

We come this week to the first speech of Job's third friend, Zophar the Naamathite. But before we do so, let me briefly say two things about Job's three friends. (1) They came to help Job. Chapter 2:11—"Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him."

(2) They actually harm Job. That is, they actually prove to be poor comforters or helpers. For at least three reasons: (a) they are unwise. That is, while they possessed knowledge, they lacked the ability to rightly apply it to Job. Thus, what they're saying in the broad sense is true, but it's often misapplied to Job. (b) They are combative. That is, they at times come across as overly aggressive. This is nowhere truer than in the cast of Zophar (who comes out swinging). (c) They are self-righteous. This is the result of their lack of wisdom. Because they believed suffering and sinning are always related, if they're not suffering, then they must not be sinning.

Zophar basically does three things in chapter 11: he confronts Job (vv1-6); he questions Job (vv7-12); he exhorts Job (vv13-20). Thus, my goal is to explain each of these sections, summarizing each one with a practical lesson.

John Calvin—"In order to take advantage of this teaching, we must remember what was explained earlier. The points which are made here are true in themselves despite the fact that they are poorly applied to the person of Job. Consequently, we have instruction that is valid and useful, provided we have the wisdom and discretion to determine how to use it right."

- I. He Confronts Job (vv1-6)
- II. He Questions Job (vv7-12)
- III. He Exhorts Job (vv13-20)

I. He Confronts Job (vv1-6)

1. V1—"Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said"—it seems Zophar was the youngest of the three (thus, he spoke last).
2. Notice two things about Zophar's confrontation of Job: his words (vv2-3); his pride (v4); his ignorance (vv5-6)
3. (1) Job's words, vv2-3—here Zophar is referring to Job's words (both in chapter 3 and in response to Eliphaz (6-7) and Bildad (9-10)).
4. He refers to his words as many (v2) and empty (v3)—multitude of words, full of talk, empty talk, mockery.
5. He asks 4 short rhetorical questions, v2—"Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be vindicated?"
6. That is, should Job go unanswered? Should he be allowed to say all that he's said and not be responded to?
7. V3—"Should your empty talk make men hold their peace? And when you mock, should no one rebuke you?"
8. The phrase "empty talk" refers to "idle" and "meaningless" talk—words that have no substance or meaning.
9. By "mockery" Zophar likely refers to God—he's accusing Job of mocking, scoffing, or ridiculing God.
10. To "mock" God is to speak without concern for God—it's to disdain God—to speak as God did not hear.

11. This is what he's accusing Job of—of speaking empty and meaningless words before the face of God.
12. (2) Job's pride, v4—"For you have said, 'My doctrine is pure (beliefs), and I am clean in your eyes'"—that is, in his friends' eyes.
13. Now, while Job never specifically said these words, he did, overall, claim to be innocent of specific sins.
14. If you remember, Job never claimed to be sinless, but he did claim to innocent of any explicit offenses.
15. By "doctrine" is meant "beliefs" or "teaching"—it refers to what he previously said—this reflected his beliefs.
16. (3) Job's ignorance, v5—"But oh, that God would speak, and open His lips against you"—that God Himself would rebuke Job.
17. It wasn't enough that he (or the other friends) rebuke Job—Zophar wishes that God would speak against him.
18. V6—"That He would show you the secrets of wisdom? For they would double prudence"—that is, the secrets of wisdom would double prudence.
19. A prudent person is a wise person—because they see things properly, they are able to live sensibly and wisely.
20. V6b—"Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves"—"God is actually giving you a break."
21. "If God were to deal with you as your sins deserve, you would be suffering far more than you presently are."
22. Observe: A lesson on judicious speech—the word "judicious" means "sensible" "careful" and "cautious."
23. Actually, neither Job or Zophar spoke judiciously—they were both guilty of speaking rash and reckless words.
24. Thus, from vv1-6, and the example of Job and Zophar, I want to suggest three marks of judicious speech (it contains few, kind, and wise words).
25. (a) Few words—not everything Zophar said about Job was untrue—he did have a habit of long speeches.
26. In fact, few people in the entire Bible speak more than Job (not counting the beginning and end, he spoke 19 chapters).
27. And remember, the majority of these chapters are filled with cries and complaints that come from confusion.
28. Prov.10:19—"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise"—one way to sin less, is to speak less.
29. Ecc.5:2—"Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few."
30. Jas.1:19—"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (Matt.12:36)."
31. (b) Kind words—kindness is closely related to gentleness—it refers to what we say as well as how we say it.
32. 1Cor.13:4—"Love is kind"—it is gentle—it is concerned with the matter and manner of what it says.
33. (c) Wise words—by this I mean, judicious words are not rash or hasty, but are thoughtful and careful.

II. He Questions Job (vv7-12)

1. In verses 7-12, Zophar questions Job about God—he questions him about God's infinity (vv7-10), power (v10), and knowledge (vv11-12).
2. (1) God's infinity (vv7-9), v7—"Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?"
3. To "search out the deep things of God" and "find out the limits of the Almighty" are synonymous phrases.
4. They both refer to the infinite nature of God—the word infinite means "without limit" or "limitation."
5. God is without limit or limitation—He is infinite both in His nature and ways—both are beyond us.
6. Now notice, these phrases do not say God cannot be searched or found out but He cannot be fully searched or found out.
7. We are not able to search out "the deep things of God" or find out "the limits of the Almighty"—we can search God but never exhaust God.
8. God is infinite in His nature and works, and as a result, it's impossible to fully know God or His ways.
9. The theological term used to describe this is incomprehensible (unfathomable)—we cannot comprehend God.
10. To comprehend is to fully understand or grasp—God is too big and His ways too wise for us to comprehend.
11. Ps.145:3—"His greatness is unsearchable" Isa.40:28—"His understanding is unsearchable"—God is unsearchable.
12. Rom.11:33—"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"
13. Because God is unsearchable His judgments and ways are unsearchable—that is, the way He works in creation.
14. V8—"They are higher than heaven—what can you do? Deep than Sheol—what can you know?"—God and His ways are beyond you.
15. "Heaven" can either refer to heaven or the sky and the term "Sheol" can either refer to hell or the grave.
16. Either way, the point is the same—God and His ways are way above us—there's a big difference between God and man.
17. Isa.55:8-9—"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."
18. "V9—"Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea"—that is, "the deep things of God" and "the limits of the Almighty."
19. Zophar speaks of God in ways we can understand—this is called accommodation—God accommodates man.
20. To "accommodate" means "to fit with the needs of someone"—God accommodates man in the way He's described.
21. All of Scripture is an accommodation of God to man—God condescends to speak to man on his level.
22. God and His ways are "higher than heaven" "deeper than Sheol" "longer than the earth" and "broader than the sea."
23. (2) God's power, v10—"If He passes by, imprisons, and gathers to judgment, then who can hinder Him?"
24. By "passing by" is meant God's work in providence—it refers to God's actions or activity among men.

25. V10—"If He imprisons, and gathers to judgment"—the imagery is that of an arrest and then judgment.
26. It's as if God is the officer, prosecutor, and judge—"who can hinder Hm"—who can stop or hinder Him?
27. (3) God's knowledge (vv11-12), v11—"For He knows deceitful men; He sees wickedness also. Will He not then consider it?"
28. Although man is not able to fully comprehend God, God can easily comprehend man—He sees and He knows.
29. V12—"For an empty-headed man will be wise, when a wild donkey's colt is born a man"—in other words, never.
30. A wild donkey isn't going to give birth to a man anytime soon—so too, an empty-headed man will never be wise.
31. An empty-headed man is a man without sense or wisdom—other translations render the word "stupid, witless, and idiot.
32. If Zophar is implying that Job is an empty-headed man, then he is being very uncharitable toward Job.
33. Observe: A lesson on the nature and ways of God—here I want to start with a confession—one of the reasons I wanted to preach through Job, was because of its high doctrine of God.
34. But here I'm thinking of a specific aspect of God—vv7-9 contain a classic text on the incompressibility of God.
35. God is far bigger than man—regardless how he attempts to bring Him down to his level, God is beyond him.
36. (a) God is unknowable—that is, it's impossible for man to know God perfectly or in the fullest sense.
37. Job 36:26—"Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him" Matt.11:27—"No one knows the Son except the Father" 1Cor.2:11—"For no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God."
38. In all of these verses, the knowledge spoken of is God as He is in Himself—no man can know God as He is.
39. Only God knows God as He is—only God can comprehend God—only God knows the deep things of God.
40. This is a truth that's fallen on hard times—we rarely hear about God's transcendence or independence.
41. We love to hear about God's closeness and His ability to relate—we love to hear that God understands.
42. And brethren, it's true, God does care, and He has come close to us in the Person of His beloved Son.
43. But there's another sense, and it's important to understand, that God is very different and distant from us.
44. A.W. Pink—"The god of his century no more resembles the Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The god who is talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday school, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences, is a figment of human imagination. The heathen outside the pale of christendom form gods of wood and stone, while millions of heathen inside christendom manufacture a god out of their carnal minds."
45. (b) God is knowable—that is, while God cannot be fully known, He can be truly and increasingly known.
46. Paul Helm—"We cannot *comprehend* God, but we can *apprehend* Him from what He reveals to us about Himself in Scripture."

47. This is implied in v7—"Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?"
48. No, we cannot search out the "deep things of God" but we can search out the things of God—not perfectly but really.
49. Thus, Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:19 that we would—"know the love of Christ which passes knowledge."
50. The love of Christ is knowable and unknowable—we can know it in measure but not in full or perfection.
51. Not even for all eternity will we comprehend His love—we will increasingly know God but never comprehensively.

III. He Exhorts Job (vv13-20)

1. Having confronted and then questioned Job, Zophar ends his first speech by exhorting Job (notice two things about it).
2. (1) What he exhorts him to do (vv13-14), v13—"If you would prepare your heart, and stretch out your hands toward Him, if iniquity were in your hand, and you put it far away and would not let wickedness dwell in your tents."
3. Basically, this exhortation concerns the proper way in which man approaches God—to "stretch out your hands toward Him" refers to worship (and esp. prayer).
4. Again, it seems he's not only accusing Job of personal sin, but suggesting his children (and possibly) wife, had sinned too.
5. The point being—"Job you've sinned, and you need to get right with God—you need to get your heart right, your hands pure, and then seek God."
6. Zophar is actually providing Job with a very helpful description of repentance, Matt.5:30—"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you"
7. (2) Why he exhorts him to do it (vv15-19)—in vv15-19, Zophar provides three motives for Job to seek God.
8. (a) No shame, v15—"Then surely you could lift up your face without spot; yes, you could be steadfast, and not fear."
9. To "lift up your face without spot" without guilt or shame—to have no moral blemish on our conscience.
10. (b) No misery, vv16-17—"Because you would forget your misery, and remember it as waters that have passed away."
11. The imagery is to a past storm as the waters begin to retreat—our misery would retreat with the waters.
12. (c) No fear, vv18-20—"And you would be secure, because there is hope; yes, you would dig around you, and take your rest in safety."
13. V19—"You would also lie down, and no one would make you afraid; yes, many would court your favor."
14. Before we come to our final lesson, let me say two brief things about these three motives (vv15-20).
15. Frist, they are actually a tremendous encouragement—that is, what Zophar says in these verses is generally true.
16. These are the results or benefits of repentance—no shame, no misery, and no fear—these generally accompany repentance.
17. And you know what, we all would do well to think deeply of them—they are motives for us to comply with the exhortation of v13-14.

18. Second, they are intended as a great discouragement—that is, it is very doubtful he meant them as an encouragement.
19. I say that because of v20—"But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope—loss of life!"
20. This is in contrast to the penitent—the implication being—this is the likely end of Job (instead of the blessings).
21. Observe: A lesson on acceptable worship—again, though misapplied, what Zophar says to Job is true.
22. Many Christians enter into worship with little or no forethought—we come before God without care.
23. Most of us know, we can divide worship into public and private—public worship takes place within the church, whereas private worship takes place at home or in private.
24. (a) Our heart must be prepared, v13—"If you would prepare your heart, and stretch out your hands towards God."
25. Before we stretch out our hands toward God (a reference to worship), we must first prepare our hearts.
26. Shorter Catechism (Q.90)—"How is the Word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation? A. That the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer."
27. Thus, our hearts are prepared by the word and prayer—these are the tools God uses to plow up our hearts.
28. (b) Our heart must be cleansed, v14—"If iniquity were in your hand, and you put it far away, and would not let wickedness dwell in your tents."
29. 1Tim.2:8—"I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands"—this means two things.
30. First, holy by imputation (that is, hands that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb); second, holy by sanctification (that is, hands that are being washed in the blood of the Lamb).
31. This is a point that I fear isn't given proper thought—undealt with sin can hinder our worship to God.
32. 1Peter 3:7—"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."
33. And so, Zophar rightly exhorts Job—"If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away"—cast it far from you.
34. 1Peter 2:1-2—"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."
35. First, a repenting, v1—"Laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking"—Peter uses similar imagery as Zophar—"If iniquity were in your hand, put it far away."
36. Second, desiring, v2—"as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby"—we must stir up a spiritual hunger and thirst within the soul.
37. Now, obviously brethren, this doesn't mean we should never approach God unless our hearts are free from sin (if this were true, we would never approach Him).
38. But what Zophar and Peter are saying is this—we must not allow undealt with sin to linger in our heart or home.
39. Ps.66:18—"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear"—to "regard" is to "esteem" or "regard."
40. Thus, if you remember, in preparation for the Passover the Hebrews were to remove all leaven from their homes (leaven was a picture of sin).

41. Ex.12:15—"Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel."
42. They were to remove the leaven and then partake of the Passover—so too, we must put away all sin, and then lift up our hands.
43. (c) Our heart must be elevated—to stretch out the hands toward God is to stretch out the heart toward God.
44. This does refer to our literal hands—he understands within worship, people will lift their hands to God (in prayer and praise).
45. This is symbolic of our hearts—our physical hands symbolize our spiritual hands—the one reveals the other.
46. John Calvin—"We understand that unless our hearts go first, lifting up our hands to heaven is meaningless. A man's hands must be a true witness of what is in him and of what God himself knows to be in him."
47. Ps.25:1—"To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul"—this is what truly matters—that we lift our hearts toward God.
48. This is what true worship entails—lifting our prepared and cleansed hearts to God in love and adoration.
49. Now, in closing what does vv13-14 say to those who are not Christians—well, it says many things to them.
50. First, they too must have their hearts prepared by the ministry of the law—through the law comes a knowledge of sin.
51. Second, they too must repent from their sins—they must place all of their sin in their hand, and see it for what truly is (offensive to God and harmful to you).
52. Thirdly, they too must turn their hearts heavenward—that is, you must come to God, through Christ, by faith.