

Job 5: 1-16 – “As the Sparks Fly Upward”, Sermon # 10 in the series entitled –
“Remember to Magnify His Work”, A Communion Sermon
delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 1st, 2020,
in the Afternoon Worship.

Eliphaz the Temanite has not been very kind to Job in this, his opening discourse to him. He has assumed that Job is guilty of some monstrous sin, or some gross secret hypocrisy, and that is why all of these terrible things happened to him. He has unfortunately taken to himself the office of a prosecuting attorney toward Job; the one whom he should have gently and lovingly commended to God, and God’s loving care of him, during this time of his great loss and grief. I believe that the devil had whispered into Eliphaz’ ear telling him that Job was thinking of himself as being more righteous than God. (Chapter 4, verses 12-21) Job now realized that he was being misunderstood even by his best friends. The devil hoped that this would cause him to curse God. And yet, even though this was happening here, we will find there were some things which Eliphaz spoke about God, in these verses which had truth in them.

And so I want to examine these wonderful truths, and show how, even in receiving wrongly applied reproof from our best Christian friends, we may still be encouraged to bear up under our trials if we can sort out the lies from the truth. 1st of all – We want to look at the truth that in trials, man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. 2nd – The truth that in trials, people should seek God, believing that He does great, unsearchable and marvelous things without number. And 3rd – The truth that in trials of a godly man, God acts justly to deal with those who misunderstand him, and thus the poor godly person will have hope. I pray that as we consider these truths we too, like Job, will come to understand how God can minister to our mind and heart during the very worst times of being misunderstood by our Christian friends.

1st – Let’s look at the truth that in trials, man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. (verses 1-7)

In verse 1 Eliphaz says to Job – “Call out now; is there anyone who will answer you?” “And to which of the holy ones will you turn?” “For wrath kills a foolish man, and envy slays a simple one.” “I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his dwelling place.” “His sons are far from safety, they are crushed in the gate, and there is no deliverer.” “Because the hungry eat up his harvest, taking it even from the thorns, and a snare snatches their substance.” “For affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble spring from the ground; yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” The original Hebrew of this last verse can be translated literally – “The sons of the burning coal lifted up to fly.”

If we think of the spiritual fire that was started by Adam’s sin at the beginning of the world; the sin of the first man, burning up the whole of humanity by his one transgression, we see why man was born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. Ever since Adam sinned, we can see that all of humanity, all of his sons and daughters are burning coals, for they have a sinful nature which burns in its desires for things which God cannot approve of, because He is holy. They lift themselves to fly upward to God in their own righteousness, in vain. We all live to ourselves, and we all burn out trying to find the true meaning of life, if we try at all. And then we fly away in death, unprepared to meet our Maker because we have lived for the moment, we have lived for today, and all of our attempts to keep going on forever, enjoying this life, they fail. Why? Because our heart’s desires burn from the coal which Adam was, and the fire that he lit. We search for truth in all the wrong places; in the haunts of sin.

If our sense of ourselves is that we have a strong will, we will think that we can do everything that we do without God’s help. If our sense of ourselves is that we are weak, we will not try at all, but wander through life aimlessly. All men in Adam are sons of the burning coal; they are born to trouble, because of his sin in breaking the covenant of works, in disobeying God and eating of the fruit of the

knowledge of good and evil. By nature, now, all men fall short of the glory of God. They do not by nature understand how holy He is. And in not paying attention to what His word declares, they say things about him which are not right.

In Isaiah chapter 6, the prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. The angels cried holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” And when Isaiah saw this, he said in verse 5 – “Woe is me, for I am undone!” “Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” The prophet Isaiah had seen this powerful vision of the glory of God, and indeed it was of Christ. And now he knew that he was unworthy to speak in His name to Israel or to anyone else. He was unworthy to be called a prophet of the Lord. Now he saw that he could not speak on the Lord’s behalf unless somehow he could be cleansed of his sin; particularly of having unclean lips.

So one of the angelic seraphim flew to him, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched Isaiah’s mouth with it, and he said – Behold this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged. And then he heard the voice of the Lord saying to him – Who shall I send, and who will go for Us? And he could then say – Here am I! Send me. And so, his ministry was commissioned, to go to God’s people and to tell them: Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. He was to make the heart of the people dull and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, an understand with their heart, and return and be healed. In other words, without Christ’s grace, such as Isaiah had received, to cleanse him, they would be born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. Isaiah himself in his ministry would be born to trouble, but not in the same sense. He would be born to trouble in his ministry.

Unusual ministry indeed; to preach until cities were laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses were without a man, and the land was utterly desolate. The Lord would remove men far away into captivity, and the forsaken places in the land would be many. But a tenth of the people, it says would return and be for burning, it says in the New American Standard translation. They would become burning witnesses to truth; brands plucked from the burning, as the prophet Zechariah was told Joshua the high priest would be, in Zechariah 3: 1. “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.” “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘The Lord rebuke you, Satan!’” “The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” “Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” Well, yes, he most certainly was because Lord would remove his iniquity and cleanse him, and put rich robes on him, and put a clean turban on his head, and he would have charge of the Lord’s courts. Joshua, and the remnant would come back to Israel and they would be a remnant according to the election of grace.

You will remember that John the Baptist was called a burning and a shining light because spiritually by his righteous life and deeds he showed forth the fact that he was zealous. He showed forth his righteous zeal in setting forth God’s truth as God’s prophet. But the real reason that John was zealous, and the reason that he was righteous, was because he was a believer in the promise of Christ, who is the Light of the World. He was born to trouble in the sense that he preached not himself, but Christ as the Prophet and the Savior of the World. He was thrown into prison for rebuking John over having taken his brother Philip’s wife. And he was martyred because of it. A very similar thing was happening here with Job. Job was becoming a martyr to the truth that he was a man of integrity who was being destroyed by Satan without a cause. And his friend Eliphaz was helping the false narrative along.

“Call out now,” Job, he says. “Is there anyone who will answer you?” “And to which of the holy ones will you turn?” Which one of the righteous persons who has ever lived before us has ever suffered such afflictions that you have suffered, and yet been righteous? Wrath always kills a foolish man and envy slays a simple one. This is what he calling Job – A foolish man whom God’s righteous

wrath had fallen upon. Someone whose dwelling place he would curse, because he saw Job's sons were far from safety, verse 4, they were crushed in the gate of their city in the house where they were celebrating one of their birthdays, and there was no deliverer, and this was all Job's fault.

Wicked men came and slew his servants and ate up his harvest, and he lost all of his possessions, and the snare that snatched his substance, verse 5, was Job's sin. Because, Eliphaz says, affliction does not come from the dust, and trouble does not spring from the ground, yet man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Eliphaz is saying that Job had sinned in some great way that they did not know about, and that his sin had found him out. God is always righteous in his judgments upon sin, and therefore Job must have sinned, to have seen all of this affliction come upon himself. But as we have seen with Isaiah and John the Baptist, this is not always the case, and indeed, in the case of godly people going through afflictions, their afflictions are always brought by God to ultimately establish their righteousness.

2nd – Let's look at the truth that in trials, people should seek God, believing that He does great, unsearchable and marvelous things without number. (verses 8-11)

Eliphaz says – “But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause – Who does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number.” “He give rain on the earth, and sends waters on the fields.” “He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.” Here, Eliphaz turns from reproof to instruction, instruction that he hopes that Job will heed. He is giving him the best advice that he could think of. He thinks that perhaps Job has neglected prayer, and that this is what has led him to curse the day of his birth. He has not really committed his cause to the Lord. And so he reminds him of this precious truth, that he should seek God and commit his cause to Him because He does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things with number.

This is the best counsel that Eliphaz has given Job thus far. It shows that Eliphaz is not totally unfeeling and unsympathetic to what Job is going through. It was something which was very important for Job to do, even though he was in such great pain, such great grief, and such great distress. He needed to seek God if he were ever to find a way out of his troubles. Such is what we need to do as well. Turn with me over to Psalm 105, verse 4 – “Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore!” “Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth, O seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones!” How important it is to seek God while in the midst of our trials. Men ought always pray and not to faint, Jesus says in Luke 18: 1. Both wisdom for the trial and comfort in the midst of the trial can be found by seeking the Lord.

And while we are seeking Him, we should, with our heart and with our words, commit to God our cause. Job's cause was his integrity. There are promises which God makes to the person who commits their way to Him, that we should take notice of. Psalm 37: 5 and 6 – “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.” “He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.” This is what Job needed to take notice of; that God can answer our prayers and show us great and mighty things which we do not know. (Jeremiah 33: 3) Oh, how we ought to remember these promises of God if we are suffering for the sake of righteousness, or if we need to find grace and help in time of need. Let us remember Psalm 46: 1 – “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” “Therefore we will not fear even though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the heart of the sea.” And verse 7 – “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things!”, it says in Psalm 72: 18. He does great things, and things past finding out; marvelous things too numerous to count.

The 3 examples given in verses 10 and 11 of our text are that He gives rain on the earth, and He sets on high those who are lowly, and He lifts to safety those who mourn. Once again, how important it is that we believe the promises of God, and concerning God. It is very mysterious how the Lord

brings rain, and yet how utterly necessary it is to growing crops and seeing a good harvest! But the Lord does this great thing because He is good, and thinks upon His people for their good. He sends waters on the fields because He knows that without His doing so, people will suffer and die. His giving rain is a part of His faithfulness, His goodness, and mercy, which follow the righteous all the days of their lives. When He withholds rain, it is often a sign of His judgment upon a people because of their sins. And yet He is willing to be entreated, when we look to Him for forgiveness and to help us, as we seek His face for every good thing.

He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. It reminds me of Psalm 113, verses 5-9. “Who is like the Lord our God, who dwells on high, who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in the heavens and in the earth?” “He raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the need out of the ash heap, that He may seat him with princes – with the princes of His people.” Well, this is certainly what Job needed at this point, although it would not come for some time. Let us learn to wait upon the Lord. Lamentations 3: 25 – “The Lord is good to those who wait for Him.” “It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.” Notice that this is the best way to approach bearing with the affliction that you are going through. While you wait, you seek Him, and having sought Him it is good to hope and quietly wait for his salvation; that is, the deliverance from the particular trial that we are going through.

3rd – Let’s think about the truth that in trials of a godly man, God acts justly to deal with those who misunderstand them, and thus the poor godly person will have hope.

(verses 12-16)

He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot carry out their plans.” “He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them.” “They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope at noontime as in the night.” “But He saves the needy from the sword, from the mouth of the mighty, and from their hand.” “So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts her mouth.” I hope that you will remember, dear Christian, that when crafty, clever, wicked people have formed plans against you, that God is well able to frustrate them, so that their hands cannot carry out their plans. And He is even able to bring back upon them, the wicked things that they had planned to do to you.

Sometimes those who think that they are wise, are very foolish when they go about to reprove a godly man like Job. Eliphaz and his friends cannot even begin to see their own foolishness, as they give advice to him, but they do not see how it applies to them. Eliphaz gave Job these very wise words that God catches the wise in their own craftiness, but he himself, by the way that he speaks here, and in many chapters to come, will not see that he is one of the crafty ones who he speaks of. He no doubt had a very great concern for taking his stand for truth, and hoped to help Job to see what he did not see; his hypocrisy and sin. But Job did not have any hypocrisy, and so he himself will eventually be caught in his own craftiness, and convicted of his sin by God Himself. His sin will be – Not speaking of God what is right.

Verse 13 of our text is the only verse in Job which is quoted in the New Testament. The apostle Paul says in 1st Corinthians 3: 19 – “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” “For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness’...” He was using the verse there to convince the Corinthians not to boast in men, not to divide up into parties where they said – I am of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I am of Paul. He says – All things are yours. And you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s. Let us see that it is enough that we belong to Christ, and have His Spirit working in our heart. This is what we remember as we come to the Lord’s Table at this time. We remember that Christ died so that we would be forgiven of all of our sins. But He has also died to give us grace to bear up under great trials of our faith. There are also things that we can learn to do in relation to our going through trials or our trying to help other Christians who are going through trials.

It is enough today, that we remember that Christ died to make us part of His spiritual body. We are a part of Christ’s body the church, and if one member suffers, we suffer with them. Let us not try

to judge the heart of another Christian by the trials that they are going through, and what at first sight, seems to make it appear that they are a sinner, or inconsistent in godliness. Let us see how we can more lovingly and carefully look into these things, and ask ourselves how we can love them with the love of Christ; draw near to them to encourage them, and strengthen them in their faith. This is communion in the body and blood of Christ that we have with one another.

1st Corinthians 10: 15 – “I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.” “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” “For we, though many are one bread and one body; for we all partake of the one bread.”