

Graceless Teaching

Job 15:1-35

- A. Eliphaz rebukes Job for his sinful attempt to defend himself against his indefensible sinfulness **1-16**
1. Job's arguments were nothing more than hot air, useless speeches that led nowhere and proved nothing **1-3**
 - a. The east wind is the hot sirocco blowing in off the desert that is both unpleasant and unfruitful
 - b. Job's words were not those of a wise man or even a humble believer looking for answers
 - c. All that Eliphaz heard of all that Job had said was as far as he was concerned a waste of time
 - d. Job's friends gave good advice but Job's response gave no indication he heard, so his words were worthless
 2. Job's words were worse than useless because they actually served to undermine devotion to God **4**
 - a. In the context of how God's justice worked in the system Eliphaz believed in, Job's words were dangerous
 - b. The Lord blessed the actions of the righteous man and punished the evil deeds of the wicked
 - c. Job was saying that God treated the just and the unjust the same way, causing both to suffer
 - d. If this were so then many seeking God's blessings by doing right would no longer be motivated to do right
 3. To Eliphaz it seemed that Job had no interest in God's truth but was trying only to justify himself **5-6**
 - a. Rather than confess his sin he resorted to craftiness to wiggle out of the obvious explanation of his suffering
 - b. Eliphaz saw right through Job's deception since his suffering was all the proof needed of his great sin
 - c. Job's attempt to hide behind devious arguments meant to Eliphaz that every word Job spoke was a lie
 - d. Thus Job's own words condemned him so Eliphaz needed to add nothing; but Eliphaz kept talking anyway
 4. Job arrogantly rejected the verdict of his friends, and everyone else, that his sin had caused his suffering **7-10**
 - a. In a day when age with the experiences it brought was thought to bring wisdom, the older the better
 - 1) The point of the first question is that Job seemed to suggest he thought himself wiser than anyone
 - 2) He heard the unified wisdom of his three friends telling him to repent, but still believed he knew better
 - b. His arrogance was even greater than this though for he acted as though he had listened in on God's council
 - 1) It seemed to Eliphaz that Job was laying claim to a monopoly among men on wisdom
 - 2) His response was to make it clear he did not believe for a minute Job knew any more than his friends
 - 3) Furthermore, Job defied the traditions handed down by men even older than them all
 - 4) It was nothing short of sinful arrogance that would lead a man to think he knew more than anyone else
 - 5) Job was like a soldier out of step with his regiment who was convinced they were all on the wrong foot
 5. Job was offered the concerned counsel and comfort of friends and responded with inexplicable anger **11-13**
 - a. Eliphaz speaks of God's consolations spoken gently, but there is no account of God speaking to Job
 - 1) This word from God he speaks of is obviously the counsel offered to Job by all three of his friends
 - 2) It is true that Eliphaz had been circumspect and considerate in his first speech to Job
 - 3) However, the whole tone of his words in this second speech are markedly hostile and harsh
 - 4) He begins this time with clear cut words of rebuke and offers no hope even thru repentance at the end
 - b. Eliphaz had applied the comfort of gentle, godly consolation and in return Job can offer only anger
 - 1) Job had allowed his emotions to overrule the wisdom of godly men and sound theology
 - 2) He was trying to bend all the rules to fit his ideas of right and wrong and was angered when they didn't
 - 3) Somehow it seemed to escape Eliphaz that Job was upset due to loss of wealth, health, family, friends
 6. All Job's efforts to justify himself were misguided because sinful man cannot change the mind of God **14-16**
 - a. The Lord always does the right thing, and Job's suffering was the evidence that proved God judged him
 - b. How then could a sinful man who refused to repent of his obvious sin ever expect to prove God wrong
 - c. God does not even trust his holy angels to correct his thinking, and far less trust corrupt man to do so
 - d. To sum it all up, Job's arguments were empty, impious, arrogant, sinfully angry and pointless
 - e. What he needed to do was listen to what his friends were telling him, repent and seek God's mercy
- B. Eliphaz then warns of what will happen to wicked men, like Job, for continuing in their sin **17-35**
1. Eliphaz tries to establish his case on the most solid foundation for knowledge he knew of: tradition **17-19**
 - a. What he has seen, understood, was what had been passed down through the wise men of old
 - b. Their antiquity, and thus their tested wisdom that has been proven, is indicated in vs 19
 - 1) They lived in the land when their possession of it was unchallenged by anyone living among them
 - c. Having stood the test of all that time, Job could be sure that what Eliphaz was about to say was true

2. Eliphaz wanted his unrepentant friend to know about the anguish wicked men could expect **20-24, 27-29**
 - a. Judgment does not just come at the end of life; the wicked man suffers torment throughout all his life
 - b. The wicked man lives in constant fear because even when all seems well trouble is just around the corner
 - c. He lives in terror that bad things are awaiting and despairs because he sees no way to peace in this life
 - d. His life is full of distress and anguish, and worse, the darkness of approaching death is always on his mind
 - e. He may have wealth and power but cannot enjoy them because he fears they all will be taken from him
 - f. He may briefly enjoy signs of a blessed life (fatness), but all too soon his riches will be traded for ruin
3. All this awaits because he has turned his back on the Lord, defiantly rejecting his right to rule over him **25-26**
 - a. Rather than raise his hands to heaven in praise of the Lord, the wicked man defiantly shakes his fist at God
 - b. Like the fool he is, the wicked man arrogantly exalts himself over the Almighty who is infinitely greater
 - c. He does not just ignore the Lord's claims on his life, he charges at him with shield in hand
 - d. These are the very men that the psalmist later speaks about as being laughed at by God **Ps 2:1-4**
 - e. We laugh at Don Quixote tilting at windmills, but he was less stupid than men trying to fight the Almighty
4. The wicked man's trust in the empty things of power and wealth will yield just what it deserves: nothing **30-35**
 - a. That dark, hopeless future he despairs of escaping (22) turns out to be truly inescapable
 - b. That which he had hoped would be his legacy, his shoots, will be burned up so he is soon forgotten
 - c. Though his wealth and power may seem to make him immovable, a breath from God will carry him away
 - 1) Men whose names are etched in marble in hallowed halls soon become only that, names on a wall
 - 2) They thought to make an enduring name for themselves but all their work to that end is for nothing
 - d. It is not just that they do not outlast their rivals, but they are cut down before their time
 - 1) When others reach that maturity of life and begin to bear fruit, they will be stripped of theirs
 - 2) Like an olive tree shedding blossoms, the fruit of their labor will vanish just as it was ready to come in
 - 3) They are left with the realization that all they had worked for will come to nothing
 - e. They will be paid in full for their evil that brought them good things at the cost of losing God's blessings
 - 1) Rather than be counted successful, they will be recognized for what they are, barren of anything good
5. The fate of the wicked can perhaps best be summed up by the last words Eliphaz had to speak
 - a. They conceive trouble and give birth to evil; they come up with a plan for trouble and that is what they get
 - b. Or in more familiar terms: 'Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.'
6. Eliphaz was correct in his general conviction about the wicked: they sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
 - a. The evil they do among men and their defiance of God will bring suffering when God judges their lives
 - b. There were two things though that Eliphaz had not taken into account when addressing Job
 - 1) First, he was not speaking in general terms, but was supposed to be comforting a specific man
 - a) Job's life gave no indication of sin worthy of such suffering, but Eliphaz insisted he was a sinner
 - 2) Second, he ignored what anybody who pays attention knows: sometimes the righteous do suffer
 - c. Let us learn not to treat those we know to be righteous as wicked at the first sound of a rumor
 - 1) If we learn nothing else from Job it is that God does not always work in ways we understand
 - 2) Let us learn therefore to stand with our brothers, pray for them, encourage their faith
 - 3) Let us learn to be patient in waiting for the facts or we will sound more like Eliphaz than we should
 - d. Eliphaz was right in much he said about the wicked, but just wrong in identifying who was wicked
 - 1) May we find the grace to help a struggling saint with the kindness our Lord shows us in our need