

# Job and His Three Friends: The Introduction of Zophar

## Chapter 11

**Job 11:1** Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,

<sup>2</sup> Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?

<sup>3</sup> Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?

ZOPHAR thinks Job is full of hot air and someone who likes to speak many words. But to take his argument against Job even further, he says the reason he cannot hold his peace is the lies Job has told. He feels it his religious duty (albeit not a duty received from God) to set Job right. Zophar enters into the discussion with an even more caustic attitude than his other two friends. No doubt he is frustrated that Job could defend himself against Eliphaz's and Bildad's accusation, and this has incensed him. From the moment he first speaks, neither love nor compassion compels him but only his own unrighteous anger, a personal anger that Job could not be humbled.

*Then answered Zophar the Naamathite — How hard is it to preserve calmness in the heat of disputation! Eliphaz began modestly: Bildad was a little rougher: but Zophar falls upon Job without mercy. "Those that have a mind to fall out with their brethren, and to fall foul upon them, find it necessary to put the*

<sup>1</sup> Job 11:2–7 Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? <sup>2</sup>Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? <sup>3</sup>For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. <sup>4</sup>But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; <sup>5</sup>And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth. <sup>6</sup>Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

<sup>7</sup> Job 11:7–11 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? <sup>8</sup>It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? <sup>9</sup>The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. <sup>10</sup>If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him? <sup>11</sup>For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider it?

<sup>12</sup> Job 11:12–20 For vain men would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt. <sup>13</sup>If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; <sup>14</sup>If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. <sup>15</sup>For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear: <sup>16</sup>Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: <sup>17</sup>And thine age shall be clearer than the noonday: thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. <sup>18</sup>And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety. <sup>19</sup>Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee. <sup>20</sup>But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.

<sup>4</sup> Benson Commentary, Job 11:1

worst colours they can upon them and their performances, and, right or wrong, to make them odious." Zophar, highly provoked that Job should dare to call in question a maxim so universally assented to as that urged by his friends, immediately charges him home with secret wickedness. He tells him that he makes not the least doubt, were the real state of his heart laid open, that it would be found God had dealt very gently with him, Job 11:2–7.<sup>1</sup> That he was highly blameworthy to pretend to fathom the depths of divine providence, a task to which he was utterly unequal: that, however his wickedness might be concealed from me, yet it was open and bare to God's all-seeing eye; could he therefore imagine that God would not punish the wickedness he saw? Job 11:7–11.<sup>2</sup> It would surely be far more becoming in him to submit, and give glory to God, by making an ample confession and full restitution. In that case, indeed, he might hope for a return of God's goodness to him; but the way he was in at present was the common road of the wicked, whose only hope was annihilation, Job 11:12–20.<sup>3</sup> — Heath and Dodd.<sup>4</sup>

When men are not governed by love and a true desire to help those afflicted, malice and self-righteousness often fill the soul. It is also common for bitterness to enter self-righteous men when their arguments and decisions are rebutted. This seems to be the case with Zophar, as he is incensed that Eliphaz's and Bildad's words were easily rejected by Job

and did nothing to change his opinion. Unrighteous anger fills Zophar because he thinks himself, as well as his other two friends, superior to Job. When men think themselves higher than their fellow men, especially in religious matters, their words are dispersed with indignation. True religion is the opposite of this, for a renewed mind does not think of itself more highly than it ought.<sup>5</sup> The core of men's sin has always been the belief that they are bigger, wiser, and more virtuous than they really are.

Zophar attacked Job with great vehemence. He represented him as a man that loved to hear himself speak, though he could say nothing to the purpose, and as a man that maintained falsehoods. He desired God would show Job that less punishment was exacted than he deserved. We are ready, with much assurance, to call God to act in our quarrels, and to think that if he would but speak, he would take our part. We ought to leave all disputes to the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth; but those are not always right who are most forward to appeal to the Divine judgment.<sup>6</sup>

God's Word states that it is the truth that should be obeyed, not the unrighteousness, indignation, and anger that lives in men. *But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.*<sup>7</sup> Those not under the yoke of truth will obey the sinful, hateful, and fleshly nature within them.

When sinners have no strong arguments against the righteous, they will bring in exaggeration and blatant lies, hoping that this will strengthen their case. If a man truly desires to see himself

as superior, not even perverting the truth will be beyond what he will do to justify himself. In reality, what Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar accused Job of was true of themselves. They claimed they had come to help and comfort him, but ultimately, their actions demonstrated a much different motive.

Just because a man feels the urge to speak and give an answer for something does not mean he should. God's Word often instructs us to be silent, even if what is being spoken or done against us is wrong.<sup>8</sup> Jesus held His peace before the high priest after the two false witnesses accused Him.<sup>9</sup> This teaches us that when claims brought by our enemies are absurd and outlandish, the best repudiation is to say nothing at all. Answering a fool according to his folly only gives him more grounds for conceit.<sup>10</sup> Hence, when men lie and bring false claims against the brethren, it is common that the Holy Spirit will instruct those attacked that divine silence is the best defense. The Lord will fight His people's battles,<sup>11</sup> and His people need not think that they must fight every battle themselves. To think that we have to answer everything spoken against us is an improper assumption. We should also be careful not to ask God to correct our neighbors when in fact it might be ourselves with whom He is really dissatisfied. The more Job and his three friends spoke, the more they strengthened God's case against them.

Scripture warns all men to *study to be quiet, and to do your own business*. The reason is so we don't get so caught up in others' lives that we forget to examine our

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 12:3 *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Job 11:1-6

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 2:8

<sup>8</sup> Ps. 141:3 *Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.*

*Prov. 10:19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise.*

*Prov. 18:13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*

*Prov. 21:23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.*

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 26:61-63 *And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.*

<sup>62</sup>*And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?* <sup>63</sup>*But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.*

<sup>10</sup> *Prov. 26:4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.*

<sup>11</sup> *Exod. 14:14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*

*Deut. 3:22 Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you.*

own.<sup>12</sup> *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*<sup>13</sup> Concentrating on ourselves and obeying God's Word is one of the best ways to help others be saved, as busybodies rarely save anybody. *He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.*<sup>14</sup> Job's friends took on the roles of judges when in fact they would have been better advised to remain students. By sticking themselves and their low wisdom into a matter far above their pay grade, they really only brought disgrace to themselves. And though they spoke of Job as thinking himself innocent and pure, the truth is that this was how they viewed their own lives. It was their judgment of Job that sealed their own condemnation. Had they been quiet and merely stayed and prayed for their friend, God's anger would not have been directed toward them.

***Job 11:4 For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.***

These words, or the sum of them, are also repeated by Elihu. *Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.*<sup>15</sup> What is different is that while Zophar sought to accuse Job for being responsible for his calamities, Elihu's motives centered on bringing Job into fellowship with God again. The lesson to be learned is that it is not always what is spoken but rather who speaks and the manner in which he speaks that allows the sinner to hear the truth. So while Zophar sought to incriminate, Elihu sought to get Job to see the truth of himself so God might forgive him and bring restoration to his life. While Zophar sought a verdict and condemnation and nothing more than this, Elihu sought to clear Job of his confusion so that union with God could again be obtained. This is why Job rejects Zophar's

<sup>12</sup> *1 Thess. 4:11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;*

<sup>13</sup> *1 Tim. 4:16*

<sup>14</sup> *Prov. 26:17*

<sup>15</sup> *Job 33:8&9*

<sup>16</sup> *Job 33:10*

words but does not offer any repudiation to Elihu's godly correction. This teaches us that if men are not truly godly, they can do nothing to help turn a sinner's heart to repentance. Who we are determines how much men will hear us and understand that it is God working through us and not simply our own fleshly conceit.

Elihu's correction also added the element of truth that was absent in Zophar's address. *Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy.*<sup>16</sup> In truth, Job did to God what his friends were doing to him—he asserted blame without any true understanding of the situation. It is one thing to defend our faith when it is challenged with insincerity by men like Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, but it's quite another to lay charges against God because we think ourselves pure. When men think themselves overly pure, they will deem anything bad that happens to them as outrageously wrong. Their high opinions of themselves blind them into believing that only good should come to them. The self-righteous conclude that any negative thing, even when it is according to God's will, is an act of divine injustice.

***Job 11:5&6 But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee;***

***<sup>6</sup> And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.***

Zophar's words are presumptuous, for he assumes that if God were to reveal Job's true heart, his sins would be double. Zophar also arrogantly speaks for God when in fact God was saying absolutely nothing through him. It is highly presumptuous for any to assume, and even worse to declare, what God thinks when the truth is that the Lord has said nothing to them at all. Whenever men do this, they are uttering vain prophecies out of their own devilish and ignorant hearts.

*Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD.*<sup>17</sup> It is a great sin to speak something out of one's own heart and attribute it as coming from God. Treating human imagination as a substitute for divine revelation is a great sin and should be avoided no matter how tempting it may be.

*Song of Solomon of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel* — So they called themselves, as if none but they had been worthy of the name of Israel's prophets, who were indeed Israel's deceivers. *Say unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts* — According to their own fancy, without having received any revelation from God. The true prophets often denounced God's judgments against the false ones: laying to their charge many misdemeanours in their private life and conversation, and upbraiding them for their unfaithfulness in the office they undertook of declaring God's will to his people. *Wo unto the foolish prophets* — Ignorant and wicked, and who, while they wilfully deceived the people, unthinkingly brought destruction upon themselves. Observe, reader, foolish prophets are not of God's sending: those whom he sends, he either finds or makes fit for his work. Where he gives warrant, he gives wisdom. *That follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing* — Who utter their own imaginations for true prophecies, and pretend to have visions when they never had any. *O Israel, thy prophets, not mine, are like the foxes in the deserts* — Hungry and ravening, crafty and guileful: "deceitful workers, (as the apostle styles such persons, 2 Corinthians 11:13,<sup>18</sup>) who craftily insinuate false doctrines into weak and unstable minds, and greedily catch at any appearance of advantage to themselves." — Lowth.<sup>19</sup>

If a man does not receive direct revelation from God in a matter, he should judge nothing until Christ comes to make all things clear and manifest.

***I Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make mani-***

<sup>17</sup> Ezek. 13:2

<sup>18</sup> II Cor. 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

<sup>19</sup> Benson Commentary, Ezek. 13:2-4

<sup>20</sup> Matt. 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

<sup>21</sup> Rom. 2:10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

***fest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.***

*Judge nothing* - Pass no decided opinion; see the note at Matthew 7:1.<sup>20</sup> The apostle here takes occasion to inculcate on them an important lesson - one of the leading lessons of Christianity - not to pass a harsh opinion on the conduct of any man, since there are so many things that go to make up his character which we cannot know; and so many secret failings and motives which are all concealed from us.

*Until the Lord come* - The Lord Jesus at the Day of Judgment, when all secrets shall be revealed, and a true judgment shall be passed on all men.

*Who both will bring to light;* - See Romans 2:10.<sup>21</sup>

*The hidden things of darkness* - The secret things of the heart which have been hidden as it were in darkness. The subsequent clause shows that this is the sense. He does not refer to the deeds of night, or those things which were performed in the secret places of idolatry, but to the secret designs of the heart; and perhaps means gently to insinuate that there were many things about the character and feelings of his enemies which would not well bear the revelations of that Day.

*The counsels of the hearts* - The purposes, designs, and intentions of men. All their plans shall be made known on that Day. And it is a most fearful and alarming truth, that no man can conceal his purposes beyond the Day of Judgment.

*And then shall every man have praise of God* - The word here rendered "praise" ἔπαινος *epainos* denotes in this place reward, or that which is due to him; the just sentence which ought to be pronounced on his character. It does not mean as our translation would imply, that every man will then receive the divine approbation which will not be true; but that every man shall receive what is due to his character, whether good or evil. So Bloomfield and Bretschneider explain it. Hesychius explains it by judgment (κρῖσις *krisis*). The word must be limited in its signification according to the subject or the connection. The passage teaches:



(1) That we should not be guilty of harsh judgment of others.

(2) the reason is, that we cannot know their feelings and motives.

(3) that all secret things will be brought forth in the great Day, and nothing be concealed beyond that time.

(4) that every man shall receive justice there. He shall be treated as he ought to be. The destiny of no one will be decided by the opinions of people; but the doom of all will be fixed by God. How important is it, therefore, that we be prepared for that Day; and how important to cherish such feelings, and form such plans, that they may be developed without involving us in shame and contempt!<sup>22</sup>

***Job 11:7–10 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?***

***<sup>8</sup>It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?***

***<sup>9</sup>The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.***

***<sup>10</sup>If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?***

Here Zophar speaks flowery thoughts of God, but in fact he is greatly removed from possessing any true wisdom of the Lord. That which Zophar asks Job to consider, he neither knows nor can do himself. Job uttered similar thoughts when he confessed that he could not see what God did.<sup>23</sup> But this is not so with religious hypocrites. Their answers are meant to lift themselves up while bringing shame on others. We will see in Job's response that Zophar brought nothing to him that he did not already know. This is why Job rightly mocks Zophar along with Eliphaz and Bildad in chapter 12. *No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.*<sup>24</sup> When men think of themselves as wise, they possess no real

<sup>22</sup> Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Cor. 4:5

<sup>23</sup> Job 9:5–11 Which removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger. <sup>6</sup>Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. <sup>7</sup>Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars. <sup>8</sup>Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. <sup>9</sup>Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. <sup>10</sup>Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number. <sup>11</sup>Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.

<sup>24</sup> Job 12:2

<sup>25</sup> I Cor. 8:2

<sup>26</sup> Jer. 23:30

<sup>27</sup> Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Jer. 23:30

wisdom at all. *And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*<sup>25</sup> The truly wise realize that whatever they *do* know falls greatly short of what *should* be known. They know that the knowledge they have gained about God or living is far below what they should or could have learned.

How common it is for men to hear something and then present it as their own wisdom. They hear the truth that another man speaks but then pretend that it comes from themselves. Those who cannot think deeply must steal the wisdom of others to make themselves appear wise. Israel's false prophets practiced this deceit often. *Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.*<sup>26</sup>

*That steal my words . . .* —Another note of the counterfeit prophet is found in the want of any living personal originality. The oracles of the dreamers were patchworks of plagiarism, and they borrowed, not as men might do legitimately, and as Jeremiah himself did, from the words of the great teachers of the past, but from men of their own time, false and unreal as themselves. What we should call the “clique” of false prophets went on repeating each other's phrases with a wearisome iteration. In “my words” we have, probably, the fact that, in part also, they decked out their teaching with the borrowed plumes of phrases from true prophets.<sup>27</sup>

Those who do not have the Spirit of God in them will panhandle the truth given to other men as their own, foolishly thinking that if they say the same things as true messengers of the Lord or copy their manners, they will be able to gain the same praise and respect.

***Job 11:11 For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider it?***

While Zophar stated that God could not be searched out by man, now he states that God is able to know vain and wicked men. And this is exactly what he believes Job to be, both wicked and vain, which is the complete opposite of Job's true character. These are strong charges held forth by Zophar, which stem from no true revelation given to him from God but only from his own imagination and puffed-up mind. When men are full of themselves, they pretend to be judges for God, but in reality He has said nothing to them at all.

*For he knoweth vain men* — Though men know but little of God, and therefore are very unfit judges of his counsels and actions, yet God knows man exactly. He knoweth that every man in the world is guilty of much vanity and folly, and therefore seeth sufficient reason for his severity against the best men. *He seeth wickedness also* — He perceiveth the wickedness of evil men, though it be covered with the veil of religion.<sup>28</sup>

The vanity and emptiness referred to by Zophar did not lie in Job's religion but his own. A hypocrite will not hesitate to speak lies, calling others vain in their teaching of God when the truth is that it is their own teaching that He despises. Zophar thought that his religion was holy and Job's was vain, but in the end, the opposite was proven true, so much so that though God later reproved Job for his wrong thoughts about Him, He did not speak directly to either Zophar or his other two friends. Their condition of being filled with religious pride prompted the Lord not even to consider talking to them. It is often the case that when God resists the proud,<sup>29</sup> He will refuse to talk to them directly.

***Job 11:12 For vain men would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.***

Other translations give us a clearer understanding of Zophar's words.

<sup>28</sup> Benson Commentary, Job 11:11

<sup>29</sup> Jas. 4:6 *But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. I Pet. 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

<sup>30</sup> Benson Commentary, Job 11:12

(NIV) *But the witless can no more become wise than a wild donkey's colt can be born human.*

(Berean Study Bible) *But a witless man can no more become wise than the colt of a wild donkey can be born a man!*

(NAS) *"An idiot will become intelligent When a wild donkey is born a human.*

*For, or, yet, vain man would be wise* — Man, who since the fall is void of all true wisdom, pretends to be wise, and able to pass a censure upon all God's ways and works. *Born like a wild ass's colt* — Ignorant, and dull, and stupid, as to divine things, and yet heady and untractable. Such is man by his birth; this evil is now natural and hereditary, and therefore common to all men: of consequence it is not strange, if Job partake of the common distemper.<sup>30</sup>

***Job 11:13–16 If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; <sup>14</sup> If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.***

***<sup>15</sup> For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear:***

***<sup>16</sup> Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away:***

Zophar decrees that if Job will repent of his vanity, his countenance will be changed and he will soon forget all his previous misery. Simple men often casually conclude that complex problems may be handled with simple solutions. Perhaps Zophar was the last to speak simply because he could not distinguish himself among his group of friends. General exhortations do no good if sin is not correctly identified. And giving someone vague revelation will do nothing to help him with his very specific troubles.

***Job 11:17–20 And thine age shall be clearer than the noonday: thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning.***

<sup>18</sup> *And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety.*

<sup>19</sup> *Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee.*

<sup>20</sup> *But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.*

These are elegant thoughts, yet God inspired none of them. The proud of heart often promise that God's blessings will come when, in fact, the Lord has said nothing at all. It is even true today that many false prophets promise both revival and blessings that never materialize. Words are cheap, and those who casually use them do nothing to encourage real faith in God. *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay,*

*nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*<sup>31</sup> Men's words cannot control God's actions. To think so is a very dangerous path to walk on. Again, simple men give simple solutions and then infer that implementing them will lead to fantastic results. In truth, Zophar received absolutely no revelation from the Lord concerning Job's future. He was given zero communication that if Job followed his guidance, God would bless him and bring about all that Zophar said He would. Counterfeits consistently do this, leading men to believe that grand results will follow if they listen to them. Yet God's true prophets will be proven by the Lord not letting their words fall to the ground, something that Zophar could not claim in his false reproof of Job. *And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.*<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Matt. 5:36&37*

<sup>32</sup> *I Sam. 3:19*

*I Repent in Dust and Ashes*