

March 23

Scriptures: Read Job 11,12 & 13

Key Verse: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...” (Job 13:15)

Overview

The third so-called “friend” to speak to Job was Zophar, who was likely the youngest. He was the most harsh and dogmatic of the three. After listening to the words of Eliphaz and Bildad, and the responses of Job, Zophar rushed into the main points of his speech. He directly rebuked Job for his empty words, hypocrisy, and iniquity, yet Zophar’s accusations were without proof. He thought he was wise and had much knowledge about God. His words seem to imply that God had revealed to him the secrets of His wisdom, and he wished that God would show them to Job as well (11:6a).

Like the other counsellors, Zophar believed that Job’s suffering was as a result of his sin. The other two believed that Job’s suffering was in proportion to his sin, but Zophar went so far as to claim that what Job was going through was less than his iniquity deserved. Job had wished that God would vindicate him, but Zophar coldly wished that God would accuse him (11:5-6).

Although Zophar had some wrong ideas about God, he did express beautifully some truths about God, such as His wisdom, greatness, and omniscience. It is amazing to see the knowledge these men, including Job, had about God, even though at this time there was no written scripture. This is evidence that throughout every age, God did not leave Himself without a witness.

Zophar’s air of superiority, impudence, and even mockery of Job was expressed by his implication of Job’s ignorance. Zophar said it was just as impossible for a donkey to give birth to a man as it would be for an ignorant (“empty-headed”) man to become wise (11:12). Even Zophar’s kinder words, encouraging Job to repent, were not accepted by Job, because they did not apply to his situation. However, Zophar made some good and true points about the blessed results and rewards for repentance of sin: one can face the world without fear or shame, forgetting the despair and darkness of the past, which would be swallowed up in the bright light, as well as having security, hope, and favour (11:15-19).

Job began his response on a note of sarcasm, showing his resentment toward the three men for thinking they were the wisest men with the answers for Job’s problems. From Job’s words, it is clear that these men (especially Zophar) had not only angered and mocked him, but they had deeply hurt him by their unjustified rebukes and insinuations, all stemming from their misunderstanding of Job and the ways of God.

Job’s eloquent and profound words proved that he was not inferior to the three men in wisdom and knowledge of God. In fact, he explained that their knowledge was common (12:3) and their wisdom worthless, for they had a weak case against him, poor reasoning, and a wrong diagnosis (13:4-5, 12) for which, Job warned, they would have to answer to God (13:9-10). Job maintained that although he was experiencing suffering from God, he was still innocent, which led him to a new and radical conclusion: it is possible for the righteous to suffer and the wicked to prosper (12:4-6).

Whatever happened in the universe, Job believed that God was in control and truly sovereign. Job's emphasis, however, was God's destructive power and arbitrary nature. This is reflective of Job's bitterness and frustration with his miserable situation, yet Job still did not curse God.

Since Job believed he was innocent and not a hypocrite, he decided to take the risk and speak his case directly before God, even if it meant his death. Job, however, was confident that God would be just and compassionate, saying God "shall be my salvation", so he went to Him for refuge. He could find no refuge or comfort from his "friends".

Job pleaded that if he could be granted a fair trial, he would not hide himself from God (13:20), as did Adam who was filled with shame. He asked God to make him unafraid, so he might speak freely to Him; for Job longed to learn the truth and thus asked God many questions.

Prayer

Lord, like Job, we need You to speak to us and You have spoken in "Your Holy Word and by Your Holy Spirit. Help us to listen carefully to Your Word and understand by the teaching of Your Spirit. In the Name of the Living Word, our Lord Jesus, we pray.