

Title: Zophar's Parting Shot and Job's Rejoinder (Part 1)

Number: 0721Job20.1-29(21)

Text: 20.1-29

Central Idea: *When accused (or suffering) unjustly flee from God to God*

Date: July 18, 2021

{Read Selected Text}

20:1-7 1 **Then Zophar the Naamathite answered,** 2 **“Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, Even because of my inward agitation.** 3 **“I listened to the reproof which insults me, And the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.** 4 **“Do you know this from of old, From the establishment of man on earth,** 5 **That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the godless momentary?** 6 **“Though his loftiness reaches the heavens, And his head touches the clouds,** 7 **He perishes forever like his refuse; Those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’**

21:7-9 7 **Why do the wicked still live, Continue on, also become very powerful?** 8 **“Their descendants are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes,** 9 **Their houses are safe from fear, And the rod of God is not on them.**

[i] Swindoll quote

“The most treacherous enemy in the church is the tongue.”

By that, he means speech; what comes out of our mouths.

[ii] Sometimes the Bible likens the tongue to a sword

T/tongue cuts deep & wide. It spreads gossip, false doctrine, slander, lies, painful words.

When Solomon penned t/Proverbs, he included t/7 things t/Lord hates. Among them “A false witness who utters lies.” (6:19)

I know what it’s like to be slandered. To have things said about me that are factually untrue. Hurts. Many of you have been there, as well.

[iii] None of this is foreign to the Bible

Joseph, in t/OT, was falsely accused of rape by his master’s wife.

Moses had t/very same people he led to deliverance turn against him w/the accusation that he led them into t/wilderness to die.

David was falsely accused of attempting to dethrone King Saul.

For a dozen years he was a fugitive held sway under t/weight of those accusations.

Nehemiah led a movt. to rebuild t/wall around Jerus. Just b4 its completion his enemies spread t/word that he was in it for himself, to become King.

NT ==> Paul was accused of being a phony convert, a false teacher, a pseudo apostle, and a poor public speaker.

We could go on.

[iv] What about Jesus?

During His earthly min. he was accused of being an illegitimate child, having a demon, violating t/very Word He authored, (worst of all) blasphemy.

As it relates to false accusations, we could say that Jesus set t/standard You can’t get any lower than accusing t/God of t/univ. of lies & deceit

[v] As it relates to us—sinners saved by amazing grace—Jesus gave us these words of exhortation:

Matt. 5:11–12 11 “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

To look at it another way, in keeping w/BOJ ==>

When accused (or suffering) unjustly flee from God to God

That sounds like a contra. How can you flee from G. to Him? I think that’s what we see from Job. Job flees from God even as he flees to Him. Job knows G’ is sovereign over every inch of his suffering. Job complains, he flees in one sense even as he flees to God in another.

I know what that’s like. While suffering t/tragic car crash&subsequent loss of our daughter, I found G’s sov. both a blessing & a challenge. I fled from Him even as I fled to Him.

When accused (or suffering) unjustly flee from God to God.

[vi] Many Biblical examples of men who were unjustly accused

We have men like Joseph; Moses; David; Neh.; Paul.

But I could argue that at t/head of that class is a man named Job.

We’ve seen t/o t/chapters we’ve covered so far that Job’s 3 friends are slow to comfort & quick to accuse. They have lied about Job & slandered his name. But I don’t think they are lying deliberately. Their lies are born out of ignorance.

[vii] Deductive Logic

1. The Wicked Suffer Calamity
2. Job is Suffering Calamity
3. Job is Wicked

That is a valid deductive argument. The conclusion follows t/premises
Problem is it's not a sound argument; it's not true.

T/Logic of Job's friends (logic of t/times in which they lived) is that
calamity only befalls those who are wicked.

[viii] That brings us to Zophar . . .

Give Zophar a round of applause; these are his last words.

After chapter 20 we hear no more of him. Even tho chapter 21 ends
t/2d cycle of dialogue between Job & t/3, w/1 more cycle to go.
Zophar opts out. IOW - we will hear once more from Eliphaz and
Bildad, but no more from Zophar (who I believe is so exasperated - he
gives up - or, as we will see, he really has nothing new to say).

Zophar is youngest of t/3 friends & has a brashness to match his youth

[ix] One commentator hits the nail on the head when he writes:

“Zophar is the hottest and most violent of the three, and his
impassioned harangue is marked at once by a fanatical fierceness and
unmitigated coarseness that are unequalled in other parts of the drama.

. . . The innuendo that Job is perishing in his sin, cut down as an evil-
doer in the midst of his days . . .; the suggestion that he has been a
gourmet in wickedness, rolling it as a dainty morsel under his tongue .
. . .; the assumption that . . . Job is being compelled to disgorge his ill-

gotten wealth and deserves the fierceness of God's wrath . . . – a11 of this would be incredible if it were not the natural outcome of the dogmatic rabies which devours the innocent with the guilty, the fanatical perversity which changes the truth of God into a lie. Zophar's rhetorical diatribe is well worth studying as the utterance of a partisan who . . . magnifies God's strictness with a zeal [[that we might call "an indecent enthusiasm."]] . . . [H]is haste explains his theology; for, making God, as every zealot does, in his own image, he conceives Him, like an impatient judge, blazing out wrath against evil-doers, exulting in the doom which He pronounces upon them. . . . According to the zealot, the wheels of God grind quickly. . . . When the zealot makes his own opinions and sentiment as the standard of divinity there is a magnified Zophar on the throne of the universe. [Strahan, cited in Talbert, 124]

[x] As far as our message for today, Job chapter 20 (21 next time)
“Zophar’s Parting Shot and Job’s Rejoinder”

[xi] Overview of our outline:

I. The Last Words of Zophar (20:1–29)

A. The Wicked Die Young (20:4–11)

B. The Wicked Have Temporary Pleasure (Job 20:12–22)

C. The Wicked Die Painful Deaths (Job 20:23–29)

Then we have for next time ==>

II. Job’s Rejoinder (21:1–34)

whereby he refutes each of Zophar’s 3 points:

A. The Wicked Do Live Long Lives (21:1–16)

B. The Wicked Do Live Pleasurable Lives (21:17–21)

C. The Wicked Do Die the Same as the Righteous (21:22–34)

Focus your attention on chapter 20 ==>

I. The Last Words of Zophar (20:1–29)

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered, 2 “Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, Even because of my inward agitation.

Zophar is “agitated” or “troubled” at what he hears.

Words he uses here give t/impression that Zophar is “rattled.”

3 “I listened to the reproof which insults me, And the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.

“Job, I’m tired of listening to your nonsense and I’m offended. You know what, Job? My understanding of how life works & what’s true impels me to answer you this last time.”

Remember Job’s last words?

19:29 “. . . be afraid of the sword for yourselves, For wrath brings the punishment of the sword, So that you may know there is judgment.”

Zophar is insulted; threatened, really. After all, if Job is right everything Zophar stands for is wrong.

Zophar moves on w/the first of his points =>

A. The Wicked Die Young (20:4–11)

Those whom God opposes will not see a long life.

1. Similar argument was made by Bildad in his first speech (8:11–19) and Eliphaz in his second speech (15:29–35)

2. Verses 4 and 5 are key to Zophar’s argument

4 “Do you know this from of old, From the establishment of man on earth, 5 That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the godless momentary?”

a. “Don’t you “know” this, Job?”

I think the NAS is misleading here. It implies that Job should know that t/wicked live short, momentary lives. Better translation is given by t/ESV: “Do you not know this from of old,”

(1) “Know” is the Hebrew noun “yada” — to know with experience

Same word was used by Job in the last chapter==>

19:25 “As for me, I know [*yada*] that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.

4b-5 4b . . . **From the establishment of man on earth** [from t/time of Adam], 5 . . . **the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the godless momentary.**

A. The Wicked Die Young (20:4–11)

b. The Psalmist seems to affirm this

Psalm 37:35–36 35 I have seen a wicked, violent man Spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil. 36 Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more; I sought for him, but he could not be found.

(1) Problem is, this isn't always the case

God waited 120 years before sending the Flood (Gen. 6:3).

He gave the wicked Canaanites at least 4 centuries before He judged them (15:13–16).

Wiersbe is right when he says ==>

“Most of the people in Scripture who pondered the problem of evil in the world started from a different premise—the wicked enjoy long life and freedom from trouble, while the righteous suffer much and die young (Pss. 37; 73; Jer. 12:1–4). Zophar was deliberately blocking out a lot of data to prove his point.” [Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Patient, “Be” Commentary

Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 77–78]

Those who live sinful lives // reject God & His Word do not always (most of the time) die young.

Look around you. From t/beginning of time, to use Zophar's reference point, there has been no ironclad rule of heaven that either sinfulness leads to a short life or that G. always blesses His saints w/longevity.

The godly Scottish Presbyterian minister Robert Murray McCheyne died was he was only twenty-nine years old. David Brainerd, missionary to the Native Americans, was twenty-nine when he died. Our daughter was 14.

By Zophar's faulty logic, everyone who dies young is guilty of some sin that caused their demise.

We're not talking about poor lifestyle choices. If you are sexually promiscuous; a drug user; reckless — your lifespan is generally going to be shorter than that of a true believer in X whose lifestyle is consonant w/his or her profession. Not what Zoph. is referring to here.

He's not talking about the natural consequences of a wicked life, but t/immediate judgment of G. on all t/wicked w/o exception.

3. Note the metaphors Zophar uses in verses 6-11

a. From distinction to dung (6-7)

6 “Though his loftiness reaches the heavens, And his head touches the clouds, [distinction / a big-shot] 7 He perishes forever like his refuse [רֶשֶׁת - feces/dung]; Those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’

In those days, one's excrement was buried and returned to dust. Or to use a modern metaphor, flushed down the toilet. Once you push t/handle t/waste goes down t/porcelain hole; never to be seen again.

b. Like a fading dream (distinction; dung; dream) (8-9)

8 “He flies away like a dream, and they cannot find him; Even like a vision of the night he is chased away. 9 “The eye which saw him sees him no longer, And his place no longer beholds him. [parallels t/that of v. 7: Those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’

4. Verse 10

10 “His sons favor the poor, And his hands give back his wealth.

“No truly satisfactory interpretation of this awkward verse exists.”

[David J. A. Clines]

This likely means that the unrighteous man (Job) gained his wealth by immoral means and that his children (of whom Job has none at this point in the narrative) will have to pay back those whom their father defrauded.

United Bible Society’s Handbook on translation suggests the verse be paraphrased as ==> “The sons of the wicked father will have to return to the poor what their father took from them.” [UBS Handbook Series]

c. Distinction; Dung; Dream—then Death (v. 11)

11 “His bones are full of his youthful vigor, But it lies down with him in the dust.

A. The Wicked Die Young (20:4–11)

5. Remember the words of Billy Joel’s 1977 hit song “Only the good die young”?

So come on Virginia show me a sign

Send up a signal and I'll throw you the line

The stained-glass curtain you're hiding behind

Never let's in the sun

Darlin' only the good die young

[Billy Joel, 1977, “The Stranger” album]

a. Here's Zophar's version:

So come on Job, listen to us

We're here to help, don't ya' fret and fuss

If you don't repent you will most surely die

And that won't be much fun.

You see, only the wicked die young.

Yeah, only the wicked die young.

I. The Last Words of Zophar (20:1–29)

A. The Wicked Die Young (20:4–11)

But, B4 they die (here's his 2d point)

B. The Wicked Have Temporary Pleasure (20:12–22)

They may have some apparent success, even joy, but it will be short-lived (remember, t/wicked die young).

1. Here Zophar uses several metaphors for eating

a. Two conditions and a conclusion in vv. 12-14

12 [condition] **“Though evil is sweet in his mouth And he hides it under his tongue,** 13 [condition] **Though he desires it and will not let it go, But holds it in his mouth,** 14 [conclusion] **Yet his food in his stomach is changed To the venom of cobras within him.**

(1) As I studied this ethylene glycol poisoning came to mind

EG is t/main ingredient in antifreeze. It's sweet to t/taste, but deadly if consumed in sufficient amounts.

2011 report by t/National Library of Medicine was entitled:
“Intentional ethylene glycol poisoning increase after media coverage
of antifreeze murders”

That is, people were murdering others (often a spouse) by mixing EG
in their foods, like using it to sweeten coffee.

Don’t do that! Authorities are wise to it and you will get caught.
(Not to mention that you will face temporal & eternal ramifications
for your immoral act).

I think there’s been a movement to add an ingredient to antifreeze that
makes it taste bad.

But that’s also a good metaphor for t/deadly consequences of sin:
something sweet to the taste that ultimately kills you.

Like t/laboratory experiment I read about years ago whereby scientists
hooked a control group of mice on drugs. They then put out equal
containers of food, along w/the drugs. T/mice neglected t/food
consuming t/drugs until became emaciated and died.

Proverbs 20:17 Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, But
afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.

b. Verses 15-16 continue this eating metaphor

**15 “He swallows riches, But will vomit them up; God will expel
them from his belly. 16 “He sucks the poison of cobras; The
viper’s tongue slays him.**

(1) Picture is that sinful pleasures look, taste, feel good—for a time

(a) That's true! These 5 verses could be Proverbs!

12 “Though evil is sweet in his mouth And he hides it under his tongue, 13 Though he desires it and will not let it go, But holds it in his mouth, 14 Yet his food in his stomach is changed To the venom of cobras within him. 15 “He swallows riches, But will vomit them up; God will expel them from his belly. 16 “He sucks the poison of cobras; The viper’s tongue slays him.

(b) Zophar wrongly imputes these words to Job

When accused (or suffering) unjustly flee from God to God

2. More misery in verses 17 & 18

17 “He does not look at the streams, The rivers flowing with honey and curds. [more sweetness—the idea that he will not live long enough to enjoy it, implied in t/next v.] 18 “He returns what he has attained And cannot swallow it; As to the riches of his trading, He cannot even enjoy them.

3. Verse 19 is key (essential)—for the first time Zophar gives a reason why the wicked (Job) suffer

19 “For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor; He has seized a house which he has not built.

a. For the first time a specific sin appears: oppression of the poor and needy

T/OT is filled w/injunctions to care for t/poor, be generous to widows,
& exercise generosity & hospitality.

Charity is a mark of those who fear God.

(1) Eliphaz makes a similar accusation in chapter 22

5 “Is not your wickedness great, And your iniquities without end? 6
“For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, And
stripped men naked. 7 “To the weary you have given no water to
drink, And from the hungry you have withheld bread. 8 “But the earth
belongs to the mighty man, And the honorable man dwells in it. 9
“You have sent widows away empty, And the strength of the orphans
has been crushed.

You see why it’s so important that we know right at t/beg. of this
story that Job is a righteous, God-fearing man?

These are false accusations based on a false presupposition:

T/wicked suffer; Job suffers; he must be wicked

(what greater crime than that of oppressing those in need).

4. Verses 20-22 are difficult (NIV)

20 “Surely he will have no respite from his craving; he cannot
save himself by his treasure. 21 Nothing is left for him to devour;
his prosperity will not endure. 22 In the midst of his plenty,
distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon
him. [NIV]

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4 quick points ==>

1. Preparation for Destruction (v. 23)

23 **“When he fills his belly, God will send His fierce anger on him
And will rain it on him while he is eating.** [more of eating metaphor
we’ve seen before]

2. Picture of Death (vv. 24-25)

24 **“He may flee from the iron weapon, But the bronze bow will
pierce him. 25 “It is drawn forth and comes out of his back, Even
the glittering point from his gall. Terrors [death] come upon him,**

3. Permanent Destitution (vv. 26, 28)

After he dies, his possessions / wealth are meaningless ==>

26 **Complete darkness is held in reserve for his treasures, And
unfanned fire will devour him; It will consume the survivor in his
tent.**

28 **“The increase of his house will depart; His possessions will
flow away in the day of His anger.**

4. Predestined Decree (vv. 27, 29)

27 **“The heavens will reveal his iniquity, And the earth will rise
up against him.**

Legal sense of standing to testify. Here God testifies, along w/all of
creation to t/Job’s guilt.

29 **“This is the wicked man’s portion from God, Even the heritage decreed to him by God.”**

|
“Inherited”

I. The Last Words of Zophar (20:1–29)

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Thus ends the words of Zophar. We’re going to save Job’s rebuttal for next week.

As for Zophar, one scholar writes of this chapter ==>

Zophar, of course, in his philosophical shortsightedness, made no allowance for a person being afflicted for any reason other than retribution for sin. In his stubborn invective, he flared at Job with venomous words, like the poisonous snake he spoke about. [The Bible

Knowledge Commentary]

When accused (or suffering) unjustly flee from God to God

Where do we go from here?

Specifically, What do we do when we are falsely accused?

Few quick ideas . . .

1. Find your Conscience

Examine your heart to see if there's any truth in what is being said about you. It may be 98% false. But that means it's 2% true.

Deal w/that 2%. Use it as a time to grow in t/grace & knowledge of X.

2. Forsake Gossip

Don't be party to gossip. I've been here nearly 19 years. In that time we saw one mass-exodus from t/CH. That was largely due to gossip about things that were not true. Trust your leaders. During that time t/elders knew some things they could not in good conscience make public.

Be sure you have all the facts straight ==>

20.3 "I listened to the reproof which insults me, And the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.

Zophar's "spirit of understanding" was wrong.

Proverbs 19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who tells lies will not escape.

3. Forgo being Defensive

I find that as a gen. rule, don't defend yourself unless you have to.

Defend your doctrine // family // friends. Don't be overly defensive.

Joyfully accept attacks—especially if they are because of Jesus.

Matthew 5:11–12 11 “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

4. Fly to the Cross

Where is our hope? // vindication? Who knows all t/facts?

By all means, if you are not in X, you will face eternity in hell.

“Hell is the place where all evil enjoyment is turned to endless nausea.” [Christopher Ash, 224]

5. Flee from God to God

11th c. poet captured this beautifully when he wrote ==>

*“Therefore though You slay me, I will trust You.
For if You pursue my iniquity,
I will flee from You to Yourself,
And I will shelter myself from Your wrath in Your shadow,
And to the skirts of Your mercies I will lay hold
Until You have mercy on me.
And I will not let You go till You bless me.”*

[From “The Royal Crown” by 11th c. Spanish-Jewish poet Solomon ibn Gabirol, as cited in Talbert, 128]