

Last week we transitioned into the second main section of Job. If you recall, we divided the book into three parts: Job's dilemma (1-3), Job's discourses (4-41), and Job's deliverance (42). Job's discourses contain three rounds of speeches from Job and his three friends, a lengthy speech from Elihu (a fourth friend), and God.

With respect to the speeches of Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, three things must be kept in mind: first, they are Job's friends who sincerely desire to help (though they prove poor comforters); second, they are not wicked or evil men; third, what they say is generally true, though tragically misapplied.

Thus, the issue isn't what they say, but what they intend by it. Their doctrine is good but their application of it bad. John Calvin—"We must always remember, the general ideas that Job's friends advance are good, but they apply them poorly."

Within chapter 5, Eliphaz basically provides three closely related exhortations to Job—Admit your sin and guilt, commit yourself to God, and submit to His correction.

- I. Admit your sin and guilt (vv1-7)
- II. Commit yourself to God (vv8-16)
- III. Submit to His correction (vv17-27)

I. Admit your sin and guilt (vv1-7)

1. Verses 1-7 can be summarized as—Job admit your sin and guilt because trouble falls upon the guilty.
2. Eliphaz is accusing Job of hypocrisy, and he suggest two arguments—what Job was not and what he was.
3. (1) What Job was not, v1—"Call out now; is there anyone who will answer you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn?"
4. By "holy ones" is likely meant saints, who were made holy through the sanctifying work of God's Spirit.
5. It's as if he's saying—"Where can you turn for mediation or support? You are guilty and everyone knows it."
6. In other words, look all you might, you will never find any saint who was treated as God has treated you.
7. What Christian has ever been treated like you? Which of the saints would stand up for you and sympathize?
8. (2) What Job was, v2—"For wrath (anger) kills a foolish man, and envy slays a simple one"—these are the two sins he accuses Job of committing.
9. By "wrath" is meant "carnal anger" by which Eliphaz likely meant, Job's anger toward God and man.
10. By "envy" Eliphaz likely refers to his envy as expressed towards others who have never lost their possessions.
11. Eliphaz is accusing Job of having anger and envy in his heart, that were made known because of his trials.
12. From verses 3-7, Eliphaz describes the troubles that fall upon foolish and guilty people and they largely concern his family and possessions.
13. His dwelling place is cursed (v3), his sons are far from safety (v4), and his harvest and substance are taken from him (v5).

14. Brethren, it's evident, Eliphaz is implying something here—he's implying Job's troubles came upon him because of his sins.
15. John Gill—"Eliphaz by all this would represent and insinuate that Job was such a man, hot, passionate, and angry with God and his providence, and envious at the prosperity of others, particularly his friends; and so was a foolish and silly man, in whose breast wrath and envy rested, and would be his ruin and destruction, as he was already under slaying and killing providences."
16. Joseph Caryl—"The reason why Eliphaz speaks of these two sins, is because he conceived all of Job's troubles, and muddy complains in the 3rd chapter, arose from these two impure and filthy springs."
17. V6—"For affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble spring from the ground"—that is, they do not come by chance.
18. V7—"Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward"—that is, because man is sinful, troubles are inevitable ('sparks fly upward' likely refers to fiery coals that ascend from a fire).
19. Thus, Eliphaz is suggesting that Job's troubles are evidence of the fact that he was guilty of various sins.
20. Man, because he is a morally corrupt creature, is born to trouble, and thus, your troubles are evidence you are a morally corrupt creature.

II. Commit yourself to God (vv8-16)

1. Having urged Job to admit his sin and guilt, Eliphaz continues to give him counsel, v8—"But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause."
2. That is, if I were you, this is what I would do—I would seek God and I would commit my cause to Him.
3. By "seeking God" is meant prayer, and by "committing my cause" is meant trust—go to Him and trust Him.
4. Verse 9 provides a motive—"Who does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number."
5. This is why Job should seek God and commit his cause to Him—He does great, unsearchable, marvelous, and innumerable things.
6. Great things—this means mighty and powerful things—because God Himself is great, His works are great.
7. Unsearchable things—by this is meant, the works of God are beyond our finding out—they are beyond us.
8. Marvelous things—this refers to wonderful or awful things—works that produce wonder and awe within us.
9. Innumerable things—that is, works without number—his works are too numerous to count and consider.
10. Verses 10-15 is a beautiful poetic hymn, where some of the great things or works of God are described.
11. (1) He gives rain on the earth, v10—"He gives rain on the earth, and sends waters on the fields"—this refers to His common goodness upon all people.
12. (2) He sets on high the lowly, v11—"He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety."
13. (3) He frustrates the devices of the crafty (vv12-14)—He frustrates the plans of the crafty, wise, and cunning.
14. (4) He saves the needy and the poor, vv15-16—"But He saves the needy from the sword, from the mouth of the mighty, and from their hand. So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts her mouth."

15. These are but a sample of the great, unsearchable, marvelous, and innumerable things that God does.
16. Now, the question I want to briefly answer is this—"Why does Eliphaz mention these works to Job?"
17. Notice he lays stress on the lowly, mournful, needy, and poor—God rejects the proud but exalts the humble.
18. Again, Eliphaz's motives may or may not be right, but this is overall a powerful encouragement for Job.
19. Job, if I were you, I would seek God and commit my cause to Him, because He does great and wonderful things.
20. If God does great and wonderful things for others, surely He can, if you commit your cause to Him, do great things for you too.

III. Submit to His correction (vv17-27)

1. Verse 17 is later quoted by Solomon in Proverbs 3:11-12, and then again by the NT in Hebrews 12:5.
2. This underscores something I've said a number of times—what Eliphaz says is true though often misapplied.
3. V17—"Behold, happy (blessed) is the man whom God corrects"—to be corrected by God argues sonship.
4. Heb.12:7-8—"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons."
5. V17b—"Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty"—to despise means to consider as trivial or unimportant.
6. Verse 18 is a motive not to despise His chastening—"For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole."
7. In other words, while His chastening hurts it also helps—it's intended to correct—it's intended for our good.
8. Verse 19 is a summary of the remaining verses—"He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you (Ps.34:19; 91:3, 10)."
9. Here the number 7 is used symbolically of all troubles—evil shall not touch you so as to destroy you.
10. He then illustrates all of these troubles in vv20-26, as they relate to his possessions and his descendants.
11. Here's the primary point—if Job had humbled himself before the rod of God he would have been delivered from his present troubles.
12. He would have been delivered from famine, the sword, and destruction—he would have peace in his tent, many descendants, and long life.
13. Again, we have to read between the lines—the problem isn't what he says, but what he implies in saying it.
14. It is true, God chastens and corrects His people, and it's also true they must submit themselves to His rod.
15. But it's not true, if Job had only submitted to God's rod, he would have been delivered from all his troubles.
16. Verse 27—"Behold, this we have searched out; it is true, hear it, and know for yourself"—Eliphaz likely refers to everything he's said in chapter 4-5.

17. What I have said to you is true—we have searched it out by personal experience, and can testify to its truth.
18. Notice, Eliphaz uses the personal pronoun "we"—"Behold, this we have searched out; it is true, hear it."
19. In other words, Eliphaz, as the oldest of Job's three friends, not only speaks for himself, but the other too.
20. Thus, Eliphaz finishes his first speech, wherein he exhorts Job to admit his guilt, seek God, and submit to His rod.

IV. Applications

1. Here I want to attempt to apply this chapter with the help of three words—counseling, confession, and correction.
2. (1) Counseling—here I want to return to something I mentioned last week about Eliphaz's counsel to Job.
3. If we only had chapters 4-5 (and the actual words of Eliphaz), we might think that rightly counseled Job.
4. But as we read God's assessment of Job in the first two chapters, we learn that he was blameless and upright.
5. Also, as we compare Job's response to Eliphaz and God's assessment of Eliphaz, we learn something else.
6. We learn from Job (in the very next chapter), that what Eliphaz said failed to bring any comfort to him.
7. And furthermore, as we will see from God's assessment of Eliphaz (42:7), he did not speak right about God.
8. But the question I want to answer here is this—"Why didn't the counsel of Eliphaz actually help Job?"
9. Put another way—"Why wasn't Eliphaz an effective counselor? Why didn't he bring comfort to Job?"
10. But before I suggest a few reasons, let me say, counseling someone like Job in deep grief, isn't easy (it's for this reason, most of the older commentators, tend to take it easy on Eliphaz).
11. You don't know what to say and you're afraid of saying the wrong thing; furthermore, those grieving can be very sensitive.
12. And so, it's for this reason as I suggest these things, I want to temper them with sympathy for Eliphaz.
13. (a) He lacked love—according to 1Cor.13:7 "love believes all things"—that is, love thinks the best of others.
14. Seemingly, Eliphaz (and the other two friends), knew Job for some time, and was aware of his character.
15. Eliphaz should have simply given Job the benefit of the doubt, instead of thinking the very worst of him.
16. And so too, when we see others who are undergoing affliction and grief, we shouldn't assume they are great sinners.
17. We shouldn't even feel obligated to rebuke them as our first order of business (that may have to come later).
18. From 4:2, it seems Eliphaz could hardly refrain himself from speaking—he had to say something (but you know, he was actually wrong – he could have said far less and been more effective).
19. (b) He lacked empathy—empathy refers to the ability to share in the feelings or situation of another person.

20. It's slightly different from sympathy in this way—sympathy feels for others, empathy feels with others.
21. A person shows empathy because either they've experienced something similar or they know they one day might.
22. This is what Eliphaz lacked—he acted as if he had never in any way suffered before—he couldn't relate to Job.
23. This makes for a good counselor—not that you've experienced everything in life, but that you can relate to others.
24. You know what it's like to suffer pain, loss, and grief—perhaps not in the same degree, but in a general sense.
25. (c) He lacked wisdom—I mentioned last week that wisdom refers to the proper application of knowledge.
26. Steven Lawson—"What Eliphaz said in confronting Job was correct. His emotional collapse (ch.3) did need to be addressed by his friends. But Eliphaz's challenge was misapplied to Job, and it was even dangerous to his spiritual health. Eliphaz was a dangerous man because he only spoke part of the truth. But he did not speak the whole truth, and knowing only part of the truth is dangerous. Further, what truth he did speak was spoken at the wrong time in the wrong spirit. This reminds us how careful we must be in counseling others."
27. Let me remind you in passing, there's only one truly effective Counselor who is loving, empathetic, and wise.
28. (2) Confession—Eliphaz encouraged Job to own his sin and guilt, and submit himself to God's correction.
29. The only problem is this—Job never committed the sins that Eliphaz is encouraging him to repent from.
30. I've been a Christian for 26 years and a pastor for 17, and I've known two types of people—those who sin but don't admit it, and those who don't sin but admit it.
31. And this is the great scheme of our enemy—to accuse or blame us of our sin and drive us into despair.
32. Now I personally don't believe this was Eliphaz's intent, but this is what he was being used by Satan to do.
33. If you remember, this past Wednesday (in examining Genesis 3), we learned Satan can use Christians to tempt us.
34. And in fact, as we shall see in Job's response to Eliphaz (ch.6), Job actually falls into despair as a result of his counsel.
35. Steven Lawson—"Although well meaning, Eliphaz was dangerous in what he spoke. In reality he was a tool of the devil, one sent to erode and weaken Job's faith in God. His arguments were well crafted, but they missed the mark with Job. All Eliphaz could think was, 'What had Job done to bring such crisis upon himself?'"
36. Thus, here I want to suggest Satan seeks to lead us to despair over former, present, and fictitious sins.
37. (a) Former sins—just because Job was righteous and upright, doesn't mean he had no former sins (before and after conversion).
38. There can be little doubt, as Eliphaz was accusing Job, that the enemy reminded Job of his former sins.
39. What does a Christian do when his enemy reminds him of former sins (committed before and after conversion)?
40. Well, in the first place, as prior sins are brought to mind, we should humble ourselves and seek forgiveness.

41. We must be reminded of the rock of depravity from which we've been taken—we must remember what we once were.
42. But we must never remember our past without also remembering our past—what we were and what we now are.
43. Otherwise, dwell on our past will only lead to despair and depression—Christ has already forgiven us those sins.
44. And this is how we know it's our enemy who reminds us, because our enemy uses our past as a club to beat us down.
45. Furthermore, when it's our enemy reminding us of our past, he never offers us forgiveness (just guilt).
46. Any person who reminds us of our past, without also reminding us we're forgiven, is not our friend but enemy.
47. (b) Present sins—by this I refer to the unbelief and complaints evidenced in his lamentation in chapter 3.
48. If you remember, when we considered chapter 3, I admitted that Job crossed the line in his complaints.
49. And so, in this sense, what Eliphaz said was right—he should admit his sin, seek God, and commit his cause to Him.
50. (c) Fictitious sins—by this I refer to accusations by our enemies, concerning sins we've never committed.
51. This is what Eliphaz knowingly or unknowingly did to Job—he accused him of carnal anger and envy.
52. And believe it or not, this is what our enemy does—he accuses us of former and present sins, but also fictitious sins.
53. For example, let's say I get frustrated with my wife and say things to her that's unkind and unloving (I sin against her).
54. And later in the day, my conscious begins to smite me—but in addition to my unkindness, I'm accused of other sins as well (you never love your wife; you are a terrible husband, etc., etc.).
55. Or to put it more specifically—What should have Job done, when Eliphaz accused him of anger and envy?
56. Well, he needed to examine his heart to be sure the accusation is false, and to the extent that it is, he should have rejected the accusation.
57. (3) Correction—here I want to say just a few words about God's chastisement in the life on His people.
58. (a) It's needful—as I've already said, Job was a righteous man and not a secret sinner, but this doesn't mean he was a sinless man.
59. As we saw from his lamentation in chapter 3, Job was a man (like us) with remaining sin and corruption.
60. It's for this reason, although Job was a righteous and upright man, he nevertheless (like us) needed correction.
61. But remember, correction is different from condemnation—every affliction that comes upon a Christian is for correction and not condemnation.
62. (b) It's painful—we don't need to look any further than Job to prove this point—"He bruises...He wounds."
63. (c) It's helpful—for this we only have to go the end of the book, and find that Job benefited from his correction.
64. Job 23:10—"When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold"—that is, I shall be purified as gold.