

Eliphaz's First Speech

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Eliphaz makes the primary point of Job's friends: a man cannot truly be right before God
2. aim – To cause us to understand there is not always a correlation between one's sin and one's reality
3. passage – Job 4:1-5:27

b. outline

1. Eliphaz Confronts His Friend (Job 4:1-6)
2. Eliphaz States His Thesis (Job 4:7-21)
3. Eliphaz Asserts His Point (Job 5:1-7)
4. Eliphaz Suggests a Response (Job 5:8-27)

c. opening

1. an **introduction** to the "speeches" of Job's "friends" (**lengthy, but necessary**)
 - a. the first speech (**chap. 3**) was of Job lamenting his "life" (**i.e.** recognizing that because he lives, he is forced to *consider* issues of suffering and pain that come to him)
 1. **note:** nowhere does Job *blame God* (**see 1:22**) – he recognizes that trouble has come to him, but he *never* claims that it is something "unfair" or (even!) *that he deserves it* (**see below**)
 2. he is simply noting the fact that **human existence requires us to contemplate evil**
 - b. (**now**) the first speech of *Job's friends* comes from Eliphaz
 1. **i.e.** now that Job has spoken, his friends are free to "chime in" ...
 2. **i.e.** now that Job has *resisted* sinning (because of who he is!), the **devil** comes along (in the form of Job's friends) to try and *complete* what he failed to accomplish earlier ...
 - c. **structure: chaps. 4-14** represent **Round One** of Job's friends speaking to him
 1. by Eliphaz here, Bildad in **chap. 8**, and Zophar in **chap. 11**
 - a. they are *initially* "sympathetic" towards Job, but such sympathy rapidly fades as they attempt to prove their case before Job, even *in spite* of his protestations
 - b. **i.e.** after each speech, Job will respond by "attempting" to refute their point, but they come back at him again and again
 - d. **remember (per Calvin):** Job's friends will make their "bad" points *well* (**i.e.** their speeches will "seem" sincere and truthful), and Job will defend his "good" points *poorly*
 1. **note #1:** the speeches of Job's friends *will* contain **nuggets of truth** – however, those nuggets will be *interspersed* in *larger arguments that are false*
 - a. **i.e.** the blind squirrel occasionally finds an acorn, a broken clock is right twice a day, etc.
 - b. **e.g.** this is why Calvin preached **x159** times (**i.e.** to exegete *each* of these nuggets)
 - c. Satan's lies always come with *some* truth (**e.g. Genesis 3:5**); they are *subtle*
 2. **note #2:** to understand the speeches of Job's friends, one must "step back" from them, and look for the **larger argument** that is being made
 - a. **i.e.** reading the speeches, seeing the "nuggets of truth", and "forgetting" the *whole argument* has led some into making *theological errors* from them
 - b. **e.g. 3:25:** the *reason* that difficulty comes upon you *is because you fear* ... put aside the "spirit of fear" and the troubles of life will vanish with them (**charismatic**)
 3. **note #3:** without a *proper idea of the whole book*, it is easy to read these speeches "out of context," thinking they are bringing "fountains of wisdom" to us ... but are *actually* designed to demonstrate the **opposite** of what they conclude
 - e. **the thesis (in 4-14):** it is *Job's moral failures* that account for his present plight
 1. the **character** of Job is being probed, under a *horrible assumption by his friends*: since the wicked *always* get what they deserve, and because Job is suffering, therefore Job must be a reprobate man suffering for his "hidden" evil
 2. and ... to "right" the matter, he must go to God, confess his sin, and be restored
 3. **remember:** the intention of *the book* is to show *the righteousness of Job as declared by God*, something that cannot be "altered" by circumstances, so the speeches of his friends are *providentially* designed to demonstrate that truth, albeit "in reverse"
 - f. the structure of Eliphaz's first speech: he *confronts* Job, he states his *thesis*, he *asserts* his point, and he calls for Job to *respond properly* to his assertion

I. Eliphaz Confronts His Friend (Job 4:1-6)

Content

a. Eliphaz starts to speak (vv. 1-2)

1. “yet who can keep from speaking” = okay, now it’s my turn ...
 - a. **i.e.** you’ve opened the door by pouring forth your lamentation (**chap. 3**), so now I get to speak ...

b. Eliphaz confronts his friend (vv. 3-6)

1. **read 4:3-6**: although (at first glance) it would appear that Eliphaz is *complimenting* his friend, he is *actually* accusing him of being a **hypocrite**
 - a. **vv. 3-4** – true, “you have instructed many ... you have made firm the feeble knees”
 1. as noted in **1:1-5**, Job *did* worship the true God and *did* try to inculcate his faith into his children
 2. and, it is *highly possible* that Job *did* try to bring a true faith to Eliphaz and the others
 - b. **vv. 5-6** – but, now that “it” (**i.e.** calamity) “has come to you” you are “dismayed”
 1. your speech of lamentation demonstrates that you are nothing but a *hypocrite*
 2. **i.e.** you had a “fear of God [as] your confidence” and “the integrity of your ways” as your hope, *but* when trouble came, you immediately begin to “whine” about it
 - c. Eliphaz accuses Job of *hypocrisy* because Job *dares* to question his circumstances
 1. he starts by pointing out that Job is a *hypocrite* because he doesn’t properly connect his *misery* (circumstances) **with his true spiritual nature; his state as connected to his behavior**
 2. **i.e.** Eliphaz implies that Job has gotten his spiritual analysis *all wrong* ...

II. Eliphaz States His Thesis (Job 4:7-21)

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a. the thesis stated (vv. 7-11)

1. **read 4:7-9**: people *always* get what they deserve – their *behavior* determines their *destiny*
 - a. **vv. 7-8** – “who that was innocent ever perished” and “those who plow iniquity ... reap the same”
 1. the **fundamental axiom** of the human race: it is our *outward behavior* that (both!) determines our destiny *and* creates our circumstances in this world
 2. **e.g.** the fundamental nature of “religion”: good men go to heaven, bad men go to hell
 - a. true, a *perverted* “Christianity” suggests that *all* men go to heaven, but the *fundamental thinking* of the human race is the *direct connection* between deeds and circumstances
 - b. because, we see this as a *necessity of human existence*: those who commit heinous acts *must be* punished; those who *obey the law* are *not* punished, but rewarded for doing so
 3. Eliphaz starts with a *fundamental flaw in his logic* = there are *many* “innocents” who perish
 - a. in our *experience* we *know* this to be true – life is *not fair*, sometimes the guilty go free
 - b. and, Scripture makes it clear that *the opposite is often true* (**e.g. Habakkuk 1:1-4**)
 - c. and, the *entirety* of **redemptive history** is built upon the fact that *the truly innocent One* must suffer and die *in the place of the wicked* – redemption comes *only* through “unfairness”
 4. **i.e.** Eliphaz argues that Job has *missed the point* (**irony**: Eliphaz is missing it; **see below**)

b. the thesis substantiated with a vision (vv. 12-21)

1. **read 4:12-17**: in a vision, Eliphaz received a “revelation” that *confirms* his assertion above
 - a. **vv. 12-16** – “a spirit glided past my face, the hair of my flesh stood up” (**i.e.** I got **goosebumps**)
 1. **note**: there is some debate as to whether this is an *actual* vision, if it’s Eliphaz’s vision, or if Eliphaz is simply relating something that Job told him about and is “throwing it back” at him
 - a. **IMO**: the simplest reading is the best: Eliphaz *did* have a vision at some point (maybe while sitting with Job for seven days?) and is recounting it here ... because:
 - b. what the “spirit” in the vision says is *utterly consistent* with 1) what Eliphaz asserted in **v. 7**, and 2) what *the devil* would say in this situation
 2. **remember**: it is *highly likely* that the devil is *using Job’s friends* to complete what he started
 - a. and this vision looks a lot like the devil bringing *lies* to “overthrow” Job ...
 - b. **vv. 17-21** – “can mortal man be in the right before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?”
 1. this statement is the **key** to the speeches of Job’s friends (**repeated in 9:2; 15:14; 25:4**)
 2. **i.e.** can a *sinful* man be right before a *holy* God? can *any sinner* be pure before his Creator?
 - a. **the devil’s answer**: of course *not* – you must be “perfect” in order to come to God (**i.e.** as an *accuser*, Satan perpetuates this lie *throughout humanity*; **see v. 7 above**)
 - b. **the Lord’s answer**: *absolutely* – the entire concept of **justification** is built on God declaring known sinners to *be* righteous, and entirely on the basis of *someone else’s* behavior

3. **i.e.** Eliphaz asserts the lie of the devil: no “*mortal*” (**i.e.** sinful man) can be righteous in the sight of God – therefore, **what you are experiencing is the result of your own unrighteousness**
- c. **God: “it’s not what you do, but who[se] you are” vs. devil: “who you are is what you do”**

III. Eliphaz Asserts His Point (Job 5:1-7)

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a. Eliphaz asserts his point

1. **read 5:1-2, 6-7:** to *whom* can Job appeal? – only a *fool* misses this point to be true
 - a. **vv. 1-2** – “to which of the holy ones will you turn?”
 1. **i.e.** who is going to *contradict* my assertion? **answer:** no one, only the *fool* misses this truth
 - b. **vv. 6-7** – “affliction does not come from the dust”, “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward”
 1. Eliphaz asserts that the *human condition* is fixed, and based on the reality that *everyone suffers*
 - a. **i.e.** just as it is *normal* for sparks to fly upward from a fire ...
 2. **i.e.** since we are all sinners, and since we all suffer, *the two are obviously linked together*
 3. **i.e.** we suffer *because* we are sinners – we are “*born to trouble*” because we are sinful
 - c. Eliphaz believes that the “evidence” supports his conclusion – our *circumstances* are all the result of being born as sinners – to suffer is to “reap” the *natural* consequences of being sinful
 - d. **again:** note this as a (**erroneous, yet**) **fundamental axiom** of human thinking (**see above**)

IV. Eliphaz Suggests a Response (Job 5:8-27)

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a. Eliphaz suggests turning to God in repentance

1. **read 5:8-9, 17-19:** the proper response (as Eliphaz suggests!) is to “*commit my cause*” to God
 - a. **vv. 8-9** – “I would seek God ... to God I would commit my cause”
 1. **i.e.** the only *proper* recourse is for Job to *repent* of his sinfulness and “*seek God*” – to *admit* that his suffering is caused by his sinfulness and to ask God to forgive him *and restore him*
 - b. **vv. 17-27** – “*despise not the discipline of the Almighty*”, “*he will deliver you from six troubles*”
 1. **i.e.** what you are experiencing is simply the Lord *chastening* you for being sinful – it is the *obvious* response of God to sin: when we sin, God *punishes* us for it ... so **repent** ...
 2. **note:** the author of Hebrews quotes a *similar* statement from **Proverbs 3:11f**
“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”
 - a. the **difference** from this point is: *discipline* is what God brings to *his children*, whereas Eliphaz is assuming “discipline” to be the consequences *over all men who sin*
 - b. **i.e.** Eliphaz does not *know* that men can be *children of God* – he simply assumes humans are “under” God as a “deity” that needs to be “**appeased**” when we do wrong
2. **fact:** what Eliphaz *does not know* is that God has *purposed* Job to be a righteous man, in a state of grace before him **by virtue of his own declaration that it is so**
 - a. **i.e.** no one in the story *knows* of the heavenly council – thus, this speech is the thinking of a man with little knowledge of God or of redemption (**i.e.** believing that sin = suffering)
 - b. **what we know:** Job’s suffering is *not* caused by his sinfulness – rather, it is an attempt by Satan to *change* the status of Job as *God has declared it to be so, as his own son and in anticipation of a Savior who would come to break the power of sin over the world*
 - c. **suffering is a common part of what it means to live in a fallen world, but Christ has come to suffer like us in order to break the power of sin (Hebrews 2:14-17)**
“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”