

An Appeal For Justice Job 22-24

This week we begin the third and final round of conversation between Job and his friends. This is the last time we will hear them speak. I'm sure most of you are probably thinking –finally! It's true that these friends have not provided much comfort for Job. To be honest, all they have done to this point is hurl false accusations at Job and bring him more pain. Unfortunately, in this final round of conversation, we only find more of the same. Tonight we are going to hear Eliphaz follow up on Zophar's accusations and totally discount the words that Job has just spoken. So much so, that Job doesn't even entertain his comments. Instead, Job moves straight into a cry for justice from God.

Ch. 22 – Eliphaz's final comments

I. Logic declares you are wicked (v.1-5)

Eliphaz begins his third speak on what seems like a more generous front. It looks like he is willing to give Job the benefit of the doubt and one might even begin to think that Job has possibly swayed him into believing that Job is innocent.

Eliphaz argument basically amounts to “So What” – God doesn't need Job and regardless of what Job does or doesn't do, God isn't going to be impressed. “Can a man be profitable to God?” In other words, what do you have to offer Him anyway Job – quit your crying. Even if you are right does God gain anything from it? Eliphaz's theology is a bit off here because Scripture clearly tells us in multiple places that God does take pleasure in those who are in the right and do His will. However, Eliphaz is correct in that we can certainly bring nothing to God.

Now just when it looks as though Eliphaz concedes that Job is blameless, he pulls the rug out from under him.

“That was hypothetical Job just to prove a point” – He goes on and you can sense the condescending and sarcastic tone – Does God bring judgment on you because of your fear for him. In other words, has God dropped the hammer on you because of your high respect for Him and your obedience to Him?

That doesn't make sense. The only thing that does make sense is that your evil is abundant – there is no end to your sin. Notice Eliphaz isn't pinning one sin on Job but a lifestyle of sin – we have come a long way from when the conversations between Job and his three friends began.

The only thing that does make sense is you are wicked and are paying the price.

II. Zophar was right (v.6-20)

If you remember, in chapter 20, Zophar specifically accused Job of taking advantage of the poor and less fortunate. Now we see Eliphaz appear to agree with Zophar and really pour it on.

Eliphaz accuses Job of taking the possessions of the poor, withholding food and water from them, while also sending away the needy widows and orphans. This is a high charge as God has high expectations of his people to care for the less fortunate. Eliphaz describes Job as a man with power and a favored man. According to Eliphaz, he has abused that power.

It's interesting that Eliphaz now appears to be in a similar position and yet is acting in similar way. It's a situation that easily could be described as the pot calling the kettle black.

Again we see the problem of assumption. Eliphaz is taking what he views to be the effects of sin and using them to assume the cause (or sin itself) – you can't do that. He also slaps Job around for what he assumes to be Job's position concerning God.

He accuses Job of viewing God as too distant and far away to know what is going on in Job's life. Certainly, Job has questioned God's silence but Eliphaz's interpretation is a bit of a stretch to say the least. Again, rarely does anything good come from assumptions.

The follower of the one true God is charged with loving God and loving others – these are described as the two greatest commandments in both the Old and New Testament. 1 Corinthians 13:7 (from the love chapter we studied last week) implies that believers are to see the best in people – love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. What Eliphaz is doing is the opposite. He is assuming the worst in Job.

Eliphaz presses Job and asks him if he is going to continue to be stubborn and stick to his wicked ways. He draws a comparison to what appears to be those in Noah's flood who were swept away in their wickedness and rejection of God.

Interestingly in verse 19, Eliphaz appears to gloat in Job's suffering by saying "the righteous see it and are glad" speaking of judgment. How far have we come – a friend traveling to comfort his friend is now gloating in his suffering.

III. The only appropriate reaction is repentance (v.21-30)

We have to throw Eliphaz a small bone here as he attempts to draw Job to repentance. Notice verse 21 – He draws Job back to God's Word or instruction – the Hebrew word here is Torah – and it is the first time any of Job's friends have pointed to it. We are not sure what type of revelation individuals had in Job's day but this verse makes it clear they had something.

Here is the problem, We are three rounds into conversation here. Technically this is the 7th interaction Job has had with a friend and it has taken this long to point back to God's word? This is major mistake. Also, while normally a follower of God calling a sinner to repentance is a good thing – it doesn't apply to Job – he is blameless and one shouldn't be called to repentance regarding an accusation of sin that is assumed!

Ch. 23 – Job's wavering

I. This doesn't make sense to me

What is most interesting about chapter 23 and Job's response is that it really isn't a response at all. Job doesn't really even entertain Eliphaz's comments at all. He has grown deaf to what his friends have to say. He is tired of false accusations and as he has mentioned before, his primary frustration is with God's silence and not his friends.

What we see in this chapter is a frustrated and confused man who waivers back and forth regarding his situation and position before God.

In the first two verses, Job simply states that he doesn't understand what is going on. He has grown more bitter by the day as a result of his afflictions. His spirits are low (heavy) and he is exhausted. None of it makes sense and he feels alone in the darkness.

II. Job's certainty (v.3-12)

Job begins by stating the certainty of his situation. He comes across as very confident and bold here.

If I could find God I would lay my case before Him – I would be full of arguments. I am even confident in what His response would be to me. He wouldn't contend with me but instead He would listen to me. As an upright and blameless man I would be allowed to argue and I would be found innocent. The truth is I can't find Him – I don't sense His presence – However, He knows how to find me and when He finally shows up I will come out smelling like roses – Oh if that day would come!

I have held fast to my faithfulness – I have not departed from His commandments and I have treasured His teachings more than the bountiful food I had on my table – He was and is my priority – that has not changed! I will be set free!

III. Job's uncertainty (v.13-17)

However, in the blink of an eye, Job's viewpoint changes. It is almost as if he stops himself or has second thoughts about the situation he is in. God doesn't change so what is next for me! If no one can change His mind, how can I? What He desires to do He will most certainly do! He has set a course for my life and He will fulfill it, regardless of what I desire. When I stop to think about that, I become terrified – what if He wants to keep me here? The thought of that terrifies me! "I am in dread of Him."

Verse 17 is very interesting to me. We have seen Job in this chapter move from complete confidence to a complete lack of confidence. He moves from a position of believing that he has some sense of control over his situation to one who believes that he has no control over his situation. Ultimately he rests and fears in the fact that God is in control. Interestingly, though Job does not shy away from crying out to God about his perceived injustice.

Ch. 24 – Job's appeal for justice

I. The wicked do prosper

Job spends all of chapter 24 pointing to the prosperity of the wicked. This is somewhat of a rebuttal of his friends' comments but in some sense I believe it is a cry out to God. Without going into great detail some of what we see in Job's complaints include:

- The wicked steal others' property
- They take advantage and fail to care for the poor and less fortunate
- They rebel against God
- They murder

- They commit adultery
- They do their wicked deeds in the darkness
- They afflict widows and take advantage of women

All of this and you say they are cursed and will face judgment and yet I see no judgment. It almost appears as if God prolongs the life of the wicked and gives them security. I know that they are eventually punished but why not in this life? Why not sooner? This doesn't make sense!

II. Am I lying

In verse 25, Job basically calls out to his friends and to God – If I am lying, call me out on it. This is what I see. You say otherwise but I'm not seeing it. Why am I not seeing it?

III. Where is the justice?

This whole chapter has been a cry out from Job in response to his friends, in response to his own circumstances, and in response to what he has seen in his lifetime. It's all not adding up. Why is he being punished (the perception) when he has been blameless when the wicked appear to be flourishing? Where is the justice?

Personal Implications

1. We cannot assume or perceive the worst in others
2. We are never to rejoice in another's suffering
3. We should have a healthy fear of God but also a trust in Him that fosters conversation
4. Our heart is called to fall in line with God, not usurp Him.