

## The Terrifying End of the Wicked

Job 20:1-29

- A. Zophar responds not so much to instruct Job, but to defend himself and his other two friends **1-3**
1. Here we have yet another lengthy picture of the terrible judgment that awaits unrepentant sinners
    - a. We know all Scripture is profitable, but might wonder why another sermon on judgment is necessary
    - b. For one thing, it reminds us all of that tendency to judge others based on externals without much evidence
      - 1) One bit of circumstantial evidence, one rumor, can be used to destroy a good man's reputation
      - 2) Zophar was one of Job's friends and yet he easily jumped to the conclusion of Job's guilt
    - c. The speeches of these three men accurately describe what life is like under the judgment of God
      - 1) It is true they mistakenly applied these judgments to Job, but they do reflect the suffering involved
      - 2) It is also true they thought this judgment always came in this life, but they were right that it will come
    - d. These descriptions of life under God's judgment can be a practical benefit in three ways
      - 1) They remind us of what the unsaved will face and prompt us to warn them to flee the wrath to come
      - 2) They help us to grasp the depth of our Lord's suffering on the cross when he took our sin upon himself
      - 3) They also help us prepare for the suffering Jesus warns us can come our way for identifying with him
  2. Zophar offers his argument because he is offended by the personal insults Job leveled at him and his friends
    - a. He was disturbed because he felt the sting of Job's personal attack and felt it was unfairly dishonoring
    - b. Job closed his last speech by warning his friends God's sword was aimed at them for tormenting him
      - 1) Their counsel brought no comfort or edification for they refused to accept his claim of innocence
    - c. Job had suffered for months from illness, isolation and shameful treatment, yet Zophar had little comfort
      - 1) He feels insulted by Job though and immediately feels the need to defend himself
      - 2) Yet he still did not learn to sympathize with Job who was only defending himself, as this speech shows
- B. Job was arguing against a settled truth that everyone knew and accepted: the joy of the wicked is fleeting **4-11**
1. From the time Adam stepped foot on this earth everyone has known sin produces misery **4-5**
    - a. It was hard for Zophar to see Job's side of things because it seemed to him Job was being foolishly blind
    - b. From the day Adam ate the forbidden fruit and was cast out of Eden, suffering always follows from sin
    - c. Sure there were times when the wicked prospered and found pleasure, but these were always short-lived
    - d. One only had to watch the sinful man briefly to see divine judgment always fell on their lives (or did it)
  2. Success fills the wicked with pride, but his every gain will quickly turn to loss for him and his children **6-11**
    - a. Sometimes the accomplishments of the wicked exalt them in the eyes of others far above other men
      - 1) His head seems to touch the clouds and as a result his pride swells so that it reaches the heavens
      - 2) Like the builders of the tower of Babel, they think they can reach heaven itself and make it their home
      - 3) For a brief few moments it seems to them, and to many others, that nothing is beyond their reach
    - b. Though they seem to ascend to heaven itself, it turns out they are only men of dust who become like dung
      - 1) Quicker than a dream disappears upon awakening these great men are gone never to be seen again
      - 2) People who happened to see them in their glory will one day ask, 'Whatever happened to him?'
      - 3) Despite their fame and grandeur that made them the envy of many, few will take note of their passing
      - 4) People will gradually notice they are no longer around, noted simply in an empty desk or parking place
    - c. Rather than leaving behind a legacy that will endure for the ages, they leave only loss and debt behind
      - 1) The return of his ill-gotten gains will begin with personal humiliation as he is forced to return them
      - 2) His children will finish the process as they have to pay those wronged rather than enjoy an inheritance
      - 3) He may have been envied, but for no good reason as all his wealth and prestige were gone in an instant
      - 4) Though the wicked looks to everyone full of youthful vigor, he will be cut off in the prime of life
    - d. What Zophar says here about the wicked losing all they worked to gain will be true enough some day
      - 1) Often enough this happens in this world, but it will inevitably happen to all the wicked in the next age
      - 2) Zophar's description is accurate enough, but the implication of his addressing Job with this is not
        - a) The suggestion is that Job lost everything he had because he was one of the wicked spoken of
      - 3) Zophar was mistaken because, like our Lord, his suffering had nothing to do with his own sin
- C. The punishment endured by the wicked was a certainty because he refuses to give up the pleasures of sin **12-19**
1. The very ill-gotten gains that bring him such joy will become the source of his suffering and poverty **12-16**
    - a. The wicked man takes from the poor and helpless who cannot stop him and does so without any regrets
      - 1) Far from feeling a sense of remorse over the pain he causes others, he rejoices in what he has done
      - 2) He has no concern for the poor whom he robbed (10), but sees them only as a means to an end

- 3) He does not see them as people, but as easy targets whose wealth, little as it may be, can enrich him
- 4) The suffering he causes in the process has no effect on him and so means nothing to him
- b. What occupies the mind of the wicked is the fruit of the evil he has done, and this he savors
  - 1) He thinks about his growing wealth, the influence it buys, security it brings, pleasures it can acquire
  - 2) He daydreams about these things, rolls them around in his mind as we might a tasty treat in our mouth
  - 3) He enjoys every moment of mulling these things over so the very thought of losing them is unbearable
  - 4) He simply cannot imagine a good life apart from his wealth gained at a cost of making others miserable
- c. What he does not realize is that in wrongly gaining his wealth he has poisoned the whole lot of it
  - 1) He had given no thought to the fact that there was a just God who was watching and would take action
  - 2) God would turn all he acquired and cherished into a venom that would make it loathsome and noxious
  - 3) Like some lottery winners whose decent life was ruined by wealth that left them impoverished
    - a) so the wicked man would find his ill-gotten gain was a curse that ruined his life as a whole
2. Wickedness promises the same kind of blessings God offers, but delivers frustration and want **17-19**
  - a. The Lord promised Israel a land flowing with milk and honey; Zophar mentions rivers of cream and honey
    - 1) Plundering the poor seemed to promise a life full of the rich blessings God promises to his people
    - 2) Evil may dangle such promises before our eyes, but can't deliver the satisfaction these ought to bring
    - 3) Some of the good things it promises may be attained, but they never bring a true sense of contentment
    - 4) Wealth, pleasure, even luxuries or not evil or God would not offer a land flowing with milk and honey
    - 5) The problem is the love of these things that compels some people to attain them by wicked means
  - b. The wicked man here has multiple houses, a symbol of wealth, but only because he oppressed the poor
    - 1) He did not grow rich by hard work blessed by God, but by taking from those who could least afford it
    - 2) He deprived the poor of what was rightfully theirs and left them destitute, no resources for the future
    - 3) He seized houses he did not build, but the work he put into this was in vain because God was watching
    - 4) His fortune, no matter how impressive, would all be returned so that he would enjoy none of it
- D. The end that God appoints for the wicked is one from which they cannot by any means escape **20-29**
  1. Like the Greek mythological figure Tantalus, the wicked will crave satisfaction he can never enjoy **20-23**
    - a. The curse of the wicked who seek God's blessings through sinful means is an insatiable appetite
      - 1) No matter how much he has, it is never enough so that he never finds peace from craving more
      - 2) He grabs, cheats, steals to get more, but whatever treasure trove he gains it can't supply what he needs
      - 3) The more he has the less he should have to worry about tomorrow's wants and needs, yet
        - a) when tomorrow comes his fortune cannot save him, and there is nothing more for him to gain
      - 4) Like some wealthy sports and entertainment stars, he lives beyond his means till he has nothing
    - b. In the midst of his life of luxury, judgment falls and the full force of his miserable life becomes obvious
      - 1) His belly is full, all that he wanted is his, and then the anger of God falls on his life
      - 2) In an instant his life is turned upside down, his fleeting glory is stripped from him, all is lost
  2. No matter how much wealth he accumulates, he will never find a sense of security that brings peace **24-26**
    - a. Money gives one the ability to build forts for homes and hire body guards to protect you
    - b. It turns out though that no matter how rich a man is, he cannot escape the burning anger of the Lord
    - c. In trying to outrun an iron weapon the wicked run straight into a bronze arrow that pierces him
    - d. No matter how much security he surrounds himself with he finds terror rather than peace his companion
    - e. The wealth meant to be a monument to his life is destined for darkness so his glory is forever hidden
    - f. His end is certain because the fire that will consume him is not fanned into flame by man, but by God
  3. The day will come that his sin finds him out and the wrath of God will strip him of all that he has **27-29**
    - a. The world will not remember him for his wealth, but as a vile sinner whose guilt deserved punishment
      - 1) Lenin, Stalin and Hitler were men who wielded great power and yet they are remembered as monsters
      - 2) Stripped of their power to harm others their wickedness is exposed and the earth turns against them
    - b. The fate allotted for them by God can no more be escaped than a home can be saved from a tsunami
      - 1) Their heritage is not a good name admired by men, but a death at the hands of a just, divine Judge
    - c. The wicked may seem to be untouchable by any force of goodness and justice, but they are not
      - 1) Zophar may wrongly apply this picture to Job, but it is a picture of the terrible fate of the wicked
      - 2) Though every court in this world may allow them to escape, they will not escape the wrath of God
      - 3) Since that is an awful, dreadful end, let us pray for and witness to those headed there so they may repent
      - 4) We know that is what the wicked deserve, but as God delivered us, so he can deliver others