

Walk Through The Bible

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
8The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
9The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
10More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.
(Psalm 19:7-11. NKJV)*

*25But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.
(James 1:25. NKJV)*

Happy Is The Man Whom God Corrects

February 19th, 2012

Job 4-5

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Open your Bibles this morning to Job chapter 4. If you are joining us this morning for the first time in this series let me quickly get you up to speed. Job is a good man, he is a righteous man but he is a man experiencing some serious trouble. In a very short span of time he has lost his business, his prosperity, his health and his 10 children, all of whom were killed in a freak storm. Job knows that God is Sovereign over all things, he knows that God did not fall asleep on the job and he knows that despite his terrible circumstances, God is still God and God is still good and so in the ashes of his life, he falls to his knees and prays:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21. NKJV)

There is a lot that Job doesn’t know that we know because we are told some things in the first two chapters that Job is not told. We are told that this whole turn of events was orchestrated in heaven. God directs the Accuser’s attention to Job and God expresses delight in Job’s faith. The Accuser suggests that Job only worships God because of the many good things God has given and so God, desiring to shut the mouth of the Accuser, desiring to take a more complete pleasure

in Job his beloved creature, permits the Devil to take from Job all the blessings God had previously delighted to give him. We know that is what is going on, but Job does not. His friends show up and they sit with him for seven days and then Job expresses a desire to wrestle this one out. He wants to know why this has happened, what he should do and most of all whether this implies the loss of his friendship with God. He bares his soul to his friends and he cries out like a wounded animal. He cries out to God demanding some answers and demanding an audience. His friends are a little taken aback by Job's outburst. They've already come to some conclusions about what must be going on and now they begin to instruct Job and to offer him guidance.

This morning we look at Eliphaz the Temanite, as he begins to offer some very orthodox, but ultimately inadequate counsel. We know this because God shows up at the end and says so. Like the judge of a debate, God listens to everyone talk and then he shows up and says: "This guy had it right and these guys missed the mark." The problem is that Job's friends say MOSTLY TRUE THINGS. Almost entirely true things. 95% true things. Their case is ultimately false, but they make it very well and say many incredibly true things along the way. So the trick for us is to sort through their counsel to find the gold and to find the gaffes. Let me begin reading to you from Job chapter 4:

¹ 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?
⁷ "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.
¹² "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, Which 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? ... (Job 4:1-21. NKJV)

He continues in chapter 5 and again for the sake of time we will edit down just a little:

1 “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, ^fTaking it even from the thorns, And a snare snatches their ^fsubstance.
 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.
 8 “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....

 17 “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.....

 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.” (Job 5:1-27. NKJV)

One of the values that we receive in studying the book of Job is that it gives us a bit of a crash course on understanding the nature of heresy. We tend to think of heresy as outright nonsense. We think of things like the Da Vinci Code which suggests that Jesus never died on the cross, he moved to Ephesus, married Mary Magdalene and his great grandchildren became the royal bloodline in France. Wow. That is the kind of sheer lunacy that we tend to think of as heresy, but in reality those sorts of heresy are not very dangerous simply because nobody believes them. No true Christian is going to read the Da Vinci Code, renounce his faith, move to France and begin searching for the lost relatives of Jesus. There are very few people in the world who are that stupid. A heresy generally in church history contains far more truth than that, in fact the best heresies are almost entirely true. Let me give you the definition of heresy from the book by Alister McGrath:

“Heresy represents certain ways of formulating the core themes of the Christian faith – ways that are sooner or later recognized by the church to be **dangerously inadequate or even destructive**. What one generation welcomes as orthodoxy another may eventually discover to be heretical.”

- Alister McGrath, Heresy (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), p12.

Do you see that? Most heresies are mostly true, they are thought of as true for long periods of time but then are ultimately recognized by the church to be inadequate and destructive. The problem with most heresies is that they just don’t say enough to be totally true and ultimately helpful. That is what we are dealing with here. The things Eliphaz says are mostly true, they

would even be generally recognised as true within the church, but studied carefully will be revealed to be both inadequate and destructive, not to mention, terribly unhelpful for Job.

So let's deal with his counsel that way, let's assume its mostly true, ultimately inadequate and finally unhelpful. We'll start then by looking at some things that he said that are generally true, then we'll show how those truths are ultimately inadequate and then at the end we'll show how his counsel was finally unhelpful. So what did Eliphaz get right?

What Did Eliphaz Get Right?

✓ **Those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same (4:8)**

That's just another way of saying that we reap what we sow, can you say amen to that? Amen. We reap what we sow, there is a rough moral equivalency in the universe, there is a sort of just Providence, there is a moral feedback loop that restrains evil and rewards good. That is all true and wildly Biblical. Proverbs 22:8 says:

He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow (Proverbs 22:8. NKJV)

That's just the Bible's way of saying: "If you are a jerk, bad things are going to happen to you". That's true isn't it? Let's be honest, 95% of the bad things that happen to us are our own fault. The vast majority of the pain I have suffered in my life has been self-inflicted. All you have to do is go to YouTube and search: "Bad things happening to people" and you will get countless videos of people getting hurt because they are stupid. Usually they are drunk or high or breaking the law. You'll see drunk people falling down, or high people jumping off of buildings because they think they can fly or some moron running away from the cops and getting hit by a car as he tries to cross the street; YouTube literally makes its living off of the truth of this principle. Stupid and evil are generally rewarded with pain and calamity in this life. There is a moral justice to the universe that almost always gets you in the end. Crime don't pay. Amen? Amen. And the flip side of that is true also, good people generally do very well. Study after study says that religious people who generally drink less or not at all, don't smoke, stay married and obey the laws of the land tend to be healthier, wealthier and live longer. Obeying God is generally rewarded with increased health, increased prosperity and length of life in our immediate circumstance. So why

is it then that this argument is declared by Calvin, and more importantly by God to be ultimately inadequate?

Why Is That Truth, As Stated By Eliphaz, Ultimately Inadequate?

➤ **Because this world is fallen and groaning under the curse of sin**

Yes, nature was designed to operate by just moral laws but nature is groaning under the curse of sin. Paul said that in Romans 8:

²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope;

²¹because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

²²For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

²³Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

²⁴For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance. (Romans 8:20-25. NKJV)

Paul says that the creation is groaning, it is not working the way it was designed because it was subjected to futility along with all of us when humanity fell! Sin has entered the created realm like a virus and now the moral software of the universe is a little wonky! Good people don't always live healthy and prosperously, bad people don't always fall into the pit they dug for others. Sometimes bad people get rich, become famous, live fabulously happy lives and die in their 90's! Sometimes good people are ground into the dust by poverty, disease and hardship, sometimes beautiful teenagers, living for Jesus, have car accidents from which they are not miraculously delivered. Why? Because the moral operation of the universe is infected with a virus! BUT. Now because of Christ's victory on the cross we have the promise that things will be renewed and restored and we HOPE IN THAT, we EXPECT THAT but we don't have it yet, we have some first fruits but we are WAITING PATIENTLY WITH PERSEVERENCE IN FAITH for the reality of those things.

Eliphaz suffers under a problem theologians call "over realised eschatology". Don't be intimidated by the big word. Eschatology just means "the logic of the end" or "talk about the end". In the end, if God is just, then evil must be punished and righteousness must be rewarded, amen? Amen. BUT, and its a big but, THE END IS NOT YET. This is not the end. So over

realised eschatology is when a person thinks that all of those “end time truths” are effective IMMEDIATELY. Let me give you some examples. Is it true that Jesus will heal our bodies and wipe away every tear from our eyes? YES!!! But is it true that that will happen NOW? No, not always. That is a truth associated with the END. In the meantime, we live in old creation bodies and we groan right along with creation because not everything is working the way it should. That’s why in the Bible, when someone is healed they call it a miracle, not Thursday, because it’s UNUSUAL! God gives healings as a sign that point to the END when he will heal everyone who is in Christ. We have first fruits in our present experience. Healings are first fruits. They remind us that the full harvest, when it comes will be really good, so just wait and keep looking forward. In the end, we will all reap what we have sown. Each of us will be judged according to our works. Not that salvation is by works, I’m not saying that, but the Bible is clear that we are all judged, JUSTICE IS DONE. Good is rewarded, evil is punished. You will be healthy and prosperous and BLESSED child of God, count on that. But it may not be Thursday, it might be a thousand years from now, but it will come. You may get some first fruits to keep you going, but you may also have to deal with some fallout because its not the end yet.

That is what makes the prosperity Gospel a heresy. Its not that its not true its that it leaves out one very important detail: DELAY. If Joel Osteen ever said that at the end of his sermon, I might invite him here to preach, because most of what he says is bang on. God does love us, he does have a wonderful plan for our lives, he does want to bless us and not to harm us, he will heal us, he will reward us, we will enjoy his prosperity. That is all TRUE!!! BUT. It might not be Thursday. It might be a thousand years from now and we may experience some suffering and some hardship and some poverty and some sickness before we get there. As preachers if we fail to add that detail then we are dangerous and what we say just isn’t true enough to be useful. The truth is we DO REAP WHAT WE SOW, just not always right away and sometimes, not until we face Jesus as our Judge.

Let’s look at one more.

What Else Did Eliphaz Get Right?

✓ **Happy is the man whom God corrects (5:17)**

Not only is this one true, it is really true and really helpful, as far as it goes. John Calvin LOVED this line, he wrote a whole sermon on it and it is one of the best sermons I've ever read. I've printed 20 copies of it and put it at the Welcome Centre because it is one of the best pieces of Christian writing you'll ever see. Let me show you this piece of gold from Eliphaz again:

“Behold, happy *is* the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.
¹⁸For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole. (Job 5:17-18. NKJV)

Isn't that good? That is GOLD!!!! And it is TOTALLY Biblical. Proverbs says that:

My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; ¹² For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son *in whom* he delights. (Proverbs 3:11-12. NKJV)

The author of the Hebrews in Hebrews 12 quotes that text and then says that:

⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons...
¹¹Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:8,11. NKJV)

He says that if you don't experience some chastening, you might not even be saved and that ultimately when you are chastened it turns out to be for your good. The Bible says that the chastening of God is always a good thing; if we are unbelievers it serves to humble us, shake us free from our false hopes and false idols and it ideally positions us to embrace salvation and position ourselves to receive ETERNAL BLESSINGS from God almighty. That's a good thing! And if we are believers our trials prove that God loves us, that like a Father he is interested in our education and improvement and that he must have great responsibilities in store for us. That's also a good thing! I punish my kids, not because I don't love them, but because I DO LOVE THEM and I want them to grow up, develop self control, become useful, one day get a job and MOVE OUT OF MY HOUSE! God is like that only he wants us to move INTO HIS HOUSE, but that's because he's got a really big house and he's way more patient than me. But you get the idea, trials and sufferings are good things! And they have to hurt a little bit to be effective, John Calvin said that:

“... yet it is needful that there be some pricking and painfulness in it, in order that we may perceive the wrath of God and be displeased with ourselves and our sins.... But now if he handles us gently according to His own nature and inclination, we are lost.”

- John Calvin Blessed Is The Man Whom The Lord Correct from Sermons From Job (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952), p.39.

Trials have to be a little bit painful and bloody so that we begin to understand that God hates sin and is not cool with it. There are a lot of people in North America who need some pain and pricking because they do not seem to get that! If God continues to handle us a society with such gentleness, we are lost. We need to get humble under whatever pain is coming so that as a people we can find the narrow gate again, as once we did in the time of our fathers. That is good truth, amen? Amen - and yet. It is ultimately inadequate and very quickly I will show you why.

Why Is That Truth, As Stated By Eliphaz, Ultimately Inadequate?

➤ **Because not all suffering is chastisement for sin.**

You see, it is true that some, even much suffering is chastisement for sin, but NOT ALL SUFFERING is chastisement for sin. Look quickly at John 9:1-3.

¹Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.

²And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

³Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. (John 9:1-3. NKJV)

The disciples had the same bad theology that Eliphaz had, they thought that ALL SUFFERING was the result of sin, the only thing to figure out in the case of this blind guy was whether it was HIS SIN or HIS PARENTS’ SIN. They couldn’t even imagine another option, but there was another option. This blindness was due to the Sovereign Purpose of God. God caused this man to be blind so that Jesus would be revealed as the one who brings LIGHT and CLARITY into the world. This man was born blind for the glory of God, for the furtherance of the Gospel and because of the kindness of God who desires that no man should perish! Listen carefully my friends, sometimes the most devastating lies are truths applied too broadly. It is true that much suffering can be understood as chastisement for sin. It is not true that all suffering can be understood that way. Job’s could not, this man’s could not, maybe yours cannot. Maybe your suffering has nothing to do with your sin. Some suffering is evangelistic, some is instructional, some is communal, some is random: wrong place, wrong time, BROKEN WORLD! Suffering is way too complicated for simple equations. Eliphaz said true things in too broad a manner and so did Job injustice.

Let's very quickly end by asking the question:

How Did Eliphaz Fail To Minister Appropriate Comfort?

We'll do these in rapid fire:

1. He spoke out of a very narrow base of experience.

He said: "Well I've never seen righteous people impoverished, and I've never seen good people suffer illness". Well then you've seen too little to be offering anyone counsel! You've been living in a blessing balloon and you need to punch yourself in the face and then read the newspaper man! Too many Christians live in little blessings bubbles because we are generally rich and safe and healthy and we just haven't seen that much of the world. Read some history, turn on the news and you'll see that some of your platitudes just don't hold water. Get out of the bubble and get familiar with history and reality and you'll give better care to people who are hurting.

2. He offered untested prophetic insights.

Did you catch that one? Eliphaz says that some of this wisdom he got from a spooky dream. That's in 4:12-21. "I had a dream and wisdom spoke to me". Boy I tell you, more harm can be done to hurting people by charismaniacs than by just about any other group of Christians I can think of. Now listen, I am all for dreams and visions and prophetic utterances but they have to be TESTED and they are not to be held as equal in authority to Scripture. I've used dreams to encourage people, I shared one at last Monday's Praise and Prayer; I am not opposed to that. But Eliphaz shares an UNTESTED dream that was obviously from the devil. We have to remember that if dreams are like e-mail, some of them are from God and some of them are from the devil and they are ALL SIGNED: FROM JESUS! That's why you have to test them. Oh what harm we can do to hurting people when we offer untested prophetic insights. "The Lord told me that you are being punished for lack of faith or failure to speak in tongues or whatever". Usually God is punishing people for not taking up our pet charismatic concerns, it seems, but great harm is

done when we say we are speaking directly for the Lord. Don't do it. We do not despise prophesy in this place, but we TEST everything.

3. He looked backward instead of forwards or upwards in seeking purpose.

In trying to explain this to Job he was only looking backwards. He was saying, "The explanation for this pain must lie in your recent past activities. You must have sinned." Church, when you are counselling hurting people you have to spend the majority of your time looking forward and upward. How will God use this to bring himself glory and to bring you sanctification and depth of faith? What purposes of God's heart may lie in this difficulty? Those are forward and upward questions and they are far more helpful to hurting people.

4. He makes promises that are both cruel and unreliable.

In chapter 5:24-25 he says: "If you just get right with God then you will have peace. Your tent will be secure, you won't have to worry about your home life and you will live to a ripe old age and go to your grave in peace." How could you possibly know that man? And what good is that to Job anyway when his tent is already crushed and his kids killed in the collapse? That's just stupid, mean and untrue. We sometimes want so bad to promise to people that all will be well. Don't do that. You can't do that. It doesn't help and it isn't true.

Conclusion:

I want to leave you with some encouragement. First of all I want to tell you that I know full well how hard it is to offer good counsel to really hurting people. Looking at that list, I think I've done all of those things sometimes in the same meeting! This is tough, I know that. I did a funeral once when I was a young pastor for a couple who had lost their baby. Their son was born and then died less than an hour later. I have never been so terrified in all my life. What do you say to people in that place? What Scripture do you read? What sermon do you give? I felt physically sick on the way over to the hospital where the service was to be and I wanted to quit ministry and run away. I got there and I started talking and I started feeling overcome and I saw the little baby there and the hurt in the eyes of the parents and I lost it. I fell apart. I wept and I

couldn't stop and it was awful. It was absolutely horrible. I felt like a complete loser and a failure and I had to be rescued by an older pastor who finished for me; it was a complete gong show. This is really hard. I get that. Maybe you heard this morning's message and you feel like now everything you have ever said to hurting people was wrong and heretical. Get in line. This is tough. But we have something Job's friends didn't have. We have Jesus. He is the Suffering Servant, he entered in and he absorbed the darkness and he gave birth to light and he has conquered death and he has given his Spirit and he will lead us into all truth. He will. He does. He is. Let him lead. He knows the way. He knows better than anyone that the world isn't working right – he Created it. He knows better than anyone that not all pain is punishment for sin – what sin did he commit? He knows that not all suffering is instructional, what did he need to be taught? Yet he suffered. He suffered unjustly. He suffered for us and he suffers with us. He is our High Priest and he knows exactly what we are going through and he knows just what to say. If we sit under his teaching and let him lead us through it, we will find peace in our pain and we will find the grace to minister to others whom we love and live among. This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.