**Drama During Difficult Times Series**

**“Act Six – The Drama of Zophar” – Job 11-14**

**Introduction**

Today we are continuing our series in the book of Job entitled “Drama During Difficult Times.” We are looking at the book of Job as a series of nine acts played out on the stage of life. What we have seen in the previous acts is Job, a blameless and upright man, suffering from the lost of his family, his possessions, and his wife is smitten with a deadly disease and finds himself sitting on a ash heap in physical pain and emotional anguish. His three friends travel from neighboring countries to sympathize and comfort Job. When they arrive they are overcome by grief and sadness over Job’s dreadful condition, which they never imagined would be so terrible. After sitting in silence for a week of mourning each of Job’s friends, and one who will arrive later, give their well-rehearsed speeches accusing Job being a hypocrite and insisting that God was punishing Job for actively engaging in sinful behavior. (Job 1-2) Job responds to each speech with honesty and integrity towards God and man. As the drama transitions from one act to the next the speeches grow in intensity but so does Job’s faith. Today we hear the speech from Job’s third friend, Zophar, and Job’s response recorded in chapters eleven through fourteen. As I have done throughout the series, I will only focus on the main perspective of Zophar’s speech, learn from Job’s response, and seek biblical truth to guide us as we journey through valley of the shadow of death.

**Act Six – The Drama of Zophar**

Welcome to Act Six – The Drama of Zophar. Zophar is probably the youngest of the three. Zophar has waited patiently and has had enough of Job’s responses. *“Are all these words to go unanswered? Is this talker to be vindicated? Will your idle talk reduce others to silence? Will no one rebuke you when you mock?”* (11.2-3)

Zophar had forgotten the biblical mandate to stand up in the presence of the elderly, to show respect to your elders, to not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. (Lev.19.32; ITim.5.1) Job’s first friend Eliphaz appealed to private revelations from God for the basis of his speech. Bildad, Job’s second friend, appealed to the teachings of his forefathers but Zophar appeals to nothing expect his arrogance and youthful “know it all” attitude.

Eliphaz, Job’s first friend, began his speech insulting Job’s character and Bildad, Job’s second friend, began his speech by comparing Job’s words to a bunch of hot air. (4.2, 8.2) But according to Zophar, Job is far worst than a “windbag” he is a heretic and blasphemer who mocks God. Zophar says to Job, “*You say to God, ‘My beliefs are flawless and I am pure in your sight.’ Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that He would open His lips against you . . .* (11.4-5) God will eventually open His lips but He will not speak against Job. God will speak against Job’s three friends including Zophar. (42.7)

**Zophar’s Speech**

Zophar tells Job, “*You say to God, ‘My beliefs are flawless and I am pure in your sight.’”* (11.4) Zophar believes that God needs him to defend God’s honor against Job’s mockery. Zophar twists Job’s words by accusing him of saying he was flawless and pure. Yes, Job has insisted that he was innocent but he never suggested that he was infallible. We must remember that God already set the stage in the beginning of the book telling us that Job was a blameless man, upright, who reverenced God, and turned away from evil. (1.1) And remember that God Himself gave testimony of Job’s spiritual integrity two times in the holy convocations asking Satan, *“Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”* (1.9, 2.3) Of course, Job nor anyone of his friends knew the Lord’s opinion concerning Job but these statements about Job’s fidelity helps us, the reader, to understand how ridiculous Zophar’s charges against Job’s character truly are. Zophar is furious with Job for his insistence of innocence and frustrated by Job’s rejection to repent. Zophar, along with Eliphaz and Bildad, believed that human suffering is directly a result of a person’s sin. In their theology the greater the sinner, the greater the suffering, and in Job’s case Job has to be the greatest sinner of them all. Therefore, Zophar launches an attack against Job saying,

*Can you fathom the mysteries of God?
     Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?* (11.7)

*They are higher than the heavens above—what can you do?
    They are deeper than the depths below—what can you know?* (11.8)

*Their measure is longer than the earth
     and wider than the sea.* (11.9)

Zophar’s understanding that God’s wisdom and knowledge are limitless and incomprehensible to humanity is true. It reminds me of inspired words of the Apostle Paul who wrote, “*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”* (Rom.11.33) But we must not miss Zophar’s sarcasm and the cutting edge of his intentions as he espouses biblical truth. Zophar sarcastically interrogates Job asking,

*Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?* (11.7)

For Zophar no one is capable of knowing God’s judgments especially not a sinner like you Job. *“What can you do?” “What can you know?”*  In Zophar’s opinion for Job to sit there on that ash heap suffering deep emotional and physical pain and say that he is flawless and pure is mocking to God and is verbal testimony that Job has sinned in his heart and with his mouth. Zophar is like the high priest who in centuries to come will say,*“He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy;**what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!”* (Mt.26.65b-66)

Zophar is an example of what the Apostle James teaching about the tongue writing, “*With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?*(Js.3.9-11) Of course not! But this is exactly what Zophar is doing.

Zophar’s lack of humility hinders him from understanding that if God ways are truly beyond our ways then there are reasons for suffering that are beyond our comprehension and the only One who truly knows why we are suffering is God Himself, the One who willed it. True biblical theology believes that God Himself governs all things. God governs the best and the worst, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yes, all things, come by God’s fatherly hand. (paraphrased from Heidelberg Catechism #27) As Job said in chapter one, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” (1.21) In Zophar’s theology the Lord gives because you have been a “good boy” and the Lord takes away because you have been a “bad boy.” Zophar’s theology is deeply seated in a works based theology. For Zophar a person can be saved by works, which is directly opposed to the Gospel. *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;****9****not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Eph.2.8)

Zophar concludes by insulting Job’s character calling him an idiotic fool saying, “*But the witless can no more become wise than a wild donkey’s colt can be born human.”* (11.12)Basically, Zophar has concluded that Job is an idiotic fool who will never change his wicked ways or show any remorse for his sinful behavior. For Zophar Job will follow the path of the wicked whose eyes will fail them, finding no escape from the wrath to come, and their only hope is to breathe their last dying gasp. (11.20) Zophar has finished his religious rant. How will Job respond to Zophar?

**Job’s Response**

Job responds to Zophar’s derogatory comments saying, *“You really think you are the only wise people and that when you die, wisdom will die with you!”* (12.2) Job’s friends believe that they are the depositories of all wisdom. Even though Job is in a very feeble condition, he is not intimidated by Zophar’s belittling comments and says, *“My mind is as good as yours; you are not better than me, I’m not inferior to you.* (12.3a; 13.2)

Job responds to Zophar’s dissertation on God’s unsearchable wisdom saying, “*Who does not know all these things?”* (12.3b) “Hey Zophar, everybody knows that God’s judgments are unsearchable. *“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.* (Rom.11.34-36) “All of these things are common knowledge, Zophar. You guys aren’t the only ones who know these wonderful truths about God.”

Listen, *“I* (know) *have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called on God and He answered— a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless!* (12.4) “Hey Zophar your wish has come true. Remember how you wished *‘that God would speak, that He would open His lips?’* (11.5) Well, He has! I called on God and He answered. Oh, what did God say? He told me that I was righteous and blameless in His sight. And you know what Zophar? You guys sit there in the comfort of your own health, spouting off your own philosophies of why people suffer, judging the sincerely of a person’s heart, and it’s not funny anymore.” (12.5-8)

So with the understanding of God unsearchable wisdom and with renewed confidence that the God of grace governs all things Job says,

*Which of all these does not know
     that the hand of the Lord has done this?*

*In His hand is the life of every creature
     and the breath of all mankind.* (12.9-10)

Job is explaining to Zophar and to the rest of his friends that the hand of the Lord has done this because the hand of God is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. Why God is doing this to Job he cannot explain. But Job does know it is not for the reason his friends believe. Job is saying to Zophar, “I know that you are young and you think you know it all but *is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?* (12.12) So, just sit back and let an old man teach you an invaluable truth.” (12.11-12)

First of all, whatever happens in life God is supreme and God is in control! (12.13-25)

*“To God belong wisdom and power;
    counsel and understanding are His.* (12.13)

*What He tears down cannot be rebuilt;
     those He imprisons cannot be released.* (12.14)

*If He holds back the waters, there is drought;
     if He lets them loose, they devastate the land.* (12.15)

(Note: Verses 16-25 follow the same pattern of parallelism)

**Job’s Faith**

Job’s faith is in a sovereign God. Brothers and sisters, it’s easy to have faith in the sovereignty of God when things are going good but Job is sitting on an ash heap in dreadful pain and misery scraping his skin with a piece of broken pottery. But Job knows that all things come from God’s fatherly hand. Job clings to his godly integrity knowing that a believer must accept good from God as well as adversity. (2.10)

Job is fed up with his friends smearing lies and calls them all worthless physicians. (13.4) He tells them that they speak deceitfully about God. (13.7) He ask how it would it turn out if God examined them. Could they deceive God as they deceive those who listen to their false teachings? (13.9) Job calls their words “*proverbs of ashes*” and their defenses “*defenses of clay*.” (13.12)

*“Keep silent and let me speak;
     then let come to me what may.* (13.13)

*Why do I put myself in jeopardy
     and take my life in my hands?* (13.14)

*Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him;
     I will surely defend my ways to His face.* (13.15)

*Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance,
     for no godless person would dare come before Him!* (13.16)

This is one of the greatest confessions of faith in the Bible!

*Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him;
     I will surely defend my ways to His face.* (3.15)

It is a three-fold confession of faith. Faith in God’s will – *Though He slay me*. Faith in God’s plan – *yet I will hope in Him.* Faith in our relationship with God – *I will surely defend my ways to His face.* These faith-filled statements have challenged countless believers through the centuries to strive for a similar trust in the Lord in the face of trials. Job realizes that, ultimately, the suffering he endures is allowed by God. It is God who has the right and the power to “slay” Job. No one – No thing – is above God. Even in the midst of his pain, Job knows that “*the LORD brings death and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and raises up.*” (ISam.2.6) Only the Lord alone holds the “keys of death.” (Rev.1.18)

The faith of Job is seen in the fact that even if he perceives that he is at the point of death, without any hope of recovery, he will hope in God. Or, more exactly according to the Hebrew text, *Shall I not trust in Him?*Shall I despair? No, I will not! I will put my hope, my trust in Him. Job may not understand what is happening to him or why, but he knows that God is good, loving, and trustworthy. For those who have been to the brink of death you know what Job is saying. Job’s attitude of heart resembles our Savior when He say, *“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”* (Mt.26.42)

Job concludes his confession of faith saying, *I will surely defend my ways to His face.*Job’s faith is solid no matter what may come and he will continue to righteously lament to God’s face. Until the day the Lord restores Job or takes him home he will make a free and full confession to his loving heavenly Father knowing that he has bold and confident access through faith in Him. (Eph.3.12) No matter what happens Job knows that *this will turn out for* his *deliverance.* (13.16)

Job goes to explain that everyone in chapter fourteen that whether a person is good or bad, innocence or guilty, everyone will eventually experience pain, suffering, and death saying, *All of us born to women live only a few days and have lots of trouble. We grow up like flowers and then dry up and die. We are like a passing shadow that does not last. Our time is limited. The Lord has given us only so many months to live and has set limits we cannot go beyond.* (14.1-2, 5)

*If a tree is cut down, there is hope that it will grow again and will send out new branches. Even if its roots grow old in the ground, and its stump dies in the dirt, at the smell of water it will bud and put out new shoots like a plant.* (14.8-9)

*But when we die, and our bodies are laid in the ground; when we take our last breath we are gone.* (14.10) A person might ask, “*Will the dead live again?”* (14.14a)And the answer is “yes!” But not in this dreadful condition! Not with all of these struggles and pain! Job tells Zophar, “*All my days are a struggle; I will wait until my change comes.*” Job is referring to when he will change from this life to the next. God’s Word teaches us that when we breathe our last our bodies will go to the grave and the soul’s of the redeemed will be with the Lord. Waiting until the day of the great resurrection and the reuniting of our souls with our resurrected and glorified bodies forever to be with the Lord in the new heavens and the new earth. Job confesses, “*All my days are a struggle;* but *I will wait until my change comes.*” On that day *the Lord will call, and I will answer Him.* (14.14-15) Job looks forward to the day when God *will wipe every tear from* our *eyes.* The day when *there will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”* (Rev.21.4)

But until that day comes Job knows that *the Lord will count* his *steps*and because of God’s grace the Lord *will not keep track of my sin.* Job looks forward to the day when *my wrongs will be closed up in a bag and the Lord will cover up my sin.* (14.16-17)

**Closing Thoughts**

In the face of such adversity Job trusts that God is in control. Job’s faith is not diminishing but growing stronger. Even though his outer man is decaying his inner man is being renewal day by day. (2Cor.4.16) Brothers and sisters, this is what we need to learn from Job as we journey through this life. These things happened to Job as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (ICor.10.11) We need to have faith in a sovereign God. *My flesh*

*and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* (Ps.73.26) Until our last day comes we must surrender to the sovereign will of God.

Brothers and sisters, we must understand our immortality. We must pray, *“Show me,*

*Lord, my life’s end  and the number of my days;  let me know how fleeting my life is.*

(Ps.39.4) We must embrace the importance of placing faith in Christ. As we stand on this side of the cross, the full revelation of God’s redemptive plan, we see that Christ is the first fruits. What happened to Jesus will happen to us.

At our passing our body goes to the grave and our soul goes to be with the Lord. There we wait for the ultimate resurrection of our body being reunited with our soul into a glorified body to live in the glory of God forever and ever. Job realizes his pain was not permanent. With God, there is always a way of escape. The suffering of this life is temporary and will end for those who trust in the Lord. After this life, there is eternal life with God in heaven for the believer. Jesus came to offer eternal life to all who would believe. (Jn.3.16) By God’s grace, faith is all that is required to be made right with God. (Eph.2.8-9) Is God calling you to Himself today? Surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Call on His name and you will be saved. Place your faith in Christ and overcome the drama of Zophar.

As the worship team comes up I have asked that we would sing the old hymn “Jesus, I my Cross have Taken.” This hymn was written by Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847) whose father abandoned him at an early age and even though the reconnected later in Henry’s life his dad never let his son call him "father."

The song is a testament to the power of the Gospel to overcome the tragedies of this life with faith in Christ.

Jesus, I my cross have taken
All to leave and follow Thee
Destitute, despised, forsaken
Thou from hence my all shall be
Perish every fond ambition
All I’ve sought or hoped or known
Yet how rich is my condition!
God and heaven are still my own

I think this is a song that Job would have sung.

**Call to Prayer**

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.* (2Cor.4.16)

**Benediction**

*After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.* (IPt.5.10-11)