

Job's Second Response to Eliphaz

Job 16-17

Job 16:1-5 – *“Then Job answered and said: ²“I have heard many such things. Miserable comforters are you all!³ Shall words of wind have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? ⁴I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul's place. I could heap up words against you and shake my head at you, ⁵but I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief.”*

Background Notes

Job 15 is the record of Eliphaz's second speech, and Job's response to Eliphaz is found in chapters 16-17.

In the first round of the dialogue, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, Job's three friends all maintained that Job was suffering because he had sinned. “After all, Job, all personal suffering is because of personal sin,” they said. Job strongly disagreed with this philosophy, and said so to his so-called friends - in no uncertain terms!

So you might think that the friends would lighten up, or maybe change their views or tactics somewhat, or show a little more mercy in the second round of the dialogues. But no – that didn't happen. The three friends came on as strong as ever with their incorrect premise: “All personal suffering is the result of personal sin.”

We know that Job's counselors' premise was incorrect, because at the end of the book God will say so! And God will require these so-called friends to bring sacrifices.

Unfortunately, some folks today have the same mistaken idea that Job's three friends had. They believe if a person is suffering, it's because that he or she is involved in some personal or secret sin. This is not biblical, and (as we see with Job) this unbiblical position can be extremely hurtful for one who is suffering! Although it's true that God can use sickness and suffering in His dealings with sinful people, and as His discipline with wayward believers, it's wrong to jump to the conclusion that any time a person is sick or suffering trouble, he or she is being disciplined for sin. That conclusion is not taught in the Bible!

Job 16-17 is Job's second response to the second speech of Eliphaz. Job doesn't back down an inch from his position that he is innocent of hidden sin. He maintains that he is **not** suffering because of personal or secret sin in his life.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. In his second response to Eliphaz, Job shows his disgust.

“Miserable comforters are you all! Shall words of wind have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer?” (v2-3).

It’s hard to miss the disgust that Job shows toward his three counselors in Job 16:1-5. “You guys have not helped me one bit! You sure are sorry comforters!” In his second response to Eliphaz, Job shows his disgust.

2. In his second response to Eliphaz, Job shares his distress.

Job 16:6-11- *“Though I speak, my grief is not relieved; and if I remain silent, how am I eased? ⁷ But now He has worn me out. You have made desolate all my company. ⁸ You have shriveled me up, and it is a witness against me. My leanness rises up against me and bears witness to my face. ⁹ He tears me in His wrath, and hates me; he gnashes at me with His teeth. My adversary sharpens His gaze on me. ¹⁰ They gape at me with their mouth. They strike me reproachfully on the cheek. They gather together against me. ¹¹ God has delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over to the hands of the wicked.”*

Even though Job’s friends are not helpful, and are actually a source of greater pain for Job, this isn’t his major distress. Job’s main concern is: **Why God is allowing me to suffer?** Job says that God has exhausted him, and has taken away his strength, and neither speaking out nor remaining silent helps (v6-8). He believes that God must be angry with him, and is hunting him down (v9). Apparently Job was an object of ridicule as he sat in ashes in the town dump.

Verse 10 reminds us of the terrible treatment and scorn that ungodly people poured out upon our Lord, doesn’t it? *“They gape at me with their mouth. They strike me reproachfully on the cheek. They gather together against me.”*

Job 16:12-17 - *“I was at ease, but He has shattered me. He also has taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces. He has set me up for His target. ¹³ His archers surround me. He pierces my heart and does not pity; He pours out my gall on the ground. ¹⁴ He breaks me with wound upon wound; He runs at me like a warrior.*

¹⁵ I have sewn sackcloth over my skin, and laid my head in the dust. ¹⁶ My face is flushed from weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death, ¹⁷ although no violence is in my hands, and my prayer is pure.”

Job feels that God is attacking without mercy, as a warrior against him. Even though he continues to believe that he was innocent, Job is worn out. He’s willing to admit defeat, like an animal with its head in the dust. In his second response to Eliphaz, Job shares his distress.

3. In his second response to Eliphaz, Job states his desire.

Job 16: 18-22 - 17:1-5 - *“O earth, do not cover my blood, and let my cry have no resting place! ¹⁹ Surely even now my witness is in heaven, and my evidence is on high. ²⁰ My friends scorn me; My eyes pour out tears to God. ²¹ Oh, that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbor! ²² For when a few years are finished, I shall go the way of no return.”*

“My spirit is broken; my days are extinguished. The grave is ready for me. ² Are not mockers with me? And does not my eye dwell on their provocation? “Now put down a pledge for me with Yourself. Who is he who will shake hands with me? ⁴ For You have hidden their heart from understanding, and You will not exalt them. ⁵ He who speaks flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children will fail.”

In these verses, Job’s chief desire is not that he be relieved of his suffering, but that he would be vindicated before God! Job doesn’t mind dying as long as his blameless life is finally vindicated, and his case is not forgotten when he goes “*the way of no return*” (16:22). Job longs for an intercessor to provide a pledge for him in court!

Chapter 17

Job 17:1-4 - *“My spirit is broken, My days are extinguished. The grave is ready for me. ² Are not mockers with me? And does not my eye dwell on their provocation? ³ “Now put down a pledge for me with Yourself. Who is he who will shake hands with me? ⁴ For You have hidden their heart from understanding; therefore, You will not exalt them.”*

Job knows that his friends won’t stand up for him. In fact, he hopes that they will reap what they have sown, for their lack of understanding of what God has allowed! He knows that his only hope is God. And even though it seems that God is against him, Job longs for vindication from God Himself. In his second response to Eliphaz, Job states his desire.

4. In his second response to Eliphaz, Job stresses his dilemma.

Job 17:6-9 - *“But He has made me a byword of the people, and I have become one in whose face men spit. ⁷ My eye has also grown dim because of sorrow, and all my members are like shadows. ⁸ Upright men are astonished at this, and the innocent stirs himself up against the hypocrite. ⁹ Yet the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger.”*

In verses 6-9 we see Job’s dilemma or predicament. No matter how he looks at his situation, he can’t see any purpose or reason for why God is allowing him to experience these terrible troubles. He can’t see how being a byword and a ridicule serves any purpose. Is it possible that he is an object lesson to help righteous people to grow stronger in faith (v8-9)?

Job 17:10-12 – *“But please, come back again, all of you, for I shall not find one wise man among you. ¹¹ My days are past. My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. ¹² They change the night into day. ‘The light is near,’ they say, in the face of darkness!”*

In his dilemma, Job reluctantly turns to his three friends again - even though they were not wise (v10), and even though he knew that they would repeat their position that light and hope would come to Job only when he would repent (v11-12).

Job 17:13-16 - *“If I wait for the grave as my house, if I make my bed in the darkness, if I say to corruption, ‘You are my father,’ and to the worm, ‘You are my mother and my sister,’ ¹⁵ where then is my hope? As for my hope, who can see it? ¹⁶ Will they go down to the gates of Sheol? Shall we have rest together in the dust?”*

In his predicament, all Job could do was look forward to death, knowing that any hope would die with him. In his second response to Eliphaz, Job stresses his dilemma.

Practical Application

Praise God, Job’s desire for a Mediator has been answered!

At the end of Job 16, Job’s great desire was that he could be vindicated before God. *“Oh, that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbor!” (v21).* If only there was someone - a mediator - who would plead his case!

It’s remarkable that Job used the word “*man*” here, even though he had just stated that his only hope was for God Himself to step in as Mediator: *“Surely even now my witness is in heaven, and my evidence is on high” (v19).*

Praise God, Job’s desire for Mediator has been answered! The Mediator is both God and Man - our Lord Jesus Christ! *“There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).*

Praise God - Job’s desire for a Mediator has been answered!