

## When Friends Fail to Comfort

Job 6:1-30

### A. Job does not seek to refute the wisdom of Eliphaz, but only mourns his pitiable condition **6:1-13**

#### 1. He begins by giving voice to his anguish endured at the hands of the Sovereign Lord **1-7**

- a. Eliphaz said, '*Resentment* kills a fool' (5:2), but Job spoke of a *grief* (same word) too heavy to bear
  - 1) Eliphaz was offering commonly accepted wisdom, but Job could think only of his anguish and misery
  - 2) This is why he does not respond directly to Eliphaz; his friend saw his suffering as a small thing
  - 3) Job said the suffering he was enduring weighed so heavily on him that his rash words were justified
  - 4) How could a friend think after months of unbearable suffering a reasoned argument was all he needed
  - 5) Job was not trying to resolve a philosophical question, he was in pain and could not understand why
- b. Job's problems weighed so heavily on him because he knew the Lord was behind what was happening
  - 1) It was not just his loss of his great wealth or his standing in the community or even his children
  - 2) What vexed his spirit so greatly was that the poison coursing through his life was the Almighty's doing
  - 3) When he surveyed the forces at work destroying his life he recognized them as being from God
  - 4) It was hard enough to endure the losses he had, but knowing this came from God made it worse still
  - 5) His faith in God was being severely tested because he did not know why God was tormenting him
- c. His friends may wonder why his complaint is so bitter and even offensive, but he says he has good reason
  - 1) As donkeys bray and oxen bellow when hungry, so he complains he is not be nourished sufficiently
    - a) He does not have the spiritual provisions needed to face the trials he has been called on to endure
    - b) God offered him a 'diet' he found repulsive enough that he could not eat it, an unbearable life
    - c) He complains like anyone who was offered a meal of tasteless, unpalatable food when hungry
  - 2) There is likely another meaning to Job's complaint here also, a reference to his friend's counsel
    - a) The counsel that Eliphaz offered was spiritually un nourishing; it was bland, tasteless, repugnant

#### 2. He speaks once again of his desire for death so that his suffering will not lead to dishonoring the Lord **8-10**

- a. Job already expressed his desire for death and his friends' counsel had done nothing to change his mind
  - 1) It would seem that it does not cross his mind to pray for vindication and restoration
  - 2) The only solution to the anguish he is enduring that he can think of is that the Lord would crush him
- b. Even in this state of mind though the thoughts of this godly man are not what like those of others
  - 1) Many who are facing intense suffering can think only of relief from the pain, release from this life
  - 2) Job though longs for the deliverance death brings because it would free him from a great temptation
  - 3) He feared a time when the pain might become so unrelenting and intense that he would break
  - 4) In that moment he might say or do something that would dishonor his Lord and bring him shame
  - 5) Death would allow him to leave this world knowing he was the blameless man God had said he was
  - 6) He wants so much to honor God with his whole life that death was better than going on as he was

#### 3. He confesses a weakness so great that patiently waiting in hope is beyond his ability **11-13**

- a. Death was Job's only solution because after 'months of futility' (7:3) he had no strength of any kind left
- b. Even when he had lost his family and wealth and his wife told him to curse God and die, he refused
- c. He held on to his integrity and said he would accept the trouble from God just as he had taken the good
- d. His faith was genuine and strong, but months of torment had left him weak and the battle too much
- e. He did not have the strength of stones or bronze to resist the blows from God any longer
- f. He was about to lose his grip and did not think he had the strength to hang on to his integrity any longer
- g. Any power to remain faithful to the Lord was sapped so that hope for restoration had dried up

### B. He is especially distressed by friends who have only made things worse and pleads for their compassion **6:14-30**

#### 1. He denounces his friends as worthless comforters at a time when despair had overcome him **14-23**

- a. A man rightfully should be able to count on his friends' devotion (*hesed*) no matter what happens
  - 1) Job offers the extreme case of forsaking the Lord to illustrate how far a true friend's loyalty should go
  - 2) This is not to say that Job was admitting this had happened to him, but is merely illustrative
  - 3) Though a man's friends should stand by him, in his most desperate hour, these men did not
  - 4) Even if he had forsaken God, they should have been there to gently, compassionately lead him back
  - 5) Instead, Eliphaz's speech indicated that the only thing Job could expect was an irrelevant sermon

- b. Job uses an extended parable of sorts to depict the disappointment his friends were when he needed them
  - 1) There were streams that flowed with water in the springtime as the winter snows began to melt
    - a) Job imagines a caravan of merchants following the trade routes one summer during dry season
    - b) For whatever the reason they are running out of water and someone remembers a nearby stream
    - c) The caravan takes off in the direction of the stream using the last of their water supply to get there
    - d) On arriving they find that where there had been an overflowing stream there was now only wasteland
    - e) The end result was that the people of that caravan perished because their hope came to nothing
  - 2) Job told his friends that they were like those unreliable streams, promising help but failing to give it
    - a) He had been suffering alone for months before they came to visit and needed comfort and counsel
    - b) When they arrived it must have seemed to him like water from a rock, much needed companionship
    - c) These friends, these wise men, had come so that maybe he would find insight and answers
    - d) His hopes were raised but were dashed almost as soon as Eliphaz began talking
    - e) The stream that he had hoped would bring spiritual refreshment led instead to deeper despair
- 2. He pleads with his friends to lovingly help him to understand his situation and know what to do **24-30**
  - a. Addressing these friends as brothers (15) may have been cynical, but his plea for counsel was not
    - 1) None of what was happening made any sense, and he really wanted to understand what God was doing
    - 2) Eliphaz had said some things that were true, but he had not dealt directly with Job's life
    - 3) If they were aware of a sin worthy of this punishment then he wanted to know what it was, specifically
    - 4) A revelation of some terrible sin might have been painful, but could have set him on the right road
    - 5) At this point though their arguments as voiced by Eliphaz had proven of no use whatsoever
  - b. He asks they not treat him as a debate opponent but as a just man whose words were to be taken seriously
    - 1) He wanted to know how they thought they could correct him when they weren't even listening to him
      - a) Did they think just because he was in despair he could no longer speak as a reasonable, godly man
      - b) They were acting like heartless men who treated those they felt beneath them with contempt
      - c) They attack him when he is weak, like an orphan, and cannot stand up for himself
      - d) They are playing games with him, like casting lots, treating him as a pawn in their religious debate
    - 2) Job pleads with them to stop treating him like a character in a play and deal with him as a man, a friend
      - a) He wants them to look him in the eye, remember who he is and his character as they knew it
      - b) He wants them to ask themselves if the man they knew was likely to sin as they were now thinking
      - c) They were thinking his great suffering meant he was a great sinner, but was that the man they knew
    - 3) He asks for his friends to relent, to repent, to turn from the direction this conversation was heading
      - a) By continuing to suggest that his suffering is due to some great sin they are accusing him of lying
      - b) He has and will continue to insist that he knows of no great sin in his life that brought this on
      - c) For Job this is not an attempt to regain his health, wealth and family, it is to hold on to his integrity
      - d) He has nothing left but his blameless character and he wants his friends to stand with him
      - e) He wants them to serve as witnesses that he is still the man they always knew him to be, godly
- 3. As we try to counsel and comfort friends suffering through the difficult days of their lives, let us remember Job
  - a. It is one thing to know their sin has brought their suffering, but quite another to assume that it has
  - b. If we have known them to be of good character, let us treat them as those who can be trusted to tell the truth
  - c. Let us listen to them and not take their fears lightly, even if we do not fully understand their pain
  - d. And most of all, let us help turn them to think on Christ, the perfectly righteous man who suffered much
    - 1) Let us point out that there is a place in God's plan for the suffering of the just, and it leads to good
  - e. Let us then stand beside them for as long as it takes for the Lord to bring their cause to his appointed ends