

JOB 12

“WISDOM SHALL DIE WITH YOU!”

Zophar concluded his thoughts, and then Job spoke again. He upbraided his friends with the good opinion that they had of their own wisdom compared with his. We are often foolishly inclined to call reproofs reproaches, and to think ourselves mocked when we are only advised and admonished; yet in this case, there was reason for Job's charge. His friends were determined to twist everything he said, and every present and former action of his life; and so we must remove from our minds all surprise at his keen and indignant reproof – especially since this was a time when he naturally and reasonably looked for consolation, or at least forbearance. He said to them, “No doubt you are the only people who are wise or excellent! So sound is your judgment, so charitable is your nature, and so wise and prudent are your words – that surely when you die, all this will die with you!” Nothing can exceed the satire of this statement, but Job soon changed his tone again to one of deep and grave seriousness. He continued to assert that no matter what height of understanding they had attained to, he was not inferior to them. The absurd pride of these men was a sure evidence of their folly, for pride is always the handmaid of ignorance.

Job did not deny the truth of what his friends said, but this was not the proper time and place to bring terrors before him. He was in a season when he needed strong encouragement; but instead, his friends were mocking their afflicted neighbor. However, Job referred to himself as one who was answered when he called upon the Lord. “Beware, then,” he warned, “how you laugh to scorn one of God's justified ones – although he is passing through trials which would overwhelm him, if he were not under Divine protection.” He was ready to slip with his feet, and he raised his imploring eyes in vain to men who – instead of supporting him – only endeavored to make him sink lower in his fall. Instead of giving him the oil he needed for his flickering lamp, they were extinguishing it entirely.

Job disagreed with his friends' assertion that only wicked people suffer affliction. He appealed to the fact that the most audacious robbers, the most tyrannical oppressors, and the most impious wretches often prosper on this earth! Yet this is not by fortune or chance, for the Lord orders these things. Worldly prosperity is of small value in His sight; He has better things laid up in store for His children.

It seems that Job forgot his bodily ailments for a while, as he urged his friends to take a lesson from nature. He insisted that even the animals – because

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Job condemns what his friends said of him – verses 1-5
- ❖ He speaks of how the wicked often enjoy earthly prosperity – verses 6-11
- ❖ He confirms what they said of God's wisdom, power, and Providence – verses 12-25



of man's sin and its subsequent curse – were living evidence that much evil still abounds, even in the midst of God's goodness. The whole creation groans under oppression, yet no accusation arises out of it against Divine love and wisdom. Animals are slaughtered to gratify the luxury of the most wicked persons, and the fishes of the sea are dragged forth to pamper the appetites of sinners. "But," said Job, "who does not see that despite all this, the goodness of God is still the same?"

Beginning in verse 12, Job entered into a noble discourse concerning the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of the Lord. He orders all the affairs of the children of men according to the counsel of His own will, which none can resist. Here Job did not complain; rather, he gave many instances of God's powerful management of the children of men – overruling all their counsels and overcoming all their oppositions. Having all strength and wisdom, the Lord knows how to make use of even those who are foolish and bad. If He did not do so, there is so little true wisdom and honesty in the world, that everything would have been in total confusion and ruin long ago!

These important truths were intended to convince the disputants that they were out of their area of expertise in attempting to determine the Lord's reasons for afflicting Job. His ways are unsearchable, and His judgments are past finding out. He is righteous in all His ways, and He is holy in all His works. When He breaks something down, it cannot be built again; when He shuts a door, no one can open it. The deceiver and the deceived are both His, and they shall both ultimately minister to His glory – no matter what their intentions are. Many beautiful and glorious illustrations are in the Word of God, which confirm His sovereignty and wisdom. For example, when Joseph was sold as a slave, both the deceiver and the deceived were in God's hands; and the outcome – the preservation of Jacob's entire family – arose out of that dark event. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord!" (Ps. 107:43)

Is Satan accusing us as he did Job? Has our gracious God permitted him to harass us with his devices? Do we have the unkindness of friends, or the malice of open enemies, to grapple with? Has the Lord brought us under any bereaving Providences, or any bodily or spiritual afflictions? It is always a sweet mercy – however harsh it may seem at first – which ends by bringing our soul to Jesus! Job was stripped of all his earthly comforts, but he did not lose his God. No matter how poor, sick, or sore we may be; yet if we have Jesus, there is enough reason to sing, "Hallelujah!"

Lord, we praise You as the One Whose ways are unsearchable, and Whose judgments are past finding out. Truly, You are righteous in all Your ways, and holy in all Your works! Amen.