

We come this week, in our exposition of Job to a transition. If you recall I suggested there are three basic parts to the book: Job's dilemma (1-3), Job's discourses (4-41), and Job's deliverance (42). And so, as we come to this 2<sup>nd</sup> section, I want to say a few things, by way of introduction, about these discourses.

First, they alternate between Job's friends and Job himself. For example, Eliphaz speaks in 4-5, Job answers in 6-7; Bildad speaks in 8, Job answers in 9-10; Zophar speaks in 11, Job answers in 12-14. As we will see, Job's responses are longer than his friends.

Second, they comprise three rounds of speeches: there are speeches in turn from Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, each of which is followed by a reply from Job. As we will see, these speeches get shorter and shorter.

Third, they contain sound doctrine that's often misapplied. This is a very important point that I'll repeat a number of times.

- I. Eliphaz's Affirmation (vv1-6)
- II. Eliphaz's Axiom (vv7-11)
- III. Eliphaz's Authority (vv12-21)

I. Eliphaz's Affirmation (vv1-6)

1. There's indication from chapter 15, that Eliphaz was likely the oldest among Job's friends, and thus the wisest.
2. He asks in v2—"If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary?"—that is, if I speak to you will you listen?
3. V2—"But who can withhold himself from speaking?"—that is, I hope you are willing to speak, because I have much to say.
4. It's almost as if, Eliphaz felt obligated to address Job—he feels obligated to respond to his lamentation.
5. And this is a very important point—Eliphaz isn't concerned with his suffering but with his lamentation.
6. He isn't interested in comforting Job but confronting Job—Job sinned and he feels obligated to let him know.
7. He then affirms two things about Job—his past encouragement of others and his integrity (in other words it appears that Job had a good reputation among his friends and others).
8. (1) His past encouragement of others, vv3-4—"Surely you have instructed many, and you have strengthened weak hands. Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees."
9. Eliphaz affirms that Job has helped others in the past—he has spoken words of encouragement and comfort.
10. V5—"But now it comes upon you, and you are weary; it touches you, and you are troubled"—the trouble that has troubled others has fallen on you.
11. Eliphaz is accusing Job of hypocrisy—"You help others but are unwilling to heed your own counsel."
12. He's basically saying—You make a good doctor but horrible patient—you want to teach but not learn.
13. (2) His past reverence and integrity, v6—"Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?"

14. One of the many difficulties of expounding this book, are verses such as v6 (not because it's unclear but because it's so dense).
15. There's a well of practical theology in this verse, but before we come to that, we have to first notice its sarcastic tone.
16. V6—"Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?"—Eliphaz is being cynical.
17. As if he said—"Why are you acting this way? Isn't your fear your confidence and your integrity your hope?"
18. It's almost as if, Eliphaz was quoting Job—"Is not your reverence your confidence?" "Isn't this what you've said?"
19. And this provides a good illustration on how to interpret these discourses—what Eliphaz says is true, even though he says it sarcastically.
20. What he says is good doctrine though he's not applying it properly—he's kind of using it as a weapon.
21. But what he says is very true! Our fear of God should be our confidence and the integrity of our ways our hope.
22. Now, first of all, we have to remember the book of Job is poetry and often contains Hebrew parallelism.
23. This means, a verse often says the same thing in two different ways, the 2<sup>nd</sup> phrase clarifying the 1<sup>st</sup> phrase.
24. V6—"Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways hope?"—reverence and integrity are related and confidence and hope are related.
25. (a) Reverence and integrity—we've seen both of these terms back in chapter 1 and 2 (reverence = fearing God).
26. Here we have insight into what integrity is—it's walking in the fear of God or before the eyes of God.
27. (b) Confidence and hope—by coupling these two words together, we get insight into the meaning of hope.
28. At the heart of Christian hope is confidence—it can best be defined as confident expectation (faith in what God has promised).
29. Though all else was taken, Job still feared God and clung to his integrity, which should give him hope.
30. Hope or confidence that God has not left him—yes, all of his possessions, children, and health has left him.
31. But God hasn't—this should encourage and strengthen him—these graces are evidence of God's presence.
32. It's as if his fear of God (and integrity that resulted) was a refuge, into which Job could hide from his enemies.
33. Prov.14:26—"In the fear of the LORD *there is* strong confidence, and His (God's) children will have a place of refuge."
34. Job had many enemies—in addition to the Sabeans, Chaldean, Satan, and his wife, he had many fears (3:25).
35. And yet, the fact that he feared God and clung to his integrity, served as a refuge from these many foes.

## II. Eliphaz's Axiom (vv7-11)

1. Eliphaz repeats an axiom (a common saying or proverb), v7—"Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?"

2. In other words—"It's common knowledge that those who suffer are not innocent. There's a necessary connection between sin and suffering."
3. Here's his basic premise—"Job, you are suffering, which implies you must be sinning (openly or secretly)."
4. Now, let me first clarify—it is true, people often suffer because of sin (this is even true of Christians).
5. God often chastises His beloved people for their sin (though this is always in love and for their good).
6. Furthermore, it's also true that all suffering can be traced back to the sin of Adam (and the curse that followed).
7. But it's not true, that all suffering is the direct result of specific sin, and this was true with regards to Job.
8. If you remember, the book begins by describing Job as "blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil."
9. It's evident these afflictions did not fall upon Job because of any specific sin—there was no direct correlation.
10. Verse 8 is key for it says—"Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow troubles reap the same."
11. Eliphaz was working from perception, "even as I have seen"—this means Eliphaz was judging by sight.
12. He's seen evil people reap what they've sown; he's seen wicked and godless people endure suffering and shame.
13. V9—"By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His anger they are consumed"—this is true statement.
14. Those who sow to the flesh will reap destruction—they will be consumed by the just anger and wrath of God.
15. Verses 10-11 apply this principle even to the animal kingdom—the fierce lion, young lion, old lion, and cubs.

### III. Eliphaz's Authority (vv12-21)

1. From v12-21, Eliphaz recounts a very strange incident, wherein he received a vision through a dream.
2. The spirit or form he describes in vv12-16 then speaks in vv17-21, and we need to answer two questions.
3. (1) Who spoke to him? Verses 12-16 describes "a spirit" who spoke to Eliphaz by or through a dream.
4. In other words, he was laying claim to special revelation—he claimed God gave him special wisdom.
5. How do we understand Eliphaz's claim? Well, there's basically three options that have been suggested.
6. (a) He was lying—that is, Eliphaz fabricated this account in order to give himself the appearance of wisdom.
7. I personally don't think there's much merit to this view—while misguided, nowhere is Eliphaz described as a liar.
8. (b) It was Satanic—that is, this dream came from an unclean spirit (who as you know, oftentimes speak truth).
9. Again, I personally don't think this view is very likely, simply because it lacks any objective evidence.

10. (c) It was from God—I suggest this is the most natural and likely view—God spoke this to Eliphaz on an early occasion.
11. As you know, prior to the completion of the canon, God often spoke to people through visions and dreams (let me suggest three reasons).
12. First, the manner in which Eliphaz received this vision, is identical to the way other saints received visions.
13. Second, it seems evident Eliphaz was a Godly man—this becomes evident as you consider all that he says.
14. Yes, God says of him (as the other two friends), 42:7—"My anger is aroused against you and your two friends," but then God commands Job to offer sacrifices and pray for them.
15. It seems very unlikely that God would have Job offer sacrifices and prayers for them if they were enemies.
16. Third, all that was told Eliphaz in the dream, as we shall see here in a minute, is in keeping with truth.
17. Thus, it's for these reasons (and others), I suggest it's best to understand this vision as truly from God.
18. John Gill—"Some indeed have thought that this was a mere fiction of Eliphaz, and not a real vision; yea, some have gone so far as to pronounce it a diabolical one, but without any just foundation; for there is nothing in the manner or matter of it but what is agreeable to a divine vision or to a revelation from God."
19. John Calvin—"Now some think that here Eliphaz is boasting of having a revelation that he was in fact not having; but when everything is taken into consideration, there is no doubt that what he is claiming, namely, that God revealed something to him, is certain. We must always remember this: the general ideas that he advances are good, but he applies them poorly."
20. Thus, it's most likely that God gave this vision to Eliphaz, on a previous occasion, that he now recounts.
21. MH—"Probably God had sent Eliphaz this messenger and message some time or other, when he was himself in an unquiet discontented frame, to calm and pacify him."
22. (2) What did they speak? Verses 17-21 comprise a very wonderful truth (that again, Eliphaz wrongly applies to Job).
23. But what Eliphaz was told in the dream is true—again the problem is how Eliphaz applies this to Job.
24. V17—"Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?"—the answer is obvious – NO.
25. But here's the problem—Eliphaz is implying that Job was justifying himself—as if he were pure than God.
26. Where did Job do this? Nowhere in his lamentation did Job suggest he was more righteous or pure than God.
27. In proof that God is more righteous and pure than all else, mention is made of angels (v18) and man (vv19-21).
28. (a) Angels, v18—"If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error"—here again we find Hebrew parallelism (servants = angels).
29. When it says God "puts no trust in His servants" or "He charges His angels with error" we have to understand these also as parallel statements.
30. It does not mean angels sin—it is true fallen angels (called demons) sin—but this doesn't refer to them.
31. It's just saying, as glorious as angels are, in comparison to God, His righteousness and purity, they are nothing.

32. It's like comparing the moon with the sun—it's not a slight on the moon to say it's nothing to the sun.
33. Likewise, the point here isn't to speak ill of the angels, as much as to elevate the infinite glory of God.
34. (b) Man, v19—"How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth?"
35. In other words, if angels are nothing in comparison to God, how much less is man, who is inferior to angels.
36. We are creatures who dwell in houses of clay, made of dust, who fall apart, and will one day perish in the grave.
37. V21—"Does not their own excellence go away? They die, even without wisdom"—man is a mortal creature.
38. In contrast to this, God is infinitely pure, wise, and eternal—"who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light" (1Tim.6:16).

#### IV. Two Practical Lessons

1. Fall of Eliphaz's faults, he provides us with two important lessons—we need to judge righteously, and we need true and wise friends.
2. (1) We need to judge righteously—this is the big lesson we learn from this chapter—Eliphaz failed to rightly judge the situation.
3. He failed to rightly judge Job's present condition (and I suggest he illustrates three ways this is done).
4. (a) We judge by appearance—that is, we judge things as they appear to be, and not as they actually are.
5. This of course is tragically illustrated in Eliphaz, who judged Job wrongly based upon outward appearance.
6. I mean look at Job—he lost all of his possessions and children, and now he's covered in painful boils.
7. But brethren, judging by appearance is living by sight not faith—faith sees things as God says they are.
8. We have to be very careful to judge others and ourselves by appearance, otherwise we're similar to Eliphaz.
9. For example, what if Job judged himself by appearance—no possessions, no family, and painful boils.
10. If somebody had just walked by Job (and didn't know anything about him), what would they think of him?
11. They would likely view him as a wretched and worthless man, who was rejected and despised by God.
12. But would that be true? Of course not! Job was a very successful man who was favored and loved by God.
13. Perhaps the greatest example of this was our Savior, who because of His humble appearance was despised by men.
14. Thus, He warned the pharisees, Jn.7:24—"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."
15. Furthermore, when our Savior was on the cross, they ridiculed Him saying—"He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him" (Ps.22:8).
16. In other words, He claimed to be the eternal Son of God and the object of God's delight, but look at Him now.

17. (b) We judge by experience—that is, we impute our experiences upon others as if they are a law (of sorts).
18. Experiences are like belly-buttons, everyone has them, and we have to be careful not to judge others by ours.
19. (c) We misapply revelation—that is, we misapply what God has revealed to us through Holy Scripture.
20. This is the difference between knowledge and wisdom—the first understands truth, whereas the second applies it.
21. Obviously Eliphaz had plenty of knowledge—he even appeals to an inspired dream—but he lacked wisdom.
22. My friends, we can own a hundred Bibles and know a lot of theology, and yet fail to properly apply it.
23. (2) We need true and wise friends—I think it's most probable that Eliphaz sincerely wanted to help Job.
24. There's every reason to believe Eliphaz (and the others) were longtime friends of Job (and cared for him).
25. But here's the problem—they simply were not the best of friends, and as the result, Job greatly suffered.
26. In fact, as we shall see, Job's anguish only increases as the result of the poor counsel of his close friends.
27. Stephen Lawson—"Our friends have an enormous influence on our lives, for either good or bad. Our peers may be used, by either God or Satan, to build us up or tear us down. Scripture says, 'A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity' (Prov.17:17). When in the furnace of affliction, a genuine friend will provide much relief and strength. May God surround us with true friends who, unlike Eliphaz, will genuinely love us and help us in our times of adversity."
28. Thus, as we look at Eliphaz we learn what we are not to do—in many ways we are to be the very opposite.
29. (a) Be sensitive—Eliphaz was very insensitive—as the old saying goes—he was like a bull in a china store.
30. Prov.12:18—"There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health."
31. (b) Be sympathetic—Eliphaz failed to sympathize with Job—he forgot that he too was weak and frail.
32. (c) Be supportive—Eliphaz was more corrective than supportive—he was really proud and full of himself.
33. Job was wrong and Eliphaz was going to prove it—he could hardly refrain himself from speaking (v2).
34. Blessed is that man who has such sensitive, sympathetic, and supportive friends around him (even if they are few).
35. But let me close by reminding you—there's only one perfectly true and wise friend and that's the Lord Jesus.
36. He alone is the perfect Counselor! He alone can speak comfort to our hearts! He alone can heal our broken bones!
37. I suggest this is "a" if not "the" main point of Job 4—there's only one friend who sticks closer than a brother!
38. All human friends will fail us! Only Christ is perfectly sensitive, sympathetic, and supportive. Only Christ perfectly cares!