

The Power of a Worldview Job 15-17

At this point in the book of Job, we have been introduced to Job and the heavenly court. We have learned of Job's integrity and we have learned of Satan's desire to trip up man. Through the hand of God Job has experienced as great of a tragedy as any man can. All of his possessions have been lost as has his family. In addition, Job is struck with disease and relegates himself to a trash heap outside the city. As we have seen, 3 of his friends have traveled in a supposed attempt to comfort him but to this point they have provided anything but comfort. After each of the three friends taking a turn to speak and hearing Job's response to each, we now find ourselves entering round two of the discussion. Each of his friends will antagonize Job even more deeply as tensions rise. In chapter 15 we see Eliphaz continue his argument based on experience. What we quickly discover is the power that an entrenched worldview can have on an individual.

Tonight we are going to take a deep dive into Eliphaz's second remarks to Job. We will address Job's response as well but our primary focus is going to be spent on the comments of Eliphaz in chapter 15.

Job 15

Eliphaz's first speech in Job 4-5 focused heavily on the value of experience. We talked about how experience can be valuable but it should never be our primary source of information. Personal experience never trumps divine revelation – particularly from Scripture. What Eliphaz revealed to us in chapters 4-5 was his worldview and theology. Eliphaz (and his two companions) wholeheartedly believed in the doctrine of retribution. In other words, God rewards the righteous and judges the wicked. This doctrine served as the foundation for the way in which Eliphaz chose to view the world. Much like a house, everything else must be supported by the foundation.

In chapter 15, the more we read, the more that is revealed about the state of his heart. As a result, we find out how deeply entrenched Eliphaz's worldview really is.

- I. The State of Eliphaz's Heart
 - A. What he says (v.1-6)

Eliphaz continues an argument that we have already seen by Job's friends. How long are you going to go about blowing hot air Job?

- A wise man does not answer with empty words
- Your argument is useless
- Your words serve no purpose
- You don't revere God like you should
- You don't meditate on divine things and approach God in prayer like you should
- Your words are slick but you are fooling no one – it is your own mouth that condemns you

Matthew 12:34 – “For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.”

Eliphaz argues that the very words of Job reveal his state as a sinner. It is his view that Job has attempted to deceive his friends and God and that this approach will get him nowhere. However, what Eliphaz's words have really revealed is the state of his very own heart.

In these 6 verses, Eliphaz is essentially calling Job a liar. Why would he believe that? Again, we must remember that Eliphaz is not privy to the information that we have been provided in Job 1-2. We know Eliphaz is wrong about Job because we know God's own personal thoughts about Job. Eliphaz doesn't know this but what leads him to his conclusions – His entrenched worldview.

Doctrine of Retribution – God will reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

This is the lens through which Eliphaz sees everything and his words prove it. In his heart Eliphaz knows Job cannot be right because if he is, then Eliphaz would be forced to see things differently. In order to hold on to his view of the world and his way of thinking – Job must be wrong.

Therefore

- Job's words are useless
- He fails to understand God (or even better – Eliphaz's worldview)
- Job's words are nothing but the used car salesman routine

Eliphaz's worldview never entertains in the slightest that Job could be right.

B. What he condemns (v.7-16)

Eliphaz condemns Job for rejecting his (and the other two friends) counsel. He sarcastically asks Job, do you think you were the first man to be born. This is another way to insinuate that Job thinks he is smarter and wiser than everyone else.

He asks Job, have you listened in on the council of God. Eliphaz is saying that Job doesn't have secret access to God so why does he act as though he does – as though he knows something that no one else does. In fact that is his next question – what do you understand that we don't?

Eliphaz goes on to tell Job that there are older men around him "gray-haired" – they speak with the words of experience while Job allows his emotions to overtake him.

Then in verse 14 we get down to the nitty gritty – No man can be pure – No man can be righteous. God doesn't even trust in His angels, how much less does He trust men who are only corrupt.

*Hang on to this verse because we are going to come back to it.

It is easy to see here that Eliphaz goes out of his way to condemn Job for rejecting the counsel of his friends as though he has inside access to God. By rejecting his friends, Job is rejecting wisdom – at least that is what Eliphaz thinks. In verse 11, this is specifically what Eliphaz says – are the comforts of God too small for you, or the word that deals gently with you? Eliphaz is speaking of his own words here – he sees the advice given from him and Job's other two friends as the comforts of God. That's an awful proud position.

What is really revealed here is once again the position of Eliphaz's heart and his worldview. As we saw in his first speech, Eliphaz places an enormous amount of emphasis on personal experience. He condemns Job for rejecting it and therefore he must view it with a lofty perspective.

*Now we begin to see the foundations of Eliphaz's worldview – It is the things of man that has built this worldview.

C. What he fears (v.17-35)

This is the largest section of Eliphaz's second speech and it is very interesting that the man who accuses Job of blowing hot air spends a great deal of time rambling on and on.

This section centers on the constant fear that the wicked man lives in. Eliphaz describes him as writhing in pain and dreading sounds that point to him being found out. The wicked man does not prosper and struggles to get by while living in constant distress and anguish. He will live in constant darkness and never experience wealth or any type of prosperity – he will live in ruins. He will not bear any fruit or blossom in any way.

There is a lot of talk about fear here. Eliphaz appears to be trying to use fear as a motivator. He is calling upon Job to fear God and repent. Again, it is this same idea that the righteous will be blessed while the wicked will come to ruin.

Certainly there are some wicked people in the world that live in this state. However, there are also many wicked individuals that do appear to prosper and quite frankly do enjoy their debauchery. Something doesn't add up here. For someone who speaks so highly of experience – either Eliphaz's experience is very limited or he cannot bring himself to admit that his perspective might be wrong.

It appears that this while trying to move Job with fear, what Eliphaz really fears is being exposed – He fears that his worldview could be wrong. However, he has allowed it to become so entrenched that he refuses to back down. He has planted his flag on his poor theology.

One commentary put it this way – “Eliphaz cannot even admit the fact – the frequent fact – of the untrammelled prosperity of the bad and the unrelieved misery of the good, let alone reconcile it with the justice of God.

Eliphaz's worldview refuses to allow him to even consider that Job is telling the truth. The fear of that prospect is too great because if that be the case, Eliphaz would have to wrestle with the fact that he could very well experience the heartache and trouble that Job demonstrates in front of his very eyes.

II. The Foolishness of The Gospel (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5)

Eliphaz's entrenched worldview that places such a high priority on personal experience reminds me of this passage of Scripture. He considers Job's argument as complete foolishness for many of the same reasons that the lost in the world view the gospel message as complete foolishness.

A. One Born of a Woman (v.14)

What is man that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous? In other words, Job – you were born of a woman just like we were, you are nothing more than a man and yet you claim to be pure – there is no way that is possible!

This is the same argument that many have of Jesus – “He was a good man, but nothing more.”

Matthew 13:53-58 – Jesus rejected at Nazareth

B. True Wisdom

1 Corinthians 1:20-25

True wisdom is found in Christ. Eliphaz argued with Job that he understood true wisdom as a result of his experiences and the ones that came before him. That is what he trusted in. However, Paul points out that God has made foolish the wisdom of the world. Eliphaz thinks he has it figured out but he doesn't. His theology is off – It is only what he views as foolishness that can save a man.

Notice that Christ crucified is described as a stumbling block. Very similarly, Eliphaz is stumbling over Job's situation and claim. Eliphaz refuses to see the truth because it would shake the foundations of what he believes. This is the same response of the lost – they refuse to see the truth of salvation and freedom in Jesus Christ because it causes them to reject their worldly wisdom – they would have to reorient their lives because their worldview would be turned upside down. Eliphaz simply won't allow himself to go there and many today do the same.

C. A Balance of Love and Fear

Again, Eliphaz attempts to motivate Job through fear. As he sees it, Job doesn't fear God and a rightful fear of God will bring his life back in line with God's standard. Eliphaz is right that man should fear God. However, as Paul points out in Romans 2:4 it is God's love and kindness that is intended to draw a man to repentance.

Paul also speaks of this in 2 Corinthians 7:10 when he says that godly grief produces a repentance unto salvation. Godly grief occurs when one understands the great love of God and the lengths that he has gone to offer salvation only to also understand how that offer has been rejected and mistreated. Paul goes on to say that worldly grief produces death. Worldly grief implies a sadness over sin because of what its consequences on your life – This is what Eliphaz is throwing in Job's face – worldly grief – You should fear God because of the result – judgement like you are experiencing.

The foolishness of the gospel is a perfect balance of love and fear. The love found in the gospel offer and the fear found in its rejection. Although Eliphaz isn't privy to a full understanding of the gospel that is to come, he is in some sense rejecting its very premise due to his worldly wisdom formed by his entrenched worldview.

Job 16

III. God's Sovereignty

Job replies in these next two chapters (16 & 17). In 16, Job speaks exclusively about the sovereignty of God. Eliphaz and Zophar have accused Job of blowing hot air – useless speech, but Job declares here that it is the counsel of his three friends that is hot air. He tells them that they speak from an easy position – it's easy to second guess or pass judgement. Job says he could do the same if their roles were reversed. Again, he mentions that their words have only brought pain.

His friends have told Job that he is going about his situation the wrong way – that he is speaking to God out of turn. In verse 6, Job argues that whether he speaks or not, the result is the same. God is the one in control of his plight and God will do what God will do. Surely there is purpose in it, Job just doesn't know what it is.

What follows is a description of how Job sees his rejection from God. Verses 7-17 draw a stark comparison with the rejection and crucifixion of Christ.

v.7 – God has worn me out – He is doing this. Also, the company of Job has vanished just like the company of Christ vanished in his final hour.

v.9-10 – Violence has struck him through the hands of other men just as Christ was beaten and mocked by men. The masses gathered against Him yelling “crucify Him!”

v.11 – Job was given over to the wicked – only his life was spared. Christ was handed over to the wicked and his life was not spared – He was completely forsaken. “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

v.16 – Job was full of grief just as Christ was in the garden

v.17 – Job was blameless - he did not deserve the situation he found himself in, just as Christ was completely sin free and did not deserve the wrath of God that was poured out on Him.

Job's situation is extreme. I cannot imagine a worse situation befalling an individual and yet through Christ, God demonstrated that He has not, does not, and will not allow us to experience anything that He is not willing to experience Himself!

IV. The Desire for an Advocate

Once again, towards the end of this chapter (v.20-21) we see Job's cry for an advocate. Though his friends scorn him, Job's conscience remains clear as he pours out his heart to God. He is confident that he has not partaken in any grievous sin but is open to the fact that there may be unknown sin in his life.

He cries out for someone that could argue his case to God. He longs for an advocate that could talk with God like a man talks with his neighbor. What Job doesn't know is that this advocate is coming and will experience loss just as He has. Again, God is willing to experience beyond what we experience in order that some may come to know Him. The deeper and deeper we go into this book the more a man must realize his similar need for an advocate for it is only through this advocate - Jesus Christ – that man can be made right before God.

Job 17

V. Conflicting Hope

Chapter 17 reveals the complete brokenness of Job. In the opening verse this is the message that Job shares – “My spirit is broken.”

He pleads with God to not forget him even though all of those around him have forsaken him. Again, there is such similarity here between Job's condition and Christ's on the cross.

Verse 9 is where I want us to place emphasis in this chapter. Despite Job's up's and down's he tells us that the righteous holds to his way, and the one who has clean hands will only grow stronger.

Understand that stronger doesn't equate with ease. Job's situation isn't growing easier by the day but his faith and reliance on God can make him stronger. The truly righteous man does not waiver in his reliance on God – he may not understand and he may question some things, but he does not question God's authority and sovereignty. This is the situation we find Job in. He struggles to find any hope? He has good moments and bad – the end of this chapter leans towards the bad, but there is always a sliver of reliance on the one true God.

Personal Implications

1. Worldview Matters Greatly

What we see in this encounter with Eliphaz is that one's worldview matters greatly. It functions as the lens through which one views everything. Eliphaz placed such a high emphasis on experience that he was unable to even consider anything that threatened his belief system. Eliphaz didn't want Job to be innocent because that would turn his worldview upside down.

Romans 12:2

Paul calls on us to renew our mind – it must be shaped by the Word of God. It is the Word of God that must serve as the foundation to our worldview. All we see, think, and do should be shaped by it. When we place too much emphasis on the wisdom of the world we begin to distort the truth resulting in foolishness.

Kids

2. The Foolishness of the Gospel

1 Corinthians makes it very clear that the world will view the gospel as foolishness. The Christian worldview will be mocked at every turn because it directly contradicts what the world views as wisdom. We see a hint of this in Eliphaz as he rejects Job's message but we must be prepared to see it as well in our own interactions with others. The lost will only gain the ability to reject worldly wisdom when they are illuminated by the Holy Spirit. This does not eliminate our requirement to evangelize. Instead, it only necessitates our requirement to pray for the lost that their eyes might be opened.

In addition, we must pray for our own strength to reject worldly wisdom that is put before us every day. All that we see, think, and do should be rooted in our knowledge of and trust in Scripture. We should be grounded in 1st Corinthians 1:31 – our boasting should be in the Lord.

3. God's love demonstrated

Job's suffering in many ways mirrors the suffering of Christ in his final days. This should be an overwhelming encouragement to us because it demonstrates God's immense love for us. Many times

when we are struggling with something we are tempted with the idea that no one has ever struggled like us before – as if we are the first to encounter such a situation. Even if we know others have experienced similar we often feel as though our situation is unique. This is a lie and there is no greater example than the very sufferings of Christ. God does not allow us to experience anything that He was not willing to experience Himself. Christ suffered on your behalf – suffering He did not deserve – only because of God’s immense love for you. When we suffer we can be comforted by the thought that God understands our suffering because Christ experienced it Himself – on an immensely greater level.

4. Holding Fast

Job describes himself as disregarded and looked down upon by men. He has grown weary from all of his suffering and frustration. To be brutally honest, his hope has waned. He has good moments and bad. He sees no way out of his situation and he does not understand it. No one appears to be on his side and most certainly no one understands what he is dealing with. Even so, there is always a remnant of faith in God that does not waiver. Certainly at times it is smaller than at other times but it is always there. Job 17:9 should be a verse that we cling to in difficulty – one we know by heart – Yet the righteous holds to his way, and he who has clean hands grows stronger and stronger. As bad as it may be, our only true hope and source of strength is in our God. All else will eventually fail us, but He never will.