

**Considering Job
(Week 5)
Job 11-14
“Speaking For God”**

Introduction

“If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” **1 Corinthians 13:1**

after Job’s first two friends had accused him of some great sin, and he had done his best to try and defend his integrity before them, it was then Zophar’s turn to speak. His name, pronounced Tso-far actually means “sparrow” so one would naturally assume that he would be the more delicate of the three. This was not the case however, for Zophar, was even more brutal and unfeeling in his accusations against Job. Not only does he accuse him of being punished for his sins, the same as Eliphaz and Bildad, but he tells Job that he is receiving far less punishment than he actually deserves!

“But if only God would only speak and open His lips against you! He would show you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom has two sides. Know that God has chosen to overlook some of your iniquity.” **Job 11:5-6**

Wow! And I thought the other two guys were mean. Old “Sparrow” here, thinks that Job is so very evil that he should really be suffering more than he already is! He speaks eloquently about how wisdom is “two-sided”. What this means is that we mortals can only see a small portion of God’s wisdom from below, while He, Who is above all, can see the whole picture. This is absolutely true, but the problem is that Zophar is pretending that he has a better view of God’s wisdom than poor Job. The insinuation is that if only Job knew what Zophar knew, then how much the wiser he would be. Have you ever met anyone like that? They seem to think that they have more insight into the heavenly throne room than the rest of us mere mortals. My wife and I were just discussing someone like that this morning at breakfast. All of us know someone who tries to come off on a higher spiritual plain than the rest of us. Now, I cannot speak for you, but those people actually Get on my nerves... a lot!

As believers, we are called to be God’s representative in this fallen world, which means that at times we are supposed to speak on God’s behalf. But sadly, many of us try and put our words into God’s mouth as it were. Just look at what Zophar said to Job, **“If God would only speak and open up His lips against you!”** The simple fact is that God had not spoken against Job. If God is sovereign in the universe, and we believe that He most certainly is, then could He not speak for Himself? Of course He could have, but He had not, so old “Sparrow” assumed that in God’s absence, he was the one most qualified to speak for Him. How arrogant we are when we think that we have God all figured out, that we can take the sum of His infinite wisdom and place it in a box we can carry around with us.

Zophar said that Job could not begin to fathom the depth of God’s wisdom, and yet he has somehow convinced himself that he could! He proclaims some wondrous truths regarding The Almighty.

“Can you fathom the depths of God or discover the limits of The Almighty? They are higher than the heavens—what can you do? They are deeper than Sheol (the grave)—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea. If he passes by and throws someone into prison or convenes a court, who can stop Him?” **Job 11:7-10**

Now every bit of this was true, but Job knew all of that already (and so does every other person who has placed their faith in God by the way). None of this was anything new, nor did it bring job any consolation. Job needed answers, but all he was receiving were religious platitudes. He longed to understand why he was suffering. But sadly, his friends had leaped to the wrong conclusion by assuming that he had surely deserved all his troubles as punishment for some grievous sin. Job is left defenseless against his adversaries. In despair, he lashes out against his accusers. Zophar compared him to a

witless donkey, devoid of understanding (**vs. 12**), but Job is not a fool. He knows what he knows, and when he most needed to hear an encouraging word from those who claimed to belong to God, He gets religious “catch phrases” instead. Those who claim to be speaking on God’s behalf actually said the exact opposite of what God was doing in Job’s life. And, Job’s faith was weakened as a result. False prophets are more damaging to faith than all the other sins in this world combined, for they serve to weaken faith, rather than to strengthen it. This is why we must be careful when we presume to speak on God’s behalf. After hearing his friends claim to know more of God’s wisdom than he, Job responds angrily. Today we will look at the three phases of Job’s response to Zophar in **Chapters 12-14**. **1. Just Stop Speaking (Chapter 12:1-13:5); 2. Let God Speak (13:6-28); and 3. Let Me Be (14).**

Just Stop Speaking (12:1 - 13:5)

“Then Job answered: No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!”

Job 12:1-2

I just love that! Job has tried to plead his case rationally with his so called friends, and that hasn’t worked, so he resorts to “Plan B”... sarcasm. He tells Zophar that he and his companions are the embodiment of the wisdom of all mankind, and undoubtedly, when the three of them finally perish, then all wisdom will perish as well! I can think of a few people that I would actually like to tell that as well, can’t you?

Job then goes on to say:

“But I also have a mind like you; I am not inferior to you; who doesn’t know the things you are talking about?”

Job 12:3

Although Zophar and his companions may feel that Job is far less than they are, even considering him to be stupid in fact (**vs. 11:12**), Job is nobody’s fool. He is aware that God is far greater than he or anyone on the earth. God is infinite, and we are finite. This is nothing new. What he cannot seem to get them to understand is that it is they who have tried to put “God in a box”, as it were. They make assumptions that they know how God will always respond in all things. Job shoots their theories to pieces by asking them; if people always suffer horribly for sin, then why do thieves and robbers seem to get away with it for so long before they face justice (**vs. 5-6**). God is also sovereign over them, and yet they continue in sin for long periods of time without facing any consequences. So, why is it that Job is suffering, and they are not? Could it be that Zophar and his companions do not understand the dispensing of God’s supreme justice as well as they think?

Not one of us has a complete grasp on just why God allows some things to happen, and yet doesn’t allow others. I wish that I had a dime for every time I was faced with a question from someone in the church for which I had no answers. Can I get a witness? How many funerals of good people have you attended, while some of the most wicked seem to continue year after year seemingly without consequence? I have no reasoning to offer for that. However, I believe that God is just. I also think that Job and his friends would agree, God has the right, and the ability, to do as He pleases. No one can stand against Him, and frankly, I am thankful for this fact. He truly does have the ability to view “wisdom” from the lofty vantage point of heaven’s throne. I’m glad that the universe is under His control. There are things that I might do differently, but my assumptions of what is good and just are flawed, and undoubtedly, were I to be placed in control, chaos and destruction would be the result. How about you? Do you think that you can run things better than God? In this we are all in agreement. God is in control and rightly so.

Zophar had assumed that since God had remained silent in Job’s suffering, it was his duty to speak on God’s behalf. Nothing could have been further from the truth. As a result of his pretentious preaching, he had actually done more harm than good. This is why God takes such a harsh stand against those who claim to speak on His behalf, when in fact they do not.

"I will hold accountable whoever does not listen to My words that he (the prophet) speaks in My Name. But the prophet who presumes to speak a message in My Name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods—that prophet must die." **Deut. 18:19-20**

You see, God is not a big proponent of people who presume to speak on His behalf without receiving a word from Him beforehand. Why? Because, when a false prophet speaks, and it is later proven that he is wrong, then it weakens the faith of the people. After all, a congregation looks up to its leaders. If you want to lead, then you need to **live out** what you believe. You need to be sure that what you say is the truth. Before presuming to speak on God's behalf, might I suggest you stop and do three things first.

- 1. Pray...** seek God's wisdom before you decide to "straighten someone else out".
- 2. Prepare...** Study and know what God's Word (*The Bible*) has to say about the situation. And THEN:
- 3. Proclaim...** speak the truth... in love (**Ephesians 4:5**).

If you try and correct someone from the error of their ways, then know this; Jesus **died** for them, and He wants them rescued, not disenfranchised. As we will see in the case of Job, Zophar's false accusations only push Job further away. Rather than drawing him closer to God, they have the exact opposite effect. Job needed a rescuer, and all he got was an accuser. He never claimed to be perfect, but apparently his "dear" friends had somehow forgotten that they weren't either! A fact that did not keep them from speaking nonetheless. I love what Job says to them. It has become one of my favorite verses. I think that we should have t-shirts printed with these words:

"If only you would shut up and let that be your wisdom!" **Job 13:5**

Just Let God Speak (13:6-28)

"Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ash; your defenses are made of clay. Be quiet, and I will speak. Let whatever comes happen to me. I will put myself at risk and take my life in my own hands. Even if He kills me, I will hope in Him. I will still defend my ways before Him. Yes, this will result in my deliverance, for no godless person can appear before Him." **Job 13:12-16**

Job no longer cares what his friends have to say. They have refused to listen to reason, so he appeals once more directly to God. He wants to have an audience before the One Who knows the hearts of men. Nothing is hidden from His sight, and Job longs to hear from God Himself. He knows that only God can vindicate him (**vs 16**). In the midst of his appeal, he utters the very oft quoted verse which I learned many years ago in the King James Version:

"Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him..." **Job 13:15 (KJV)**

What Job is in essence saying here, is that he would rather appeal his case before The LORD than his unsympathetic friends. He knows that he is not perfect, but he also knows that it is God who made him. It is God Who truly cares about Him, and it is God Who intimately knows him. If The LORD were to determine that Job should die, then Job would accept His decision. But he would rather take his chances with God than with his disloyal friends. They have proven to be unjust, so Job cries out to The One Who is always just. His faith is shaken, but not yet destroyed. He longs for God to weigh in and judge between he and his friends. He appeals to God to have mercy on him (**vs. 20-28**), for he does not know how much more that he can bear.

As a pastor, I receive many calls from people wanting me to pray for them. While I am honored to do so, I would add only one thing. Never rely solely upon the prayers of others when you find yourself in need of The LORD'S assistance. Go to Him directly. You see, Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, Who ever lives to intercede on our behalf (**Hebrews 7:25**), is always standing at the ready to hear your prayers. No longer do we need to go through a priest (pastor) in order for God to hear us, for Christ has become our priest! He gave His life on Calvary's cross, so that we might have continuous access to the throne of God. Or, as I like to say, "Jesus died, so that we can pray." It is because of this that *The Bible* tells us:

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your cares on Him, because He cares about you."

1 Peter 5:6-7

Oh, what an awesome verse of scripture! If you read Job's prayers to God while he was suffering, you will see at that time, he wasn't exactly "theologically correct" in what he said, but he **was** telling God exactly how he felt. He didn't think that God was being fair, and he told him as much. But one thing is for certain, Job took his case to the right place, and God heard his cries. God would later come to answer Job and reveal to him things about Himself that Job had never known before. But know this for certain... God hears you when you pray. If you belong to Jesus, your prayers are never ignored, and God will answer. It may not be the answer you want, or it may not come when you want, but your prayers will never be ignored. Why? Because God cares for you. So cast your cares upon Him. He can take it. Then wait for Him to answer. Don't let the Zophar's of this world discourage your faith. Don't let them drive you away from the very place where you will find rest.

Just Let Me Be (14)

Job, in his despair, begins to cry out to God in **Chapter 14**:

"Anyone born of woman is short of days and full of trouble. He blossoms like a flower, then withers; he flees like a shadow and does not last. Do You really take notice of one like this? Will you bring me into judgment against You? Who can produce something pure from what is impure? No one! Since a person's days are determined and the number of his months depends on You, and since You have set limits he cannot pass, look away from him and let him rest so that he can enjoy his day like a hired worker."

Job 14:1-6

Job is crying out to God to just let him be. His suffering is so great, and the discouragement that he has received at the hands of his companions has worked in concert to drive him to despair. This is what false preaching always does, it only serves as a stumbling block to those who need to find relief. Job is now at the breaking point, and he just longs to be left to live his life as a "hired hand", who clocks in and labors until his shift is over. Job is literally asking God to forget about him. This is the prayer of a hopeless man.

When we read Job's words carefully, we see him vacillating back and forth from faith to despair. Have you ever felt like that? Circumstances have closed in on you to the point that although you still have faith, it seems to be hanging only by a thread. This is what Job is experiencing, and most of us can relate. I am reminded of the man in **Mark Chapter 9**, who brought his demon possessed son to Jesus. He had already tried to get healing for the child by bringing him to Jesus' disciples, but they were unable to cast out the demon. So, the man went directly to the source. He asked Jesus to please help, and Jesus told him that he only needed to believe and all things were possible. To which the man replied;

"...I do believe; help my unbelief!"

Mark 9:24

Have you ever felt like that? I have, and it is pretty shaky ground. I find it interesting that the disciples of Christ, instead of helping this poor man, had only weakened his faith all the more. Jesus went on to heal the young boy, and then He rebuked his disciples, telling them that if they were going to attempt this kind of intense ministry then they had ought to pray more (**Mark 9:29**). If Job's friends had been as good at prayer and fasting as they were at talking, then maybe Job's faith would have not been so weakened by their "comforts". Be careful when you decide to speak on God's behalf. Make sure that your prayer life is up to date.

The next thing that Job says to God, I find completely fascinating. He prays for death. Which is nothing new, he's done that before. But this time he prays that God would hide him in the grave, and then bring him back after His anger has passed.

"If only You would hide me in Sheol (the grave) and conceal me until Your anger passes. If only you would appoint a time for me and then remember me. When a person dies will he come back to life? If so, I would wait all the days of my struggle until my relief comes. You would call, and I would answer You. You would long for the work of Your hands. For then you would count my steps and not take note of my sin. My rebellion would be sealed in a bag, and You would cover over my iniquity."
Job 14:13-17

This passage makes me cry. I can't help it. Job is asking God to put him in the grave until His anger has passed and then resurrect him with all his sin forgiven, and forgotten. Well, Job, I have some good news for you. God placed all your sins upon His Only begotten Son. He died on Calvary's cross, and He lay in the grave for three days (the appointed time), and then He rose from the dead. In so doing, the wrath of God was completely satisfied. To whosoever will believe and confess His name, their sins are forgiven and forgotten forevermore! Hang in there Job! Help is on the way! Your deliverer is coming! Thanks to Calvary, we all have the hope of resurrection. All the trials of this life, and even the grave, have no hold on those who have put their faith in Christ Jesus. No matter what you are going through this morning, know this, God has not forsaken you. Others who claim to belong to Him may have disappointed you, but He never will. He died so you can pray. He rose so you can have hope. He will return, so that you will never again know the pain of sorrow and hopelessness. Keep the faith. Lift up your head. Your Deliverer is coming!

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!