

# JOB

## A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

### STUDY ELEVEN

## Responding Wisely When Falsely Accused

*Selections from Job 20–21*

*Just a lot of lip banging from Zophar. He's talking nonsense. It isn't true, even though he says it poetically and beautifully and even convincingly. But Job doesn't take it on the chin.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THERE'S no more insidious enemy in the church than the tongue. Among the top seven things the Lord hates is “a false witness who pours out lies” (Proverbs 6:19). The lies of sharp-tongued witnesses have hurt many of God's most faithful servants.

Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of rape, landing him in prison. The Israelites turned on Moses after he delivered them from Egyptian slavery, accusing him of leading them into the desert to kill them. Saul falsely accused David of attempting to dethrone him. Nehemiah was falsely accused of rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem to appoint himself king. Peter and John were accused of preaching a false Christ. Some believers accused Paul of a phony conversion as his means of betraying and trapping them.

Our Savior, Jesus Himself, faced endless false accusations—of illegitimate birth, of being an evildoer and a drunkard who socialized with sinners, of being demon-possessed and a Sabbath-breaker, of blasphemy and inciting tyranny against Caesar—which culminated in His unjust death on the cross.

Living before these biblical characters, Job was the first in the long line of falsely accused saints. Already battered from Satan's ruthless attacks, Job had to endure the treacherous tongues of his friends. In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, Zophar's verbal blade struck once again, cutting Job to the quick. But, as we will see, Job's comeback was greater than his setback. Job is a wise and comforting model for Christians through the centuries who feel the sting of lying tongues.



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SEARCHING  
THE  
SCRIPTURES  
BIBLE STUDIES

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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

King David echoed Job's anguish and plea for divine understanding and intervention.

*Rescue me, O LORD, from liars  
and from all deceitful people.  
O deceptive tongue, what will God do to you?  
How will he increase your punishment? (Psalm 120:2–3)*

Like Job, perhaps you've been falsely accused and need God's wisdom. Offer David's prayer to the Lord and seek His counsel as you open His Word.



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Zophar's speech concluded the second cycle of dialogues between Job and his friends and would be Zophar's last. It was no less sharp, however. He was convinced Job was wicked and receiving from God exactly what he deserved.

The cycles of sweeping verbal attacks from Job's friends cut as deeply as Satan's physical assault, perhaps deeper. Truth, though, has a way of vindicating wrong. After listening patiently to Zophar's accusations, Job stood firm and calmly declared the facts until Zophar was silenced at last.



## Observation: Zophar Waxes Poetically . . . but Wrongly

Zophar, who insulted Job endlessly, sneered that he was “disturbed” by Job’s “insults” (Job 20:2–3) . . . because Job dared to disagree with his accusations! Zophar straddled his high horse and waxed poetically, eloquently, and convincingly—but wrongly. Overview [Job 20–21](#) before using your skills of observation to examine each man’s arguments in detail.<sup>1</sup>

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### **Zophar’s Final Speech—Job 20**

Zophar delivered an exaggerated three-point message about the fate of the wicked. Focus on the segments of his speech in [Job 20:4–5, 7–8, 12–19, 26–27, 29](#).

#### *The Wicked Don’t Live Long—Job 20:4–5, 7–8*

To make his point, Zophar appealed to the creation story, “from the beginning of time” (Job 20:4). What was his premise? While he spoke in the third person, what did he imply about Job in Job 20:7–8?

#### *The Pleasures of the Wicked Are Temporary—Job 20:12–19*

What metaphor did Zophar use in Job 20:12–18 to describe the fleeting pleasures of the wicked? How would you paraphrase these verses?

According to 20:18–19, what did he suggest about Job’s accumulation of wealth? How does that contradict God’s description of Job in [1:1–3](#)?

#### *God’s Judgment Always Falls Hard on the Wicked—Job 20:26–27, 29*

To conclude his terrifying portrait of the fate of the wicked, what words of judgment and punishment did Zophar use in Job 20:26–27?

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How did Zophar describe Job’s spiritual condition and future, according to Job 20:29?

*If you have been falsely accused, you understand real pain. Often you find yourself at a loss to know how to defend yourself. False witnesses aren’t there to listen; they’re just busy talking and spreading their venom.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

## Job’s Wise Response—Job 21

To his credit, Job allowed his friend to speak his mind. Then Job limped to the podium. “Listen closely to what I am saying,” Job began (Job 21:2), followed by, “Bear with me, and let me speak” (21:3), and then “Look at me and be stunned” (21:5). Then, once he had Zophar’s attention, Job responded to each of the three accusations with three rebuttals. Let’s focus on [Job 21:4–5, 7–14, 16–19, 22–34](#).

### *Often the Wicked Do Live Long Lives*—Job 21:7–14

Job powerfully rebutted Zophar’s first claim, citing what specific proofs in Job 21:7–13?

Who spends “their days in prosperity” (Job 21:13)? What do they dare to say to God in 21:14?

### *The Pleasures of the Wicked Aren’t Always Temporal*—Job 21:16–19

What examples did Job use to refute Zophar’s second point in Job 21:16–19?

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*God's Judgment Doesn't Always Fall Hard on the Wicked—Job 21:22–34*

According to Job 21:22–33, what illustrations did Job use to refute Zophar's third claim?

In 21:27, 34 how did Job mix patient refutation with emphatic truth-telling toward Zophar?

*If your reputation is being ruined, if your company is going down the tube, if your church is being assaulted and it's because of false stuff being said, some things need to be said in answer to the falsehood. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## **Interpretation: Simplistic Theology That Doesn't Square with Reality**

Zophar viewed the world in simplistic categories. From his perspective, the righteous always prosper and the wicked always suffer. Job's *extreme* suffering could only mean one thing: Job must be an extremely wicked person. But Job proved him wrong. In this life, *the righteous often suffer*, and *the wicked sometimes live prosperously*. Ultimate justice doesn't come until after we die, but until then, life can be unfair.

What scriptural examples can you think of that support this reality? How does the unfairness of life stretch or strengthen your faith in God's mysterious but good ways? How does this truth refocus you to the reality and promises of eternal life?

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When Job rebuked Zophar, he first told him, “Look at me and be stunned. Put your hand over your mouth in shock” (Job 21:5). What did Job hope Zophar would see if he stopped talking and *looked* at him?

Had Job simply vented his anger at Zophar, few would have blamed him. However, Job kept his composure by using facts and logic. What did Job understand about human nature, about his standing before God, and about properly confronting false accusers? How would you summarize the major points of his patient refutation?

*Job was saying to Zophar, “Your argument doesn’t hold water. There are examples on the other side. I’m not in that category. You’ve got it simplified to the point of being simplistic. Wicked or righteous, some die well; some die bitterly and in anguish.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## **Correlation: God’s Patience, Love, and Blessing on Display**

Concerning God’s patient judgment of humanity, what truths did Solomon reveal in [Ecclesiastes 8:11–12](#)? How do those truths shed light on Zophar’s mistaken assumptions?

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Jesus endured the wounds of false accusations, culminating in His willing walk to the cross. He modeled and embodied God's patience, love, and blessing. What reminder, what practical counsel, and what promised blessing did Jesus proclaim in [Matthew 5:11–12](#)?

In [Romans 8:29–30](#), Paul linked together God's promises to us in a beautiful “golden chain of salvation.” No matter what temporal trials Christians may endure, what final link does [8:31–32](#) provide?

Zophar misread Job's suffering, misunderstood the experiences of the righteous and the unrighteous, and misinterpreted God's unsearchable ways with His creation. Unlike Job, however, when we suffer, we have an opportunity to see our pain through the eyes of our loving God and Savior, Jesus.



### **Application: Responding Wisely When Falsely Accused**

Job's model of responding to Zophar teaches four lingering principles to apply when we're falsely accused.

1. *Listen to what is being said, considering the character of the critic.* When attacked, you may be tempted to jump in and say things you'll later regret. *Stay calm.*
2. *Respond with true facts, knowing the nature of your accuser.* No matter who accuses you, stick with the facts and don't simply react—or you'll come off just like the accuser. *Speak truth.*
3. *Use examples that represent reality and balance.* That's what Job did. If truth is truth, God will honor it. Entrust your defense to the Lord. *Lean hard.*
4. *Refuse to let the accusations discourage and derail you.* Remember, they are nonsense and lies. Don't fear using very specific, strongly stated examples. Job used some. *Get tough.*

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Have you been a victim of false accusation? What was the circumstance? How did you respond? Did you use any of these principles? How did it resolve?

Zophar's example warns us against accusing others when we don't have all the facts. What prompts you to spread gossip or unwholesome talk about others? What can you do to defuse these triggers?

Perhaps you are currently being falsely accused. If so, how might the four principles from Job help you better respond now or in the future?

How does God's present faithfulness and future promises of eternal blessings encourage you to stand strong in the face of persecution?

Job's suffering proved that, for unknown reasons, righteous people do suffer. Life isn't fair, and people's harsh words can feel unbearable. Thankfully, unlike Job with Zophar, you don't have to plead with God, "Look at me!" *He sees you.* What comfort to know that God sees us in our pain and has compassion for us.



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## A FINAL PRAYER

*Thank You, Father, for the cross. It's still that old message that sets the captive free. Thank You for a man who would record from his journal even things as personal as this. Such insulting comments. Such humiliating words. Thank You for his storied endurance, his courage, and for his strength of character. Thank You that he didn't just sit back and let the lies run on, but he became Your spokesman Who guides me today. I exult in Your grace. In the name of Jesus my Lord and powerful Master and Savior, I pray. Amen.*

## ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2002, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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