

Job 4 • Laying Error Alongside Truth

Introduction

Somewhere along the line I picked up the biblical definition of “heresy” to be the laying of truth alongside error. It’s a device that attempts to dilute and even redefine God’s Word into something He never intended. This is the recurring issue with Job’s 3 friends, that they often weave their opinions and errors of judgment with God’s truth so that they not only miss addressing the real issues of what is going on, but attempt to create the illusion that they have a wisdom and insight into the cause and effect of Job’s life. Jesus called this phenomena “the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6) wherein earthly authority figures’ leaven of error permeates the entire loaf of teaching for the whole body to create something that has the look and feel of the real thing but is found to be far from it when consumed. Far greater than the physical trials Job is undergoing are the doctrinal assaults on his beliefs and faith.

¹Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered,

²“If one ventures a word with you, will you become impatient?

But who can refrain from speaking?

³Behold you have admonished many, And you have strengthened weak hands.

⁴Your words have helped the tottering to stand, And you have strengthened feeble knees.

⁵But now it has come to you, and you are impatient;

It touches you, and you are dismayed.

⁶Is not your fear of God your confidence,

And the integrity of your ways your hope?

[Read v.1-6]

Q: What is the paradox contained in Eliphaz’s opening statement in v.2?

A: He accuses Job of being “impatient”, but Eliphaz himself cannot “refrain from speaking”. The paradox is that—like so many who claim to be helping but are actually just satisfying their own need—Eliphaz is guilty of the very thing of which he’s accused Job.

Q: On what grounds does Eliphaz accuse Job of impatience?

A: According to v.3-5, people that once experienced what Job is going through were themselves strengthened and helped by Job; now that the tables have been turned, Eliphaz finds Job’s response to be surprisingly out of line. It’s a variation of “Physician, heal thy self”; Eliphaz thinks that since Job is so familiar with how to minister to the errors he’s now committed that he should put into practice for himself what he suggested to help others in similar predicaments.

Q: What does Eliphaz identify in v.6 as the root causes of Job’s condition?

A: Lack of reverence for God and obedience to God’s ways.

Q: What is wrong with these assumptions on Eliphaz’s part?

A: They’re wrong. Job neither resembles those whom he has ministered to in the past nor has his current situation been brought about by lack of reverence for, nor disobedience to, God. In fact, it’s precisely **BECAUSE** of his adherence to those things that these circumstances have been brought on him. Eliphaz is completely wrong.

Q: Why do you suppose Eliphaz is so far off course in his response to Job?

A: Because he himself is impatient and has not sought the Lord in this manner. Eliphaz is answering based on his own feelings and intuition, **REACTING** to Job rather than ministering to him. He views Job’s words as doctrinal statements that need correcting rather than the expression of needs that need to be ministered to.

Application: *Have you ever found out that the way you initially saw a situation was later proven to be wrong? Do you feel that any time someone speaks that you **MUST** be obligated to respond? How often do you pause to seek God’s guidance for a response, even when you have the overwhelming urge to speak out right away?*

⁷“Remember now, who ever perished
being innocent?

Or where were the upright destroyed?

⁸According to what I have seen, those
who plow iniquity

And those who sow trouble harvest it.

⁹By the breath of God they perish,
And by the blast of His anger they
come to an end.

¹⁰The roaring of the lion and the voice
of the fierce lion,

And the teeth of the young lions are
broken.

¹¹The lion perishes for lack of prey,
And the whelps of the lioness are
scattered.

[Read v.7-11]

Q: Summarize Eliphaz's doctrinal position in v.7-11.

A: Only the wicked suffer what Job is experiencing; the innocent and upright never experience such things.

Q: What is wrong with this position?

A: It's wrong on a couple of levels:

1. We know that the righteous **DO** suffer some of the same circumstances as the unrighteous in the course of this life.
2. Eliphaz's reference in v.9, “*By the breath of God they perish*” implies that God is the author of Job's afflictions, wherein we know that they're attributable to Satan.
3. Eliphaz believes everything is the result of a person's behavior. He does not allow for the possibility of external spiritual forces being brought to bear to do anything other than punish unrighteousness and reward righteousness.

Q: What is Eliphaz trying to communicate in his 5 different uses of “lion” in v.10-11?

A: It's most likely terms that would be familiar in Job's time that describe wicked behavior. The references to a lion, lioness, and young lions could be a powerful illustration in the original language and culture of that day that describes the end that has come upon Job, his wife, and children due to Eliphaz's perception of their wickedness in God's eyes.

Q: How might you describe in general terms why Eliphaz is again so wrong here? On what basis does Eliphaz judge whether or not someone is walking rightly with God?

A: He's wrong because he measures people's spiritual walk by their earthly circumstances. He does not allow for suffering or trials to be part of a Believer's life, that their presence indicates a **LACK** of faithfulness rather than the possibility that one's faithfulness is the thing being tested.

¹²“Now a word was brought to me stealthily,
 And my ear received a whisper of it.
¹³Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night,
 When deep sleep falls on men,
¹⁴Dread came upon me, and trembling,
 And made all my bones shake.
¹⁵Then a spirit passed by my face;
 The hair of my flesh bristled up.
¹⁶It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance;
 A form was before my eyes;
 There was silence, then I heard a voice:
¹⁷“Can mankind be just before God?
 Can a man be pure before his Maker?
¹⁸He puts no trust even in His servants;
 And against His angels He charges error.
¹⁹How much more those who dwell in houses of clay,
 Whose foundation is in the dust,
 Who are crushed before the moth!
²⁰Between morning and evening they are broken in pieces;
 Unobserved, they perish forever.
²¹Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them?
 They die, yet without wisdom.”

[Read v.12-21]

Q: How would you summarize Eliphaz’s doctrinal position in v.12-21? Are they true or is he committing yet another error?

A: His point can be summed up that God holds everyone accountable for their life, both in heaven and earth. This is absolutely true, supported by other Scripture.

Q: Why do you suppose Eliphaz felt this was relevant to Job?

A: Believing Job’s circumstances to be the result of sin, Eliphaz wants to reinforce the teaching that sin has consequences beyond just this life.

Q: (Consider carefully as this is NOT a trick question.) Did God give this truth to Eliphaz for Job’s benefit? To whom did God give it?

A: Eliphaz describes in v.12-16 that this truth was revealed by God to Eliphaz in a very personal experience. There is no indication, however, that God gave it to Eliphaz for the purpose of relaying it to Job.

Q: What might this teach us about our own revelations and knowledge from God?

A: Just because He reveals things to us in special and extraordinary ways, it should not be automatically assumed that we’re to re-communicate it at any and every opportunity. By doing so we risk using the things of God for purposes they were never intended. It’s a subtle way of making ourselves the center of attention.

Q: Does the inclusion of this truth of Eliphaz’s experience and the teaching revealed through it by God override the errors made in the previous verses?

A: No. In fact, using truth to give your errors an air of legitimacy renders even the truth useless in its misapplication.

Q: How might Job perceive Eliphaz’s real reason for sharing his divine revelation?

A: Job probably sees it as Eliphaz’s attempt to make himself a greater spiritual authority than he really is. It’s a subtle way of saying, “Oh yeah? Well God told ME....[blah-blah-blah]...so you should listen to ME.”

Overall Application

- How should we deal with the urge to respond to someone? Is it OK to respond each and every time?
- Should we assume that our feelings about the root cause is always right because the person is too emotional or “too close” to the problem? How should we explore the root causes **WITH** the person? How can we discern the root causes?
- Is it OK to share any and all truth at any and all times? Why or why not? How does it play a role in preaching to a condition as opposed to ministering to a need?
- Perhaps you have received a special word of knowledge, revelation, or even a dream from God. Should you share it any time you feel like? Why or why not?