

## March 27

**Scriptures:** Read Job 20 & 21

**Key Verse:** “Why do the wicked live and become old, yes, become mighty in power?”  
(Job 21:7)

### Overview

Zophar began his second and last speech by ignoring both Job’s plea for pity and his incredible insight about life after death and his Redeemer (19:21; 25-27). Zophar felt insulted and challenged by Job, and that was foremost upon his mind. Zophar gave three reasons why he felt it pertinent to reinforce once again his orthodox position (20:2-3): 1) because of his anxious thoughts (like Eliphaz, he was worried about the spreading of Job’s heresy, cf. 15:4), 2) because of his turmoil within (anger about Job’s departure from orthodoxy), and 3) because of his spirit of understanding (he thought he had all the right answers). He immediately proceeded to dogmatically expound his views and that of his two companions regarding the punishment of the wicked.

Due to Job’s past assertions that God allows the wicked to prosper (12:6), Zophar retorted saying that if they do, it is short-lived and only a temporal enjoyment, because God, in His wrath, will bring sudden judgment of destruction upon them while they are still in their prime and enjoying prosperity (20:5,11,18, 22-23; eg. Luke 12:16-20). Zophar spoke using the third person, “he will perish...” (20:7, 8), but he was obviously referring to Job, as is evident in his claim that “the heavens will reveal his iniquity” — a direct contradiction to Job’s words of hope and faith (cf. 16:19; 19:25).

Job took Zophar’s words personally and asked that, before they continued mocking him, they first listen carefully to him. Just as Zophar went boldly and directly to his main point, so did Job, but in contradiction to Zophar, whom Job claimed to be wrong (21:34). He showed that the wicked do indeed prosper and do not necessarily see the punishment of God. They live long, enjoyable, peaceful lives, and have many descendants (21:8), an easy death (21:13, 23), and an honourable burial (21:32). On the other hand, Job said that “another man [a righteous man] dies in the bitterness of his soul” without having enjoyed life (21:25). It seems apparent that both Zophar and Job exaggerated and went to extremes in order to support their position, but Job was closer to the truth than Zophar.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were the elite of society and had likely surrounded themselves with other wealthy and righteous people (Job had formerly been one of them). They lived an “ivory tower” type of existence; their eyes were closed to the realities around them, so Job asked them to question the travelers, since they would verify Job’s words (21.-29).

Job had come from the same background and school of thought as his friends, but because of his personal suffering, he was in the process of rethinking his theology; that is why he asked, “Why do the wicked live [prosperously] and become old” (21:7), even though they have rejected and scorned God and His ways ? (21:14-15). Job pondered the notion that God arbitrarily chooses at

random those he will punish with sorrows (whether righteous or wicked, 21:17c-18), for he still did not understand the purpose of his own suffering.

This same question about the wicked prospering and the righteous suffering still perturbs people today, as it did Job, Jeremiah (Jeremiah 12:1), and even the Psalmist (Psalm 73; 37:1-7). Real life is not dependent upon physical or material enjoyment, for the inner spiritual condition is far more important. The life in the physical body is fleeting and short compared to eternity, but it is the soul that lasts forever (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Romans 8:18), and it is in this eternal state that God's judgment will come, whether it be heavenly rewards or the punishment of hell fire. An excellent example is the biblical story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man, who had everything on earth, longed for just a drop of water from Lazarus, who was safe and happy in Abraham's bosom, but who had been a poor and sickly beggar while alive on earth (Luke 16:22-24).

God often uses the presence of the wicked in the world to bring Him glory, for He is sovereignly in control and uses them for His purposes. God also works out all things (whether good or evil) for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). He takes pleasure in blessing His children, for "every good gift... comes down from the Father" (James 1:17), but He allows trials and suffering, that they may result in our good (James 1:2,3). Trials can test a believer's faith and bring him forth purer, stronger, and closer to the Lord, having a higher quality of spirituality, that they might show more fully the image of Jesus Christ, who suffered more than any man could bear (1 Peter 4:12-13, 16, 19). When God's children go through suffering, they can be confident that God is with them to help, comfort, and sustain them (Psalm 23). Thus they learn to live above the circumstances, and when they emerge triumphantly from times of trials and suffering, it brings glory to God and puts Satan to shame.

Another factor Job overlooked, due to lack of the progressive revelation that would later make things clearer (we now have the full revelation of God in Jesus and His Holy Word) was that of the common grace of God for all His creation, which unbelievers also enjoy (Matthew 5:45; Romans 2:4-5) so that they might come to know God.

## **Prayer**

Thank You, Lord, that You have revealed Yourself fully to us today. Help us to respond even more fully to You because of this greater revelation.