

‘Everyone Knows’ Counseling

Job 4:1-5:27

- A. Eliphaz opens with a word that (mostly) serves to encourage Job to do what he knows is right **4:1-6**
1. Job’s friend approaches him with a kind, respectful, deferential attitude to offer him counsel for his troubles
 - a. After Job’s dark words that revealed an anguished heart, Eliphaz wants to respond as a wise friend
 - b. He humbly asks if Job would listen if he were to offer some counsel on how to face these terrible trials
 - c. He feels compelled to speak (‘who can keep from speaking?’), but sympathizes with Job in his state
 2. Eliphaz indicates that he only wants to offer Job what Job had offered to others so well in days gone by
 - a. Job had gone to those who were struggling and offered them counsel that proved very effective for them
 - b. Those assaulted by trials left unable to lift a finger to help themselves (feeble hands) were strengthened
 - c. Those stumbling under crushing the burdens of life had found support to steady them in his words
 - d. The weak-kneed who were paralyzed by fear or sorrow and unable to move forward were uplifted
 3. Now Job was the one blasted by troubles and as his complaint demonstrates, he was discouraged and dismayed
 - a. There seems to be at least a subtle suggestion in Eliphaz’s words that Job needed to take his own advice
 - b. He had known how to counsel those who were dispirited so they were encouraged, so he knew what to do
 - c. As one suggested, it may be that Eliphaz was calling on Job to be consistent, to practice what he preached
 4. Eliphaz need not be seen as sarcastic or insulting here since he believed Job had good reason to be hopeful
 - a. His words certainly indicate that he agreed with the Lord’s evaluation of Job as a blameless man
 - b. He told Job that his piety and blameless life should have inspired confidence that all would get better
 - c. As suggested previously, Eliphaz was working from the premise that God blessed good people
 - 1) Job had proven himself to be a good man and thus had every right to expect good things from God
- B. Eliphaz offers arguments meant to prove his counsel was sound, grounded in undeniable truth **4:7-5:7**
1. His first argument was based on common experience: the innocent do not suffer (long); the evil do **4:7-11**
 - a. His question indicates that anyone who thought about it knew the upright are not targets of divine justice
 - 1) He is confident no one could find an example of the innocent being destroyed, ie, dying prematurely
 - b. The wicked on the other hand universally end up reaping the trouble that they have sown
 - 1) It is not just that they suffer, but that they suffer because of God’s anger that brings their demise
 - 2) Even though the wicked are strong, dangerous and frightening, they are easily brought low by God
 - 3) Even the powerful and oppressive among men who can seem invincible are subject to God’s judgment
 - 4) So thoroughgoing is God’s judgment that even the children of the wicked are caught up in it
 - c. Eliphaz believes that Job should recognize this moral order that exists in the world God has made
 - 1) Of course we see in this belief the basis of a conviction that becomes more clear as the story goes on
 - 2) If the good are blessed by God and the wicked punished and Job is suffering, then he must have sinned
 - 3) At this point that lies in the background though for it seem Eliphaz is trying to give comfort and hope
 2. His second argument was based on divine revelation that taught man’s frailty makes suffering expected **12-21**
 - a. To support his position that he knew what he was talking about Eliphaz speaks of a revelation he received
 - 1) His description of this revelation gives it an eerie, disturbingly frightening feel
 - 2) It came to him like a dream in that deep sleep we fall into sometimes; it was most unsettling
 - 3) A spirit glided past his face and made his hair stand up on end so that he was seized with fear
 - 4) Finally the spirit came to a stop before him, but he could not make out any definable form
 - 5) When it spoke, it did so in a hushed voice so Eliphaz’s ears could catch his word only as a whisper
 - 6) While angels tended to be frightening, there is an eerie, nightmarish feel to this that makes it unusual
 - b. When we finally hear the revelation given to Eliphaz it seems something of a letdown after this buildup
 - 1) A revelation meant to help Job would it seems have said something specific (eg, what his sin was)
 - a) Some think this vision of Eliphaz was the product of his own mind, not of God’s **42:7**
 - b) The Bible is inerrant in what it reports (he said he had a vision), but not all it reports is true
 - c) All we can do here is try to understand the argument that Eliphaz is trying to make
 - 2) Men are impure and frail, creatures of dust, whose lives and wisdom compared to God are insignificant
 - a) If Job thought God was unfair in what had happened to him, what was his wisdom next to God’s
 - b) If God does not trust even his holy angels to know what is right, why should he trust us to know

- c) Why would the eternal God think those here today and gone tomorrow know more than him
 - d) The upshot of this then seems to be that Job should just accept his suffering and trust God is right
 - 3) One note on translation is noteworthy here concerns what lies at the heart of Job's dilemma
 - a) The NIV translates 'more' in vs 17 suggesting Job might of thought himself more just than God
 - b) The ESV/NASB 'before' makes better sense; the question is 'How can a man be right before God'
- 3. He returns to his observations of what the world is like to say it is best to accept the life God hands you **5:1-7**
 - a. If we cannot prove ourselves right in God's eyes, we might consider a go between, like an angel
 - 1) Job later seeks such a person, a mediator who could make his case before the Lord
 - 2) Here tho Eliphaz says that one would look in vain to find even an angel who could function like this
 - 3) The implication is either that one's case is hopeless or that one should take his case directly to God
 - b. However an appeal may turn out, we must trust the Lord to do right and not act foolishly
 - 1) 'Resentment, vexation, anger' can easily arise when one feels that the Lord is treating him unfairly
 - 2) 'Jealousy, envy' comes too easily when one feels that others have it better than us for no good reason
 - 3) The fool (who says there is no God) who lets his emotions run away with him will forget who he is
 - a) He will challenge God's justice in dealing with him as if he knew better than God what was right
 - 4) Such a fool not only destroys all that he has built up, but destroys the future of his children
 - a) His children are left defenseless in court and with nothing since others consumed what he had
 - c. Rather than rail against God it is best to recognize that trouble in life is the common lot of mankind
 - 1) It is man's common lot because of sin; it does not come from thin air, or as here, from the ground
 - 2) David says, 'Surely I was sinful at birth, (Ps 51:5) so it is no wonder that man is born to trouble
 - 3) As naturally and normally as sparks fly upward, so it is that men find trouble entering their lives
 - 4) Since this is the case, there is no use in arguing that it is unfair; we all will face trying days
- C. On the basis of what he said about God and man, Eliphaz counsels Job to come humbly to God **5:8-16**
 - 1. Since even the angels cannot help Eliphaz tells Job that his only hope is to appeal to the Lord himself
 - a. As we saw in our study of his opening complaint (chapter 3), Job addresses neither God nor man
 - b. His friend tells him that rather than grumbling about his life, he should take his concerns to the Lord
 - 2. He encourages Job to go to the Lord by recounting God's great deeds that prove he truly can help
 - a. As painful and distressing as Job's situation was, the Lord was more than capable of restoring him
 - 1) The God who performs wonders that cannot be fathomed and miracles that cannot be fathomed
 - 2) is a God who can heal Job's terrible sickness, restore his good name and make him richer than ever
 - 3) And it is not just that he has the power to help, but clearly wants to give men good gifts (10)
 - 4) He even has a special delight in helping the weak and those treated unjustly (11, 15-16)
 - b. The Lord not only helps the lowly, but thwarts the plans of those most likely to do them harm (12-14)
 - 1) The crafty skirt ways that are legal and good to get what they want, and often seem to get away with evil
 - 2) Their ways are known to God though and a day will come when their evil will come back haunt them
 - 3) In a moment that they least expect it their day will be turned to night and they will be brought low
 - c. Eliphaz does not apply this to Job, but given his view that suffering is tied to sin, it is likely on his mind
 - 1) This might be a warning to Job that with his ill-gotten fortune already gone, it is time to be honest
 - 2) Rather than trying to spin his misfortune as inexplicable, it is time to confess and repent
- D. To urge acceptance of his counsel Eliphaz points to the blessings of those who learn from God's discipline **5:17-26**
 - 1. Eliphaz gets as close as anywhere in this speech to identifying Job as a sinner suffering God's punishment
 - a. The implication of vs 17 is that he is a man God was correcting, suffering the discipline of the Almighty
 - b. The good news was that one disciplined by God was blessed if only he did not despise what God was doing
 - c. Whatever wounds God inflicted he was also able to bind up, whatever injuries he dealt he could heal
 - d. Job could look forward to good days ahead if he would learn from his mistakes and trust in God's goodness
 - 2. Eliphaz offers a list of the kind of blessings Job can expect if he will only repent and turn from his sin
 - a. Physical blessings like food to eat in famines, protection from violent death, safety in natural disasters (destruction -21), no fear of wild beasts (Is 11:6-9), peace with nature itself (stones - 23), secure property
 - b. Social blessings like protection from gossips who ruin reputations, family to carry that reputation forward
 - c. The promise of an active life, a full life doing what God gives you to do, to the end of your days

- E. Speaking for the other two friends also, Eliphaz urges Job to accept what he has said as the truth **5:27**
1. Eliphaz closes with an argument meant to bolster his credibility and wisdom and thus that Job should listen
 - a. The 'we' indicates he is speaking for his friends too, and as three witnesses their testimony was reliable
 - b. There is an irony here, for Eliphaz encourages Job to fear God for the very reason Satan accused him of
 - c. Eliphaz said, 'serve God so you can have all those good gifts' which is why Satan said Job feared God
 2. The problem with the counsel of Eliphaz was that he saw God's justice in this world as a math equation
 - a. This much sin brought this much suffering and the equation always balanced at the end of this life
 - b. What he leaves out is that justice is not always dealt out in this life; some awaits the final judgment
 - c. His counsel is also deficient because he did not have the information we do as it concerns the Christ
 - d. Sometimes for the furtherance of God's good purposes the righteous are called to suffer in this world
 - e. Sometimes the righteous suffer because they have taken up their cross to follow Jesus, and God is pleased
 - f. In counseling others let us remember that God's ways are not always as clear to us as we sometimes think
 - 1) Let us therefore study Scripture and then lean heavily upon the Spirit's guidance in helping others