

Job 04 - Eliphaz: The Innocent Don't Suffer

II. Dialogue (Job 3:1–42:6)

- (2) First dialogue cycle (Job 4:1–14:22)
 - (A) Job's exchange with Eliphaz (Job 4:1–7:21)
 - (a) Eliphaz' first speech (Job 4:1–5:27)
 - (i) Eliphaz implies Job is not trusting in God (4:1-6)
 - (ii) Iniquity causes suffering (4:7-11)
 - (iii) Eliphaz implies Job's disobedience by recounting the vision that taught no man can be righteous before God (4:12-21)

Job 4

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2 "If one ventures a word with you, will you become impatient? But who can refrain from speaking?

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2 "Will you get offended if somebody tries to talk to you? Who can keep from speaking at a time like this?

2 If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?

3 "Behold, you have taught many, And you have strengthened weak hands.

3 "Behold you have admonished many, And you have strengthened weak hands.

3 Look! You've admonished many people, and you've strengthened feeble hands.

3 Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.

4 "Your words have helped the stumbling to stand, And you have strengthened feeble knees.

4 "Your words have helped the tottering to stand, And you have strengthened feeble knees.

4 A word from you has supported those who have stumbled, and has strengthened faltering knees.

4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.

5 "But now it comes to you, and you are impatient; It touches you, and you are horrified.

5 "But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; It touches you, and you are dismayed.

5 "But now it's your turn, and you're the one who is worn out! Now it's striking you, and you're dismayed!

5 But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.

6 "Is your fear of God not your confidence, And the integrity of your ways your hope?

6 "Is not your fear of God your confidence, And the integrity of your ways your hope?

6 "Your fear of God has been your confidence, hasn't it? The integrity of your life has been your hope, hasn't it?

6 Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?

- Eliphaz is saying, "Job, you have been a counsellor to many people; you can identify the problem and assist in their dealing with it. Now it's your turn: follow your own advice." He then goes on to define the problem and we learn his basic principle of life.

(ii) Iniquity causes suffering (4:7-11)

7 "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed?

7 "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed?

7 Now please think: Who has ever perished when they're innocent? Where have the upright been destroyed?

7 Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?

8 "According to what I have seen, those who plow wrongdoing And those who sow trouble harvest it.

8 "According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity And those who sow trouble harvest it.

8 It's been my experience that those who plow the soil of iniquity and those who sow the seed of trouble will reap their harvest!

8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

- "You reap what you sow"

- Like the Psalmist: I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread (Ps 37:25)

- But Eliphaz goes too far: it is one thing as an abstract principle, quite another to apply it to Job's case. He deserves the retort: "You haven't seen much."

9 "By the breath of God they perish, And by the blast of His anger they come to an end.

9 "By the breath of God they perish, And by the blast of His anger they come to an end.

9 They perish by the breath of God; they are consumed by the storm that is his anger.

9 By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.

10 "The roaring of the lion and the voice of the *fierce* lion, And the teeth of the young lions are broken out.

10 "The roaring of the lion and the voice of the *fierce* lion, And the teeth of the young lions are broken.

10 "The lioness may roar, and the lion cub may growl; but even the ivory teeth of the full grown lion are broken.

10 The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the *fierce* lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken.

11 "The lion perishes for lack of prey, And the cubs of the lioness are scattered.

11 "The lion perishes for lack of prey, And the whelps of the lioness are scattered.

11 Full grown lions die when they cannot find prey; that's when the lion cubs are scattered.

11 The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.

- What Eliphaz's argument lacks in substance he makes up for with rhetoric

-- He uses a pride (family) of lions to describe the natural strength of human beings: it appears to be strong, but in God's judging hand, it is broken. His argument is that the righteous are never punished; only the unrighteous suffer.

- "Where did you ever see an innocent man perish? Where did you ever see an unrighteous man succeed?" he asks. Job's problem is caused by his own sin, something he is hiding.

"There is something wrong, Job. If you will only admit it you will be all right."

(iii) Eliphaz implies Job's disobedience by recounting the vision that taught no man can be righteous before God (4:12-21)

12 "Now a word was brought to me secretly, And my ear received a whisper of it.

12 "Now a word was brought to me stealthily, And my ear received a whisper of it.

12 "A message was confided to me; my ear caught a whisper of it.

12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof.

13 "Amid disquieting thoughts from visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on people,

13 "Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men,

13 Disquieting thoughts from dreams at night; when deep sleep falls on everyone.

13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men,

14 Dread came upon me, and trembling, And made all my bones shake.

14 Dread came upon me, and trembling, And made all my bones shake.

14 A fear fell upon me, along with trembling that caused all my bones to shake in terror.

14 Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.

15 "Then a **spirit** passed by my face; The hair of my flesh stood up.

15 "Then a spirit passed by my face; The hair of my flesh bristled up.

15 A spirit glided past me and made the hair on my skin to bristle.

15 Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up:

— "...spirit" - the Hebrew word *ruach*, commonly feminine, has a masculine verb: he stood, his appearance, etc.

— Thus, Spirit of God seems intended, not "wind"

16 "Something was standing still, but I could not recognize its appearance; A form was before my eyes; There was silence, then I heard a voice:

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:

16 It remained standing, but I couldn't recognize its appearance. A form appeared before my eyes; At first there was silence, and then this voice:

16 It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying,

17 'Can mankind be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?

17 'Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?

17 'Can a mortal person be more righteous than God? Or can the purity of the valiant exceed that of his maker?'

17 Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?
- The banality makes Eliphaz sound pretentious, and quite unfair. Job has not questioned the ways of God, let alone claimed to be better than God.
- All he has done is proclaim his misery

18 'He puts no trust even in His servants; And He accuses His angels of error.
18 'He puts no trust even in His servants; And against His angels He charges error.
18 "Indeed, since he doesn't trust his servants, since he charges his angels with error,
18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly:

19 'How much more those who live in houses of clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are crushed before the moth!
19 'How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are crushed before the moth!
19 how much less confidence does he have in those who dwell in houses of clay; who were formed from a foundation in dust and can perish like a moth?
19 How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?

20 'Between morning and evening they are broken in pieces; Unregarded, they perish forever.
20 'Between morning and evening they are broken in pieces; Unobserved, they perish forever.
20 They are defeated between morning and evening; they perish forever—and no one notices!
20 They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it.

21 'Is their tent-cord not pulled out within them? They die, yet without wisdom.
21 'Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them? They die, yet without wisdom.
21 Their wealth perishes with them, doesn't it? They die, and do so without having wisdom, don't they?"
21 Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.
- This is an argument based on the fact that infinite justice rules the universe. God is holy and pure; what chance would a man have to stand before him and claim to be sinless? That is good theology.
- As we will see before the end of this book, it was a problem that Job was, indeed, facing: he did not understand his own heart, and he so confesses at the end.

- But the problem with Eliphaz's argument is that he sees God only as a God of justice. He sees nothing of love, compassion, and forgiveness, or of discipline and training from the Father's hand. So because of unbalanced theology, his truth becomes false in its application. In this way, many people use partial truths and end up in error.

Charles Spurgeon spoke about "preachers who went about with a theological revolver in their ecclesiastical trousers."

- Eliphaz continues to argue that trouble comes only from sin. But the gulf between Job and his friends is opening up. Job's position is more audacious, more believing than Eliphaz's insipid insinuations. He will not be silenced by reminders that it is not for puny man to question the ways of the Almighty. His questions may be unanswerable, but he will ask them, and insist on his right to ask them.