

# CHAPTER 11

Poor Job's wound's were yet bleeding, his sore still runs and ceases not, but none of his friends bring him any oil, any balm; Zophar, the third, pours into them as much vinegar as the two former had done.

**I.** He exhibits a very high charge against Job, as proud and false in justifying himself (v. 1-4).

**II.** He appeals to God for his conviction, and begs that God would take him to task (v. 5) and that Job might be made sensible,

1. Of God's unerring wisdom and his inviolable justice (v. 6).

2. Of his unsearchable perfections (v. 7-9).

3. Of his incontestable sovereignty and uncontrollable power (v. 10).

4. Of the cognizance he takes of the children of men (v. 11, 12).

**III.** He assures him that, upon his repentance and reformation (v. 13, 14), God would restore him to his former prosperity and safety (v. 15-19); but that, if he were wicked it was in vain to expect it (v. 20).

## ⌘ JOB 11:1-6

### THE ADDRESS OF ZOPHAR

It is sad to see what intemperate passions even wise and good men are sometimes betrayed into by the heat of disputation, of which Zophar here is an instance. Eliphaz began with a very modest preface, ~~⌘~~ Job 4:2. Bildad was a little more rough upon Job, ~~⌘~~ Job 8:2. But Zophar falls upon him without mercy, and gives him very bad language: *Should a man full of talk be justified? And should thy lies make men hold their peace?* Is this the way to comfort Job? No, nor to convince him neither. Does this become one that appears as an advocate for God and his justice? *Tantaene animis coelestibus irae?* — *In heavenly breasts can such resentment dwell?* Those that engage in controversy will find it very hard to keep their

temper. All the wisdom, caution, and resolution they have will be little enough to prevent their breaking out into such indecencies as we here find Zophar guilty of.

**I.** He represents Job otherwise than what he was, v. 2, 3. He would have him thought idle and impertinent in his discourse, and one that loved to hear himself talk; he gives him the lie, and calls him *a mocker*; and all this that it might be looked upon as a piece of justice to chastise him. Those that have a mind to fall out with their brethren, and to fall foul upon them, find it necessary to put the worst colours they can upon them and their performances, and, right or wrong, to make them odious. We have read and considered Job's discourses in the foregoing chapters, and have found them full of good sense and much to the purpose, that his principles are right, his reasonings strong, many of his expressions weighty and very considerable, and that what there is in them of heat and passion a little candour and charity will excuse and overlook; and yet Zophar here invidiously represents him,

**1.** As a man that never considered what he said, but uttered what came uppermost, only to make a noise with the multitude of words, hoping by that means to carry his cause and run down his reprovers: *Should not the multitude of words be answered?* Truly, sometimes it is no great matter whether it be or no; silence perhaps is the best confutation of impertinence and puts the greatest contempt upon it. *Answer not a fool according to his folly.* But, if it be answered, let reason and grace have the answering of it, not pride and passion. *Should a man full of talk* (margin, *a man of lips*, that is all tongue, *vox et praeterea nihil — mere voice*) *be justified?* Should he be justified in his loquacity, as in effect he is if he be not reprov'd for it? No, for *in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.* Should he be justified by it? Shall many words pass for valid pleas? Shall he carry the day with the flourishes of language? No, he shall not be accepted with God, or any wise men, *for his much speaking,* <sup>418</sup> Matthew 6:7.

**2.** As a man that made no conscience of what he said — a liar, and one that hoped by the impudence of lies to silence his adversaries (*should thy lies make men hold their peace?*) — a mocker, one that bantered all mankind, and knew how to put false colours upon any thing, and was not ashamed to impose upon every one that talked with him: *When thou mockest shall no man make thee ashamed?* Is it not time to speak, to stem

such a violent tide as this? Job was not mad, but spoke the words of truth and soberness, and yet was thus misrepresented. Eliphaz and Bildad had answered him, and said what they could to make him ashamed; it was therefore no instance of Zophar's generosity to set upon a man so violently who was already thus harassed. Here were three matched against one.

**II.** He charges Job with saying that which he had not said (v. 4): *Thou hast said, My doctrine is pure.* And what if he had said so? It was true that Job was sound in the faith, and orthodox in his judgment, and spoke better of God than his friends did. If he had expressed himself unwarily, yet it did not therefore follow but that his doctrine was true. But he charges him with saying, *I am clean in thy eyes.* Job had not said so: he had indeed said, *Thou knowest that I am not wicked* (~~Job~~ Job 10:7); but he had also said, *I have sinned*, and never pretended to a spotless perfection. He had indeed maintained that he was not a hypocrite as they charged him; but to infer thence that he would not own himself a sinner was an unfair insinuation. We ought to put the best construction on the words and actions of our brethren that they will bear; but contenders are tempted to put the worst.

**III.** He appeals to God, and wishes him to appear against Job. So very confident is he that Job is in the wrong that nothing will serve him but that God must immediately appear to silence and condemn him. We are commonly ready with too much assurance to interest God in our quarrels, and to conclude that, if he would but speak, he would take our part and speak for us, as Zophar here: *O that God would speak!* for he would certainly *open his lips against thee*; whereas, when God did speak, he opened his lips for Job against his three friends. We ought indeed to leave all controversies to be determined by the judgment of God, which we are sure *is according to truth*; but those are not always in the right who are most forward to appeal to that judgment and prejudge it against their antagonists. Zophar despairs to convince Job himself, and therefore desires God would convince him of two things which it is good for every one of us duly to consider, and under all our afflictions cheerfully to confess: —

**1.** The unsearchable depth of God's counsels. Zophar cannot pretend to do it, but he desires that God himself would show Job so much of the secrets of the divine wisdom as might convince him that *they are at least double to that which is*, v. 6. Note,

(1.) There are secrets in the divine wisdom, *arcana imperii* — *state-secrets*. God's way is in the sea. Clouds and darkness are round about him. He has reasons of state which we cannot fathom and must not pry into.

(2.) What we know of God is nothing to what we cannot know. What is hidden is more than double to what appears, ~~489~~ Ephesians 3:9.

(3.) By employing ourselves in adoring the depth of those divine counsels of which we cannot find the bottom we shall very much tranquilize our minds under the afflicting hand of God.

(4.) God knows a great deal more evil of us than we do of ourselves; so some understand it. When God gave David a sight and sense of sin he said that he had *in the hidden part made him to know wisdom*, ~~456~~ Psalm 51:6.

2. The unexceptionable justice of his proceedings. “Know therefore that, how sore soever the correction is that thou art under, *God exacteth of thee less than thy iniquity deserves*,” or (as some read it), “*he remits thee part of thy iniquity*, and does not deal with thee according to the full demerit of it.” Note,

(1.) When the debt of duty is not paid it is justice to insist upon the debt of punishment.

(2.) Whatever punishment is inflicted upon us in this world we must own that it is less than our iniquities deserve, and therefore, instead of complaining of our troubles, we must be thankful that we are out of hell, ~~489~~ Lamentations 3:39; ~~430~~ Psalm 103:10.

## ~~816~~ JOB 11:7-12

### THE ADDRESS OF ZOPHAR

Zophar here speaks very good things concerning God and his greatness and glory, concerning man and his vanity and folly: these two compared together, and duly considered, will have a powerful influence upon our submission to all the dispensations of the divine Providence.

I. See here what God is, and let him be adored.

**1.** He is an incomprehensible Being, infinite and immense, whose nature and perfections our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conceptions of, and whose counsels and actings we cannot therefore, without the greatest presumption, pass a judgment upon. We that are so little acquainted with the divine nature are incompetent judges of the divine providence; and, when we censure the dispensations of it, we talk of things that we do not understand. We cannot find out God; how dare we then find fault with him? Zophar here shows,

**(1.)** That God's nature infinitely exceeds the capacities of our understandings: "*Canst thou find out God, find him out to perfection? No, What canst thou do? What canst thou know?*" v. 7, 8. Thou, a poor, weak, short-sighted creature, a worm of the earth, that art but of yesterday? Thou, though ever so inquisitive after him, ever so desirous and industrious to find him out, yet darest thou attempt the search, or canst thou hope to speed in it? We may, by searching find God (~~4172~~ Acts 17:27), but we cannot find him out in any thing he is pleased to conceal; we may apprehend him, but we cannot comprehend him; we may know that he is, but cannot know what he is. The eye can see the ocean but not see over it. We may, by a humble, diligent, and believing search, find out something of God, but cannot find him out to perfection; we may know, but cannot know fully, what God is, nor find out his work *from the beginning to the end*, ~~2011~~ Ecclesiastes 3:11. Note, God is unsearchable. The ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, nor the spaces of his immensity measured; the depths of his wisdom cannot be fathomed, nor the reaches of his power bounded; the brightness of his glory can never be described, nor the treasures of his goodness reckoned up. This is a good reason why we should always speak of God with humility and caution and never prescribe to him nor quarrel with him, why we should be thankful for what he has revealed of himself and long to be where we shall see him as he is, ~~433~~ 1 Corinthians 13:9, 10.

**(2.)** That it infinitely exceeds the limits of the whole creation: *It is higher than heaven* (so some read it), *deeper than hell*, the great abyss, *longer than the earth*, and *broader than the sea*, many parts of which are to this day undiscovered, and more were then. It is quite out of our reach to comprehend God's nature. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for us*, ~~4116~~ Psalm 139:6. We cannot fathom God's designs, nor find out the reasons of his proceedings. His judgments are a great deep. Paul attributes such immeasurable dimensions to the divine love as Zophar here attributes to

the divine wisdom, and yet recommends it to our acquaintance.

<sup><418></sup>Ephesians 3:18, 19, *That you may know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ.*

**2.** God is a sovereign Lord (v. 10): *If he cut off* by death (margin, *If he make a change*, for death is a change; if he make a change in nations, in families, in the posture of our affairs), — if he *shut up* in prison, or in the net of affliction (<sup><461></sup>Psalm 66:11), — if he seize any creature as a hunter his prey, he will gather it (so bishop Patrick) and who shall force him to restore? or if he *gather together*, as tares for the fire, or *if he gather to himself man's spirit and breath* (<sup><434></sup>Job 34:14), *then who can hinder him?* Who can either arrest the sentence or oppose the execution? Who can control his power or arraign his wisdom and justice? If he that made all out of nothing think fit to reduce all to nothing, or to their first chaos again, — if he that separated between light and darkness, dry land and sea, at first, please to gather them together again, — if he that made unmake, *who can turn him away*, alter his mind or stay his hand, impede or impeach his proceedings?

**3.** God is a strict and just observer of the children of men (v. 11): *He knows vain men.* We know little of him, but he knows us perfectly: *He sees wickedness also*, not to approve it (<sup><413></sup>Habakkuk 1:13), but to animadvert upon it.

**(1.)** He observes vain men. Such all are (*every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity*), and he considers it in his dealings with them. He knows what the projects and hopes of vain men are, and can blast and defeat them, the workings of their foolish fancies; he sits in heaven, and laughs at them. He takes knowledge of the vanity of men (that is, their little sins; so some) their vain thoughts and vain words, and unsteadiness in that which is good.

**(2.)** He observes bad men: *He sees gross wickedness also*, though committed ever so secretly and ever so artfully palliated and disguised. All the wickedness of the wicked is naked and open before the all-seeing eye of God: *Will he not then consider it?* Yes, certainly he will, and will reckon for it, though for a time he seem to keep silence.

**II.** See here what man is, and let him be humbled, v. 12. God sees this concerning vain man that he *would be wise*, would be thought so, *though*

*he is born like a wild ass's colt*, so sottish and foolish, unteachable and untameable. See what man is.

**1.** He is a vain creature — *empty*; so the word is. God made him full, but he emptied himself, impoverished himself, and now he is *raca*, a creature that has nothing in him.

**2.** He is a foolish creature, has become *like the beasts that perish* (<sup><492></sup>Psalm 49:20, 73:22), an idiot, born like an ass, the most stupid animal, an ass's colt, not yet brought to any service. If ever he come to be good for any thing, it is owing to the grace of Christ, who once, in the day of his triumph, served himself by an ass's colt.

**3.** He is a wilful ungovernable creature. An ass's colt may be made good for something, but the wild ass's colt will never be reclaimed, nor regards the crying of the driver. See <sup><395></sup>Job 39:5-7. Man thinks himself as much at liberty, and his own master, as the wild ass's colt does, that is *used to the wilderness* (<sup><212></sup>Jeremiah 2:24), eager to gratify his own appetites and passions.

**4.** Yet he is a proud creature and self-conceited. He *would be wise*, would he thought so, values himself upon the honour of wisdom, though he will not submit to the laws of wisdom. He would be wise, that is, he reaches after forbidden wisdom, and, like his first parents, aiming to be wise above what is written, loses the tree of life for the tree of knowledge. Now is such a creature as this fit to contend with God or call him to an account? Did we but better know God and ourselves, we should better know how to conduct ourselves towards God.

## <811> JOB 11:13-20

### THE ADDRESS OF ZOPHAR

Zophar, as the other two, here encourages Job to hope for better times if he would but come to a better temper.

**I.** He gives him good counsel (v. 13, 14), as Eliphaz did (<sup><383></sup>Job 5:8), and Bildad, <sup><385></sup>Job 8:5. He would have him repent and return to God. Observe the steps of that return.

**1.** He must look within, and get his mind changed and the tree made good. He must *prepare his heart*; there the work of conversion and reformation must begin. The heart that wandered from God must be reduced — that was defiled with sin and put into disorder must be cleansed and put in order again — that was wavering and unfixed must be settled and established; so the word here signifies. The heart is then prepared to seek God when it is determined and fully resolved to make a business of it and to go through with it.

**2.** He must look up, and *stretch out his hands towards God*, that is, must stir up himself to take hold on God, must pray to him with earnestness and importunity, striving in prayer, and with expectation to receive mercy and grace from him. To *give the hand to the Lord* signifies to yield ourselves to him and to covenant with him, <sup><408></sup>2 Chronicles 30:8. This Job must do, and, for the doing of it, must prepare his heart. Job had prayed, but Zophar would have him to pray in a better manner, not as an appellant, but as a petitioner and humble suppliant.

**3.** He must amend what was amiss in his own conversation, else his prayers would be ineffectual (v. 14): “*If iniquity be in thy hand* (that is, if there be any sin which thou dost yet live in the practice of) *put it far away*, forsake it with detestation and a holy indignation, stedfastly resolving not to return to it, nor ever to have any thing more to do with it. <sup><388></sup>Ezekiel 18:31; <sup><349></sup>Hosea 14:9; <sup><302></sup>Isaiah 30:22. If any of the gains of iniquity, any goods gotten by fraud or oppression, be in thy hand, make restitution thereof” (as Zaccheus, <sup><298></sup>Luke 19:8), “and *shake thy hands from holding them*,” <sup><335></sup>Isaiah 33:15. The guilt of sin is not removed if the gain of sin be not restored.

**4.** He must do his utmost to reform his family too: “*Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles*; let not thy house harbour or shelter any wicked persons, any wicked practices, or any wealth gotten by wickedness.” He suspected that Job’s great household had been ill-governed, and that, where there were many, there were many wicked, and the ruin of his family was the punishment of the wickedness of it; and therefore, if he expected God should return to him, he must reform what was amiss there, and, though wickedness might come into his tabernacles, he must not suffer it to dwell there, <sup><101></sup>Psalms 101:3, etc.

**II.** He assures him of comfort if he took this counsel, v. 15, etc. If he would repent and reform, he should, without doubt, be easy and happy, and all would be well. Perhaps Zophar might insinuate that, unless God did speedily make such a change as this in his condition, he and his friends would be confirmed in their opinion of him as a hypocrite and a dissembler with God. A great truth, however, is conveyed, That, *the work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever*, <sup><3317></sup> Isaiah 32:17. Those that sincerely turn to God may expect,

**1.** A holy confidence towards God: “*Then shalt thou lift up thy face towards heaven without spot; thou mayest come boldly to the throne of grace, and not with that terror and amazement expressed*,” <sup><3334></sup> Job 9:34. If our hearts condemn us not for hypocrisy and impenitency, then have we confidence in our approaches to God and expectations from him, <sup><3321></sup> 1 John 3:21. If we are looked upon in the face of the anointed, our faces, that were dejected, may be lifted up — that were polluted, being washed with the blood of Christ, may be lifted up without spot. We may *draw near in full assurance of faith* when we are *sprinkled from an evil conscience*, <sup><3322></sup> Hebrews 10:22. Some understand this of the clearing up of his credit before men, <sup><3306></sup> Psalm 37:6. If we make our peace with God, we may with cheerfulness look our friends in the face.

**2.** A holy composedness in themselves: *Thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear, not be afraid of evil tidings, thy heart being fixed*, <sup><3307></sup> Psalm 112:7. Job was now full of confusion (<sup><3315></sup> Job 10:15), while he looked upon God as his enemy and quarrelled with him; but Zophar assures him that, if he would submit and humble himself, his mind would be composed, and he would be freed from those frightful apprehensions he had of God, which put him into such an agitation. The less we are frightened the more we are fixed, and consequently the more fit we are for our services and for our sufferings.

**3.** A comfortable reflection upon their past troubles (v. 16): “*Thou shalt forget thy misery, as the mother forgets her travailing pains, for joy that the child is born; thou shalt be perfectly freed from the impressions it makes upon thee, and thou shalt remember it as waters that pass away, or are poured out of a vessel, which leave no taste or tincture behind them, as other liquors do. The wounds of thy present affliction shall be perfectly healed, not only without a remaining scar, but without a remaining pain.*”

Job had endeavoured to forget his complaint (~~3107~~ Job 9:27), but found he could not; his soul *had still in remembrance the wormwood and the gall*: but here Zophar puts him in a way to forget it; let him by faith and prayer bring his griefs and cares to God, and leave them with him, and then he shall forget them. Where sin sits heavily affliction sits lightly. If we duly remember our sins, we shall, in comparison with them, forget our misery, much more if we obtain the comfort of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. He whose iniquity is forgiven shall *not say, I am sick*, but shall forget his sickness, ~~2334~~ Isaiah 33:24.

**4.** A comfortable prospect of their future peace. This Zophar here thinks to please Job with, in answer to the many despairing expressions he had used, as if it were to no purpose for him to hope ever to see good days again in this world: “Yea, but thou mayest” (says Zophar) “and good nights too.” A blessed change he here puts him in hopes of.

**(1.)** That though now his light was eclipsed it should shine out again, and more brightly than ever (v. 17), — that even his setting sun should out-shine his noon-day sun, and his evening be fair and clear as the morning, in respect both of honour and pleasure. — that his light should shine *out of obscurity* (~~2330~~ Isaiah 58:10), and the thick and dark cloud, from behind which his sun should break forth, would serve as a foil to its lustre, — that it should shine even in old age, and those evil days should be good days to him. Note, Those that truly turn to God then begin to shine forth; their path is as the shining light which increases, the period of their day will be the perfection of it, and their evening to this world will be their morning to a better.

**(2.)** That, though now he was in a continual fear and terror, he should live in a holy rest and security, and find himself continually safe and easy (v. 18): *Thou shalt be secure, because there is hope*. Note, Those who have a good hope, through grace, in God, and of heaven, are certainly safe, and have reason to be secure, how difficult soever the times are through which they pass in this world. He that walks uprightly may thus walk surely, because, though there are trouble and danger, yet there is hope that all will be well at last. Hope is *an anchor of the soul*, ~~3109~~ Hebrews 6:19. “*Thou shalt dig about thee*,” that is, “Thou shalt be as safe as an army in its entrenchments.” Those that submit to God's government shall be taken under his protection, and then they are safe both day and night.

[1.] By day, when they employ themselves abroad: “*Thou shalt dig in safety, thou and thy servants for thee, and not be again set upon by the plunderers, who fell upon thy servants at plough,*” ~~<811>~~ Job 1:14, 15. It is no part of the promised prosperity that he should live in idleness, but that he should have a calling and follow it, and, when he was about the business of it, should be under the divine protection. Thou shalt dig and be safe, not rob and be safe, revel and be safe. The way of duty is the way of safety.

[2.] By night, when they repose themselves at home: *Thou shalt take thy rest (and the sleep of the labouring man is sweet) in safety,* notwithstanding the dangers of the darkness. The pillar of cloud by day shall be a pillar of fire by night: “*Thou shalt lie down (v. 19), not forced to wander where there is no place to lay thy head on, nor forced to watch and sit up in expectation of assaults; but thou shalt go to bed at bedtime, and not only shall non hurt thee, but none shall make thee afraid nor so much as give thee an alarm.*” Note, It is a great mercy to have quiet nights and undisturbed sleeps; those say so that are within the hearing of the noise of war. And the way to be quiet is to seek unto God and keep ourselves in his love. Nothing needs make those afraid who *return to God as their rest* and take him for their habitation.

(3.) That, though now he was slighted, yet he should be courted: “*Many shall make suit to thee, and think it their interest to secure thy friendship.*” Suit is made to those that are eminently wise or reputed to be so, that are very rich or in power. Zophar knew Job so well that he foresaw that, how low soever this present ebb was, if once the tide turned, it would flow as high as ever; and he would be again the darling of his country. Those that rightly make suit to God will probably see the day when others will make suit to them, as the foolish virgins to the wise, *Give us of your oil.*

**III.** Zophar concludes with a brief account of the doom of wicked people (v. 20): *But the eyes of the wicked shall fail.* It should seem, he suspected that Job would not take his counsel, and here tells him what would then come of it, setting death as well as life before him. See what will become of those who persist in their wickedness, and will not be reformed.

**1.** They shall not reach the good they flatter themselves with the hopes of in this world and in the other. Disappointments will be their doom, their shame, their endless torment. Their eyes shall fail with expecting that which will never come. *When a wicked man dies his expectation perishes,*

☞ Proverbs 11:7. *Their hope shall be as a puff of breath* (margin), vanished and gone past recall. Or their hope will perish and expire as a man does when he gives up the ghost; it will fail them when they have most need of it and when they expected the accomplishment of it; it will die away, and leave them in utter confusion.

2. They shall not avoid the evil which sometimes they frighten themselves with the apprehensions of. They shall not escape the execution of the sentence passed upon them, can neither out-brave it nor outrun it. Those that will not fly to God will find it in vain to think of flying from him.