and could see into the lives of all men. There was nothing hidden from His sight. While Job’s life had given the outward appearance of righteousness, it must have contained hidden secrets of which only God was aware. Now God was exposing Job’s sins by inflicting judgment.

*“If God comes and puts a person in prison  
or calls the court to order, who can stop him?  
For he knows those who are false,  
and he takes note of all their sins.” – Job 11:10-11 NLT*

Convinced that his conclusion was the right one, all Zophar could recommend was repentance.

*“If only you would prepare your heart  
and lift up your hands to him in prayer!  
Get rid of your sins,  
and leave all iniquity behind you.” – Job 11:13 NLT*

But Zophar couldn’t see into Job’s heart. He had no way of knowing what Job had done or said that might have led to his fall from grace. In fact, he had no proof whatsoever that Job had done anything worthy of God’s judgment. Yet, on nothing more than flimsy facts and faulty conclusions, he labeled his friend as a babbler and an empty-headed person. When Job needed love, Zophar delivered demeaning labels and callous calls to repent or suffer further judgment from the hand of God.

But despite all his pain, Job knew that God was there. He called out to Him. He appealed to Him. He acknowledged that God had created him (Job 10:8-9). But Job was confused. He clung to his innocence but was having a hard time understanding why he was having to endure all this pain. He was going through a terrible time of questioning and doubt. He needed comfort and all he got was caustic counseling from those who claimed to be his friends. He needed empathy but all he got was impatient demands that he confess his hidden sins.

Job's suffering was so intense that he longed for death. At this point in his life, he needed friends who would point him to the mercy, grace, and sovereign power of God. He needed guides to God, not the grand inquisition. He needed to be reminded that God loves him, not loathes him. The only remedy for anyone's pain and heartache is God. We need to point them to Him.

*When darkness falls  
Temptations call*

*And all around me seems undone  
 You hear my pleas  
 Supply my needs  
 And tell me of Your wondrous love*

*You are the joy in my morning  
 You're my song of praise  
 Just like the new day dawning  
 Flooding my world with grace*

*Though trials come  
 And every one  
 Can take me further from Your truth  
 You calm my fears  
 Dry all my tears  
 And draw me closer, Lord, to You*

*In You there's no shadow of turning  
 Constant in all Your ways  
 You're growing my faith  
 And I'm learning to lean  
 On You all of my days*

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Reading the words of Zophar reminds me that I need to be a friend who points others to God, instead of always trying to point out their faults or their sins. He alone knows their hearts, and only He can diagnose their condition and heal their hurts. I am simply a guide who can point them to God as they wander in the darkness of their circumstance.

The other lesson to be learned from this passage is to take my pain and suffering to God. In the midst of the pain that enters my own life, I should always turn to Him first. And when I find that difficult to do, I pray that God will bring friends into my life who will remind me of His love, grace, and mercy.

**Job 20:1-19****The Worthless Wisdom of this World**

<sup>1</sup> Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said:

- <sup>2</sup> “Therefore my thoughts answer me,  
because of my haste within me.
- <sup>3</sup> I hear censure that insults me,  
and out of my understanding a spirit answers me.
- <sup>4</sup> Do you not know this from of old,  
since man was placed on earth,  
<sup>5</sup> that the exulting of the wicked is short,  
and the joy of the godless but for a moment?
- <sup>6</sup> Though his height mount up to the heavens,  
and his head reach to the clouds,  
<sup>7</sup> he will perish forever like his own dung;  
those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’
- <sup>8</sup> He will fly away like a dream and not be found;  
he will be chased away like a vision of the night.
- <sup>9</sup> The eye that saw him will see him no more,  
nor will his place any more behold him.
- <sup>10</sup> His children will seek the favor of the poor,  
and his hands will give back his wealth.
- <sup>11</sup> His bones are full of his youthful vigor,  
but it will lie down with him in the dust.
- <sup>12</sup> “Though evil is sweet in his mouth,  
though he hides it under his tongue,  
<sup>13</sup> though he is loath to let it go  
and holds it in his mouth,  
<sup>14</sup> yet his food is turned in his stomach;  
it is the venom of cobras within him.
- <sup>15</sup> He swallows down riches and vomits them up again;  
God casts them out of his belly.
- <sup>16</sup> He will suck the poison of cobras;  
the tongue of a viper will kill him.
- <sup>17</sup> He will not look upon the rivers,  
the streams flowing with honey and curds.
- <sup>18</sup> He will give back the fruit of his toil  
and will not swallow it down;  
from the profit of his trading  
he will get no enjoyment.

*19 For he has crushed and abandoned the poor;  
he has seized a house that he did not build.” – Job 20:1-19 ESV*

Tag! You’re it.

Now, it’s Zophar’s turn to torment Job, and he takes up the challenge with a vengeance. Like his companions, Zophar has had his fill of Job’s declarations of innocence and accusations of abuse. He is deeply offended by Job’s assertions that their counsel was harmful in any way.

*“I must reply  
because I am greatly disturbed.  
I’ve had to endure your insults,  
but now my spirit prompts me to reply.” – Job 20:2-3 NLT*

It’s amazing to witness how adept these men are at turning all the attention to themselves as they play the victim card and accuse Job of harming them. Somehow, they manage to make it all about themselves, portraying Job as the evil aggressor and themselves as his hapless and defenseless prey.

Zophar displays no compassion or empathy and is unwilling to allow his suffering friend to vent his frustration or express his confusion over his predicament. At no point do any of these men say, “I understand.” They have come to be heard, not to listen. They are determined to offer their opinions but have no desire to provide a listening ear or a word of consolation and comfort.

Rather than wrapping his arms around Job and loving him through his sorrow, Zophar chooses to beat down his brother with charges of wickedness and godlessness. But he isn’t brave enough to say, “Job, you are a wicked and evil man.” Instead, he veils his accusations in cleverly worded lessons about the well-deserved fate of such people. From the beginning of time, the wicked and godless have always gotten their just desserts. Oh, for a time they may enjoy a semblance of success and “the sweet taste of wickedness” (Job 20:12 NLT), but their joy is always temporary and their fate is permanent and inescapable.

*“...the triumph of the wicked has been short lived  
and the joy of the godless has been only temporary...” – Job 20:5 NLT*

*“...they will vanish forever,  
thrown away like their own dung.” – Job 20:7 NLT*

*“They will fade like a dream and not be found.  
They will vanish like a vision in the night.” – Job 20:8 NLT*

In this grand-sounding soliloquy, Zophar never mentions Job by name but it is painfully clear who his words are meant for. He infers that Job was a prideful man who enjoyed a lifestyle of

wealth and comfort. He had all the trappings of success but they were ill-gotten gain, acquired by illegal or illegitimate means. Zophar has concluded that Job's former life of luxury and leisure was the result of "stolen riches" (Job 20:10), not the blessings of God. He rationalized that Job's fall from grace was nothing more than payback for a life of crime, graft, and corruption. If Job's heirs were going to live out their lives in abject poverty, it was his own fault.

*"Their children will beg from the poor,  
for they must give back their stolen riches."* – Job 20:10 NLT

This callous statement is all the more hurtful because Zophar is fully aware that Job has no children. All ten of them had been killed when the roof of the house they were in collapsed and crushed them to death. So, Job had no inheritance or inheritors. He had nothing to leave and no one to leave it to. But that sad fact didn't stop Zophar from continuing his relentless attack.

Zophar seems to take great pleasure in reminding Job of all that he has lost. He can't stop alluding to Job's former wealth and riches, and it's impossible to know whether these attacks are driven by long-pent-up feelings of jealousy. But it is quite possible that Zophar had always been bothered by Job's success. It's as if he almost relishes the prospect of Job never rising from the ashes and regaining his former status as a wealthy and well-respected member of the community.

To justify his contempt for Job, Zophar must paint him in the least flattering light. So, he attributes Job's success to corruption.

*"Their wealth will bring them no joy.  
For they oppressed the poor and left them destitute.  
They foreclosed on their homes."* – Job 20:18-19 NLT

This conclusion gives Zophar the freedom to treat his former friend with disdain. One almost gets the impression that Zophar has developed a strong hatred for Job that is the culmination of years of jealousy and envy. While Job was in his prime and enjoying what appeared to be the blessings of God, Zophar could only sit back and watch as his friend basked in all the affluence and accolades. Now, the tables were turned. Zophar was on top and getting to watch his former friend's fall from grace.

For Zophar, Job's demise was proof of his depravity and wickedness. There was no other explanation. For Job to have lost all that he had, he must have gained it all through a life of wickedness.

*"They enjoyed the sweet taste of wickedness,  
letting it melt under their tongue.  
They savored it,  
holding it long in their mouths."*

*But suddenly the food in their bellies turns sour,  
a poisonous venom in their stomach.” – Job 20:12-14 NLT*

Zophar’s logic is simple but sensible. Job had gained his wealth through wickedness or God would not have taken it from him.

*“They will vomit the wealth they swallowed.  
God won’t let them keep it down.” – Job 20:15 NLT*

While everyone had believed that Job’s wealth was the byproduct of his blameless life, Zophar was challenging that conclusion. He was proffering a different opinion that portrayed Job as a villain and not a victim. He proposed that the collapse of Job’s world was nothing more than the judgment of God for a life of undeserved prosperity gained through wickedness. That is why Zophar shows no sympathy to Job. He has determined his former friend to be a godless sinner whose fate is well-deserved and proof of God’s justice. Sadly, Zophar justifies his enjoyment of Job’s fall by demonizing him. This might explain why Zophar goes out of his way to portray Job as a corrupt profiteer who used his facade of righteousness for personal gain.

Like all men, Zophar is attempting to explain the complexities of life through the means of flawed and finite human reason. There is so much he doesn’t understand. There are so many things he cannot see from his limited earthly perspective. Zophar can’t peer into the heart of his friend. He has no way of determining Job’s righteousness or deciding Job’s warranting of God’s judgment. Zophar, because he is human, has no capacity for discerning the will or the ways of God. He has deemed himself to be a spokesman for God but he does not know the heart of God. And eventually, God will expose the flawed logic of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

*After the Lord had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite: “I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has.” – Job 42:7 NLT*

These men had taken it upon themselves to speak on behalf of God. But nowhere in the Book of Job do we see them consulting God and attempting to discern His will concerning Job. There are no prayers directed to God. There are no requests for wisdom or insight. These men seem to believe that they reached the right conclusion without the help of God. Yet, the apostle James would have encouraged them to pray more and talk less.

*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. – James 1:5 NLT*

Life is complicated, and understanding the complexities of the human experience is impossible without insight from the One who rules and reigns over all. Zophar had no business acting as Job’s judge. He had no right to stand in judgment over his friend and flippantly determine his fault and fate without seeking insight from God first. He and his two friends were claiming to speak for God but had not heard from God.

They had set themselves up as arbiters of truth and dispensers of divine justice. But they were more like the false teachers that Jude describes in his short but impactful letter.

*They are like shameless shepherds who care only for themselves. They are like clouds blowing over the land without giving any rain. They are like trees in autumn that are doubly dead, for they bear no fruit and have been pulled up by the roots. They are like wild waves of the sea, churning up the foam of their shameful deeds. They are like wandering stars, doomed forever to blackest darkness. – Jude 1:12-13 NLT*

In the end, Zophar, Eliphaz, and Bildad were providing wisdom that was ungodly, counsel that was unhelpful, and conclusions that were unreliable and inaccurate. All because they failed to consult God. Had Paul been around to consult them, they may have taken a decidedly different tact.

*Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say,*

*“He traps the wise  
in the snare of their own cleverness.”*

*And again,*

*“The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise;  
he knows they are worthless.” – 1 Corinthians 3:18-20 NLT*



**Job 20:20-29****Applying Divine Doctrine Without Divine Authorization**

- <sup>20</sup> *“Because he knew no contentment in his belly,  
he will not let anything in which he delights escape him.*
- <sup>21</sup> *There was nothing left after he had eaten;  
therefore his prosperity will not endure.*
- <sup>22</sup> *In the fullness of his sufficiency he will be in distress;  
the hand of everyone in misery will come against him.*
- <sup>23</sup> *To fill his belly to the full,  
God will send his burning anger against him  
and rain it upon him into his body.*
- <sup>24</sup> *He will flee from an iron weapon;  
a bronze arrow will strike him through.*
- <sup>25</sup> *It is drawn forth and comes out of his body;  
the glittering point comes out of his gallbladder;  
terrors come upon him.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Utter darkness is laid up for his treasures;  
a fire not fanned will devour him;  
what is left in his tent will be consumed.*
- <sup>27</sup> *The heavens will reveal his iniquity,  
and the earth will rise up against him.*
- <sup>28</sup> *The possessions of his house will be carried away,  
dragged off in the day of God's wrath.*
- <sup>29</sup> *This is the wicked man's portion from God,  
the heritage decreed for him by God.” – Job 20:20-29 ESV*

The longer Zophar talks, the darker his rhetoric becomes. He is on a roll and believes he has Job on the ropes. According to Zophar, not only is Job wicked and ungodly, but he is greedy and a glutton whose voracious appetite for evil will destroy him. It is somewhat shocking to remember that this man was supposed to be Job's friend and had shown up in Uz with the intent of providing comfort and support. But when Job refused to accept the dark and condemning assessment of his situation from his three “comforters,” they turned on him. His defiant resistance to their calls for confession and repentance was met with resentment and incredulity. Zophar and his companions couldn't believe their ears. How could this miserable wretch of a man dare to contradict their words of wisdom?

In his frustration with Job, Zophar resorts to blame and belittlement. He compares Job to a self-indulgent glutton who can't control his appetite and ends up eating himself out of house and home.

*“Nothing is left after they finish gorging themselves.  
Therefore, their prosperity will not endure.” – Job 20:21 NLT*

To Zophar, Job is nothing more than a money-hungry, thrill-seeking, materialistic, and hedonistic fool who has reaped the results of his out-of-control lifestyle. His assessment of Job sounds similar to Paul's description of the "enemies of the cross" who had infiltrated the church in Philippi.

*They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth.* – Philippians 3:19 NLT

But the problem with Zophar's less-than-flattering assessment of Job is that it directly contradicts what God had to say about His faithful servant.

*"Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil."* – Job 1:8 NLT

It seems obvious that Zophar had not sought or received insight from God on Job's situation. He was simply making judgments based on external circumstances and his personal opinion. He is right in stressing God's hatred for sin and the inevitable judgment that awaits those who refuse to repent. But his quick-to-judge mentality had placed him in a precarious position, where he found himself falsely accusing the Lord's anointed and spouting accusations and opinions that were anything but godly.

But in his over-confident zeal, Zophar charged full steam ahead, barraging his poor victim with further insults disguised as insights. He even resorts to praying for Job's eventual destruction by God.

*"May God give them a bellyful of trouble.  
May God rain down his anger upon them."* – Job 20:23 NLT

Of course, he's kind enough not to address Job by name but his intentions are clear, and the not-so-subtle message didn't escape Job. It would have been difficult to miss what Zophar was inferring by his graphic depiction of an arrow piercing human flesh and dripping with blood.

*"When they try to escape an iron weapon,  
a bronze-tipped arrow will pierce them.  
The arrow is pulled from their back,  
and the arrowhead glistens with blood."* – Job 20:24-25 NLT

According to Zophar, the archer is God and the victim is Job. God, the righteous warrior, has rained down his anger on the wicked and well-deserving Job. There was nowhere Job could run from God's wrath. He could continue to deny his guilt but God would eventually expose him for what he really was: a guilty and unrepentant sinner.

But again, Zophar is attempting to apply truth based on false assumptions. While much of what he says is accurate, he has mistakenly misapplied the doctrine concerning God's judgment. There is nothing wrong with his portrayal of God as a vengeful judge who metes out wrath on the wicked. The Scriptures fully support Zophar's understanding of divine judgment upon those who perpetrate evil.

*For the wicked will be destroyed,  
but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land.*

*Soon the wicked will disappear.  
Though you look for them, they will be gone. – Psalm 37:9-10 NLT*

*The wicked plot against the godly;  
they snarl at them in defiance.  
But the Lord just laughs,  
for he sees their day of judgment coming. – Psalm 37:12-13 NLT*

*Though the wicked sprout like weeds  
and evildoers flourish,  
they will be destroyed forever. – Psalm 92:7 NLT*

The problem was how Zophar had assumed the worst when it came to Job's predicament. He wrongly assessed Job's fall as evidence of wickedness and proof of God's displeasure. From what he could gather, Job had screwed up and God had rained down His righteous anger in just retribution.

But he was wrong.

Zophar didn't have all the facts, so he ended up making wrong assumptions and drawing faulty conclusions. He spoke with self-assumed certainty and an over-confident assurance in his own assessment of the facts.

But he was wrong; categorically and catastrophically wrong.

Yet, he got one thing right. He boldly claimed, "The heavens will reveal their guilt, and the earth will testify against them" (Job 20:27 NLT). That one statement drips with truth and reflects the reality that only God knows the hearts of men and only He is authorized to stand in judgment as to their guilt or innocence.

The one thing Zophar, Bildad, and Eliphaz got consistently right was their call to repentance. All men are required to come to God, confessing their sins and repenting of their open rebellion against His righteous rule and reign. But where these three men got off the rails was in their assumption of Job's wickedness and their assertion that all of Job's pain and suffering was the handiwork of God.

“Was Zophar correct in his assessment of the wicked person’s fate? He was correct in saying that God judges sin, but he was wrong in claiming that God’s judgment always takes place during our earthly lifetime. He was also inaccurate in saying that Job was the type of person he described.” – Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Job*

Zophar was right when he stated, “This is the reward that God gives the wicked. It is the inheritance decreed by God” (Job 20:29 NLT), but he was wrong in applying it to Job. The doctrines of God are righteous, just, and true, but they must be wielded carefully and judiciously. They should never be used as hammers to beat down the defenseless or to win a war of words with an opponent.

Paul told his young protégé, Timothy, “Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior” (2 Timothy 2:15-16 NLT). Knowing doctrine is not enough; you also have to know when and how to apply it. Paul also told Timothy that an overseer or leader in the church “must be able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2 NLT). That phrase carries the idea that a godly leader must be equipped “to teach God’s Word with skill.”

Verses quoted out of context, doctrines used as weapons, and godly truths misappropriated and misapplied are all to be avoided like the plague. Zophar was a veritable fountain of doctrine but he had used it to deluge Job and leave him drowning in despair. If only Zophar had understood that God’s Word, rightly divided, was fully capable of exposing and excising sin. It alone can reveal the condition of the heart and bring about either conviction or comfort. As the author of Hebrews so eloquently put it, “...the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires” (Hebrews 4:12 NLT).

But before you dare to speak on behalf of God, it pays to have heard from God. These men had chosen to address Job’s circumstances as self-appointed spokesmen for God. but they had failed to seek the will of God. Their arrogant appropriation of divine doctrine without divine authorization placed them in dangerous company. Without knowing it, they had become false prophets guilty of propagating false messages from God, and this is not something God takes lightly.

*“I have not sent these prophets,  
yet they run around claiming to speak for me.  
I have given them no message,  
yet they go on prophesying.  
If they had stood before me and listened to me,  
they would have spoken my words,  
and they would have turned my people  
from their evil ways and deeds.” – Jeremiah 23:21-22 NLT*