

Job's Continuing Response to Zophar

Job 13-14

Job 13:1-19 - *"Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it. ² What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. ³ But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God. ⁴ But you forgers of lies, you are all worthless physicians. ⁵ Oh, that you would be silent, and it would be your wisdom!*

⁶ Now hear my reasoning, and heed the pleadings of my lips. ⁷ Will you speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for Him? ⁸ Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God? ⁹ Will it be well when He searches you out? Or can you mock Him as one mocks a man? ¹⁰ He will surely rebuke you if you secretly show partiality. ¹¹ Will not His excellence make you afraid and the dread of Him fall upon you? ¹² Your platitudes are proverbs of ashes, your defenses are defenses of clay.

¹³ "Hold your peace with me, and let me speak, then let come on me what may! ¹⁴ Why do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hands? ¹⁵ Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. ¹⁶ He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him. ¹⁷ Listen carefully to my speech, and to my declaration with your ears.

¹⁸ See now, I have prepared my case, I know that I shall be vindicated. ¹⁹ Who is he who will contend with me? If now I hold my tongue, I perish.

Background Notes

Job's response to Zophar's first speech is three chapters long - Job 12, 13 & 14. It is divided into two major parts: In Part One, (Job 12-13:19), Job tells Zophar that he and his two friends are wrong. They're wrong in their premise that Job is suffering because of personal sin, and they're wrong in their callous and uncaring attitude.

In Part Two of Job's response (Job 13:20-28 & Job 14), he presents what he views as his hopeless case directly to God. Thus, Part Two of Job's response is a prayer of despair.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Job's first response to Zophar is a petition for silence.

In Job 13:1-19, Job continues to criticize his friends for their bad counsel – but **now** Job asks his friends to just stop talking! *"Oh, that you would be silent, and it would be your wisdom!"* (v5). They're sure that Job is suffering because he's

involved in some sort of personal, hidden sin. All Job has to do, they say, is to confess the sin in his life, and God will heal him. But Job argues that his three friends are wrong. He's not involved in secret sin. He's blameless! He doesn't know why God has allowed this suffering in his life, but it certainly isn't because of personal sin.

So Job tells his friends, "Be quiet! You don't know what you're talking about!" They certainly weren't comforting him (v1-5). In fact, they were misrepresenting God - and they will have to answer for that (v6-12). So, says Job, "Be quiet, and listen to me as I prepare my case - that I will present directly to God!" (v13-19).

In these verses we see that Job is willing to die by the direct hand of the Lord if need be, but at least he will present his case directly to God. And he wants to present it by himself, without the bad theology and wrong presuppositions of his three human counselors.

The first response of Job to Zophar is a petition for silence.

2. Job's first response to Zophar is a prayer of despair.

In Job 13:20 we come to Part Two of Job's response to Zophar's first speech. "This is the case that I will present before God," Job tells his friends. Essentially it is a prayer, because Job directly addresses God - but it is a prayer of despair.

Job 13:20-28 - *"Only two things do not do to me, then I will not hide myself from You. ²¹ Do not withdraw Your hand far from me, and let not the dread of You make me afraid. ²² Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, then You respond to me. ²³ How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin. ²⁴ Why do You hide Your face, and regard me as Your enemy? ²⁵ Will You frighten a leaf driven to and fro? And will You pursue dry stubble? ²⁶ For You write bitter things against me, and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth. ²⁷ You put my feet in the stocks, and watch closely all my paths. You set a limit for the soles of my feet. ²⁸ Man decays like a rotten thing, like a moth-eaten garment."*

In those verses Job essentially asks God to relieve his suffering so that he can have a fair trial in a neutral court. Job asks God not to frighten him. He pleads with God to please show him iniquities and sins, even the sins of his youth, if indeed that is why he is suffering.

Chapter 14

In Job 14, we sense the depth of despair in Job's prayer. He bemoans the fact that this short life is full of trouble (v1).

Job 14:1-6 - *"Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. ² He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue. ³ And do You open Your eyes on such a one, and bring me to judgment with Yourself? ⁴ Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!"*

⁵ *Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with You. You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass.* ⁶ *Look away from him that he may rest, till like a hired man he finishes his day.*”

The older we get, the more we can agree with Job that life is short! “*Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with You. You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass*” (v5). And the rest of Scripture backs up Job’s statement.

In his sovereignty, God determines the number of our days and years. Job asks that God would let man’s short life be peaceful and free from harassment (v6).

Job 14:7-12 - *“For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. ⁸ Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, ⁹ yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant. ¹⁰ But man dies and is laid away. Indeed he breathes his last, and where is he? ¹¹ As water disappears from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dries up, ¹² So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep.”*

In Job 14:7-12, Job speaks of the futility and finality of death. By the way, these verses cannot be used to support either the false teaching of “annihilation” (that the wicked will not live on in hell forever, but will eventually be destroyed). And it does not teach the false idea of “soul sleep” (after death the soul enters an unconscious state, like sleep until the resurrection). The rest of Scripture does not support either of those false teachings. In these verses, Job is merely contrasting the life of trees and people. Some trees have the advantage of being able to grow up again after they’re cut down, but people do not. When the people die, that’s the end - and that seems unfair to Job.

Job 14:13-17 - *“Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! ¹⁴ If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait till my change comes. ¹⁵ You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands. ¹⁶ For now You number my steps, but do not watch over my sin. ¹⁷ My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and You cover my iniquity.”*

In these verses we see that Job is hoping there might be a final reckoning after death, because then he might be vindicated at last! Right now, says Job, there is no vindication for him in this life.

Job 14:18-22 - *“But as a mountain falls and crumbles away, and as a rock is moved from its place, ¹⁹ as water wears away stones, and as torrents wash away the soil of the earth, so You destroy the hope of man. ²⁰ You prevail forever against him, and he passes on; You change his countenance and send him away. ²¹ His sons come to honor, and he does not know it. They are brought low, and he does not perceive it. ²² But his flesh will be in pain over it, and his soul will mourn over it.”*

Job's despair, with no hope in this life, is emphasized in verses 18-22 of his prayer. Without the further revelation of Scripture, our prayers would be filled with despair, just as Job's prayers were. Life is short and hopeless, filled with sorrow and pain. The first response of Job to Zophar is a prayer of despair.

Practical Application

Praise the Lord, we have more light than Job!

"If a man dies, shall he live again?" (14:14).

We know the answer to that question, because we have further light. We are blessed to have the full canon of Scripture!

Job did not. Job is one of the earliest books of written Scripture, so Job didn't have the full revelation of the entire Word of God. He had *hope* for life after death, and he was *confident* that there is life after death - even bodily resurrection (as we'll see in Job 19). But Job certainly didn't have the details that we have today. We have the light of the full revelation of the Word of God.

Listen to some of the details we know now because of the revelation of Scripture since Job's time:

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 - *"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

And Philippians 3:20-21 - *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."*

What wonderful truths for the believer! We have more light than Job – praise the Lord!