

First Speech of Eliphaz to Job

Job 4-5

Job 4:1-6 - *"Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: ² 'If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary? But who can withhold himself from speaking? ³ Surely you have instructed many, and you have strengthened weak hands. ⁴ Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees. ⁵ But now it comes upon you, and you are weary. It touches you, and you are troubled. ⁶ Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?'"*

Background Notes

Job 3 was Job's opening lament about his sufferings. Now in Job 4-31 his three friends, Eliphaz, Bidad and Zophar, will counsel with him. They will try to explain his sufferings in three rounds of dialogues. Elihu, a fourth counselor, will enter the scene in Job 32. Some of what Job's counselors say is true, and some of what they say is not true.

Their basic argument is this:

1. All suffering is the result of sin.
2. Job is suffering.
3. Therefore, Job has sinned.

Their argument is wrong, and their conclusion is wrong - then and today. All suffering in a person's life is not the result of personal sin. Some is, but certainly not all! Job's three friends were wrong for the following reasons:

1. Job 1-2 reveals that **Job's suffering was a test of his faith**. It's God's proof to Satan that Job was faithful.
2. The rest of the Bible makes very clear that all personal suffering is not the result of personal sin. For example, the Lord Jesus said that the blind man He healed was born blind for the purpose bringing glory to God (John 9).
3. At the end of the book of Job, the Lord Himself said they were wrong. They had to bring sacrifices because they spoke and reasoned wrongly about Job.

Doctrinal / Teaching Point

The first speech of Eliphaz contains both truth and error.

Notice! Our Doctrinal Point **does not say that God speaks both truth and error in the Bible! No!** God doesn't make mistakes, and the Bible is His Word! The **Bible is inerrant**. Its record is completely free of mistakes or errors. But many

times (as in the case of Job's friends) the Bible gives us the accurate record of what people said – their erroneous statements or deliberate lies. The Bible doesn't lie, but it contains the true record of lies that some people told. Pagans lied in the Bible. The Pharisees lied in the Bible. Abraham lied about his wife in the Bible. And Job's three friends lied in the Bible - by making untrue statements.

However, some things that Job's three counselors said were not lies. Eliphaz's speech contains both truth and error. The rest of Scripture helps us to determine what is truth and what is error in Job's three friends' speeches. Let's sort out the truth and the error in Eliphaz' first speech.

In verses 1-6, Eliphaz commends Job for helping others in the past - but now he rebukes Job for not trusting God in the present. (This is definitely not the best approach for us to take when we counsel someone who is suffering!)

Job 4:7-11 - *“Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? ⁸ Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same. ⁹ By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His anger they are consumed. ¹⁰ The roaring of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions are broken. ¹¹ The old lion perishes for lack of prey, and the cubs of the lioness are scattered.”*

Verses 7-11 give us Eliphaz's view as to why people suffer. According to Eliphaz, those who practice iniquity suffer, but the innocent and the upright don't suffer. This is incorrect. Many times in this life righteous people suffer, and wicked people don't. Eliphaz's "experience" was limited, and his experience was definitely not the best teacher (v8). Then Eliphaz again infers that God is taking Job down for his sin, as would a strong lion (v10-11). Wrong again!

To add to his argument from experience, Eliphaz relates a vision of a spirit who spoke with him:

Job 4:12-21 - *“Now a word was secretly brought to me, and my ear received a whisper of it. ¹³ In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, ¹⁴ fear came upon me, and trembling, that made all my bones shake. ¹⁵ Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair on my body stood up. ¹⁶ It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes; there was silence. Then I heard a voice saying: ¹⁷ ‘Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker? ¹⁸ If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error, ¹⁹ how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth? ²⁰ They are broken in pieces from morning till evening. They perish forever, with no one regarding. ²¹ Does not their excellence go away? They die, without wisdom.”*

Was this "spirit vision" from God? No, it was not, because the content that Eliphaz relates is a mixture of truth and error (v17-21). It's true that mortal man is not righteous before God (v17), and it's true that if God judges angels, He will certainly judge mortal man (v18-19). But Eliphaz is wrong when he implies that Job is suffering because of sin. And he's wrong that God doesn't notice and is unconcerned with the death of mortals, or that all people die without having obtained wisdom (v20-21). Those last three things are **not** true.

Chapter 5

Job 5:1-7 - *“Call out now! Is there anyone who will answer you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn? ² For wrath kills a foolish man, and envy slays a simple one. ³ I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his dwelling place. ⁴ His sons are far from safety; they are crushed in the gate, and there is no deliverer. ⁵ Because the hungry eat up his harvest, taking it even from the thorns, and a snare snatches their substance. ⁶ For affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble spring from the ground. ⁷ Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.”*

Now in Job 5:1-7, Eliphaz challenges Job to disprove his premise that suffering follows sin. He’s convinced that neither men nor angels can defeat his argument!

Eliphaz was right that everyone will have trouble, as sure as sparks fly upward from a fire! But he was wrong when he concluded that trouble is always the result of personal sin. In Luke 13 the Lord Jesus disagreed with Eliphaz’s conclusion: *“Those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:4-5).*

Clearly the Lord Jesus disagreed with Eliphaz’s premise that all suffering results from personal sin. Eliphaz was wrong to make blanket statements that personal sin is the cause of trouble, and wrong to conclude this on the basis of his own limited knowledge, and his personal experience of cases that he had seen.

Job 5:8-16 - *“But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause— ⁹ who does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number. ¹⁰ He gives rain on the earth, and sends waters on the fields. ¹¹ He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. ¹² He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot carry out their plans. ¹³ He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them. ¹⁴ They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope at noontime as in the night. ¹⁵ But He saves the needy from the sword, from the mouth of the mighty, and from their hand. ¹⁶ So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts her mouth.”*

Eliphaz urges Job to appeal his case to God. All that Eliphaz says in these verses about God’s majesty and power, and His ability to thwart the schemes of the wicked is true. We know it’s true because the rest of Scripture backs up those statements! But Eliphaz is wrong in his assumption that Job is suffering for his sin, and that he should appeal to God.

Job 5:17-26 – *“Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects. Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. ¹⁸ For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole. ¹⁹ He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you. ²⁰ In famine He shall redeem you from death, and in war from the power of the sword. ²¹ You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, and you shall not be afraid of destruction when it comes. ²² You shall laugh at destruction and famine, and you shall not be afraid of the beasts of the earth. ²³ For you shall have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you. ²⁴ You shall know that your tent is in*

peace. You shall visit your dwelling and find nothing amiss. ²⁵ You shall also know that your descendants shall be many, and your offspring like the grass of the earth. ²⁶ You shall come to the grave at a full age, as a sheaf of grain ripens in its season. ²⁷ Behold, this we have searched out. It is true. Hear it, and know for yourself.”

Then Eliphaz concludes that people who submit to God will be delivered from every kind of problem, and enjoy peace and blessing and longevity. Again, Eliphaz was right about submitting to God’s discipline, and also about God’s ability to bring relief and healing and joy and peace. But Eliphaz was wrong in counseling that God will **always** take away all trouble whenever we submit to Him, and that God will bring healing and relief **in every case**. That is not true.

Eliphaz was wrong because **his basic premise was wrong**. All trouble in a person’s life is not the result of personal sin. The Bible doesn’t teach that incorrect idea. Righteous Job was certainly Exhibit A to refute it! So - the first speech of Eliphaz contains a mixture of truth and error.

Practical Application

Eliminate the “Eliphaz mentality” from your counseling!

All of us are called on to counsel others from time to time, for one reason or another. Let’s be careful that we don’t make the same mistakes as Eliphaz. Eliphaz was totally convinced that he had all the answers – based on **his own** experience and observations.

Look at his smug conclusion and advice to Job: *“Behold, this we have searched out. It is true. Hear it, and know for yourself” (5:27).*

Unfortunately, it’s all too easy for us to fall into this same know-it-all mentality! Let’s be very careful. We don’t have unlimited experience, and we don’t have all the answers. Certainly **all** trouble and suffering in a person’s life is **not** a result of personal sin! Eliminate the “Eliphaz mentality” from your counseling.