

Job 5 • Applying Truth Through Opinion

Introduction

Perhaps it would be more accurate to title this study, “**MIS**Applying Truth Through Opinion”. But in Eliphaz’s attempt to put Job in his place, there are several indicators that even he knows there may be holes in his credibility. Take note how he will assert that everyone, even angelic agency, automatically agrees with his assessment (Unless an angel appears, how can this be rebutted?), that he has never witnessed the innocent having to undergo any of these things (which is obviously an error), and that this is ultimately irrefutable because he and his colleagues have fully investigated the situation and all come to the same conclusion. What at most is a personal opinion reveals such a thinly veiled pride that Eliphaz not only elevates himself, but in the end transitions from embellishment to an outright lie. An important lesson here is to understand that we have abandoned the role of comforter when we become obsessed with being right regardless of how the patient might feel about it. And that including **some** truth never sanctifies or disguises error and what can at most be called opinion.

¹“Call now, is there anyone who will answer you?
And to which of the holy ones will you turn?

²For anger slays the foolish man,
And jealousy kills the simple.

³I have seen the foolish taking root,
And I cursed his abode immediately.

⁴His sons are far from safety,
They are even oppressed in the gate,
And there is no deliverer.

⁵His harvest the hungry devour
And take it to a place of thorns,
And the schemer is eager for their wealth.

⁶For affliction does not come from the dust,
Nor does trouble sprout from the ground,

⁷For man is born for trouble,
As sparks fly upward.

[Read v.1-7]

Q: What is Eliphaz referring to in v.1? Is he asking if Job is going to call on an angel or some such thing?

A: This appears to be a poetic way of addressing Job’s passionate appeal, which to Eliphaz and company, does not fit the circumstances. Eliphaz is basically stating that anyone with spiritual understanding, even angelic authorities, would recognize the situation in the exact, same way that Eliphaz does. It’s a way of stating, “This is obvious to everyone but you, Job”.

Point: One of the chief characteristics of people like Eliphaz is that they assume that everyone, even those who normally rank above them, see things and respond exactly like them. They are actually elevating their self at the expense of the hurting because they’re more concerned about being right than actually helping out.

Q: What overall type of person does Eliphaz call Job?

A: Not just a “foolish man”, but a “simple” one. (v.2)

Q: What is the difference between these two conditions?

A: According to biblical usages, someone who is “simple” lacks wisdom by the world’s standards, and someone who is “foolish” lacks wisdom by God’s standards. It’s an unflattering way of calling someone stupid and without understanding on every level, both earthly and spiritually, someone who is considered “double blind”.

Point: By scriptural standards, a “fool” is brash, abrasive and always right in his own eyes; the “simple” are easily enticed by their lusts and therefore easily deceived. This is ironic because in this case it applies to Eliphaz much more than Job.

Q: What are the chief attributes Eliphaz is assigning to Job as someone both “foolish” and “simple”?

A: “Anger” and “jealousy”. (v.2)

Q: And what are the spiritual results of such unbiblical anger?

A: Foolishness. Whereas the biblical definition of wisdom is to live according to God’s Word and ways to please God, foolishness is living according to the world’s ways to please one’s self.

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Q: What is the full meaning of “jealousy” in this context?

A: The underlying Hebrew term in the context of being associated with “the simple” is best understood as “childish resentment”. It approaches what we would describe as a child throwing a tantrum when they are corrected rather than accepting the truth of the situation and the discipline which comes with it.

Point: *Eliphaz is saying in a most unflattering way that everything is Job’s fault and that he is not just dealing with it badly, but even with shallowness and immaturity.*

Q: How is this accusation being stated as not just a one-time problem, but in Eliphaz’s opinion, taking on a permanent part of Job’s nature?

A: In v.3 he observes, “I have seen the foolish taking root”. This is a picture of a tree attempting to provide nourishment for itself, something which is a spiritual representation of someone willfully living apart from God’s Word and ways, steadfastly refusing to depart from their own.

Q: How does Eliphaz imply that this is not only the reason for Job’s situation, but is the direct cause-and-effect for the loss of Job’s family?

A: In v.2-6, the consequences of foolishness are stated to result in “his sons are far from safety” (v.4), his harvest and wealth—in other words, all material possessions, are lost to others (v.5), and for such a person “there is no deliverer”. These are things which Job has experienced for which Eliphaz provides a cause.

Point: *Eliphaz was never a witness to any of these things. However, he does not phrase an opinion, but having witnessed something similar in others, he assumes this is the same thing.*

Q: How does this tie into the statement in v.6-7 as to the source of “affliction” and “trouble”?

A: Since such cannot be blamed on the environment, one must recognize that the true source is man himself.

Point: *Eliphaz does not consider the possibility of divine testing or trials; to him every circumstance is a reaction to man’s behavior. In his view, nothing good can happen to a bad person and nothing bad can happen to a good person.*

Q: What do we know about the nature of man which is most certainly true where sin is concerned?

A: Man is born with a sinful nature and is predisposed to sin. We often witness the consequences of sin.

Q: How is the reference in v.4, “even oppressed in the gate” a specific rebuttal to Job?

A: As known from ancient cultures from that area and time, and seen in various instances in Scripture, the gate of a city is where courts met and judicial matters were settled. This addresses Job’s desire to take his case to God with Eliphaz responding that because of his obvious foolishness (in Eliphaz’s estimation), Job has no case.

Application: *Man’s predisposition to sin does not automatically mean that any and all affliction and trouble is a result of sin. But this does not stop some from adjudicating on God’s behalf as if there is sin.*

⁸But as for me, I would seek God,
 And I would place my cause before
 God;
⁹Who does great and unsearchable
 things,
 Wonders without number.
¹⁰He gives rain on the earth
 And sends water on the fields,
¹¹So that He sets on high those who are
 lowly,
 And those who mourn are lifted to
 safety.
¹²He frustrates the plotting of the
 shrewd,
 So that their hands cannot attain
 success.
¹³He captures the wise by their own
 shrewdness,
 And the advice of the cunning is quickly
 thwarted.
¹⁴By day they meet with darkness,
 And grope at noon as in the night.
¹⁵But He saves from the sword of their
 mouth,
 And the poor from the hand of the
 mighty.
¹⁶So the helpless has hope,
 And unrighteousness must shut its
 mouth.

[Read v.8-16]

Q: How do we know that Eliphaz is actually rebuking Job and not just in general “sermonizing”?

A: By the statement, “*But as for me, I would seek God...*” (v.8) Eliphaz is stating outright, “*Job, you’re not like me, seeking God; I would never act like you are acting*”.

Q: What is probably inferred by Eliphaz further stating, “I would place my cause before God”? (v.8)

A: That Job is instead somehow trying to avoid God by taking his case to men. It’s another way of attempting to make the case that, from Eliphaz’s point of view, Job is trying to avoid responsibility for all that has happened to him.

Q: How does what is stated in v.9-10 compare to what follows in v.11-16?

A: Eliphaz begins by stating an absolute truth regarding the character of God, that He performs “*wonders without number*”, and provides the indisputable accompanying example of rain. But then Eliphaz speaks of things God may or may not do as if He always does so without fail:

1. (v.11) Does God **always** set “*on high those who are lowly*”?
2. (v.11) Does God **always** lift “*those who mourn...to safety*”?
3. (v.12) Does God **always** frustrate “*the plotting of the shrewd*” so they “*cannot attain success*”?
4. (v.13) Does God **always** “*capture the wise by their own shrewdness*”?
5. (v.13) Does God **always** “*quickly*” thwart “*the advice of the cunning*”?
6. (v.14) Does God **always** ensure that “*the wise*” and “*the cunning*” always “*meet with darkness, and grope at noon as in the night*”?
7. (v.15) Does God **always** rescue from “*the sword of their mouth*”—a biblical metaphor for someone’s speech intended for irreparable harm?
8. (v.15) Does God **always** save the poor “*from the hand of the mighty*”?

Q: What is Eliphaz’s example of “rain” covering up where his follow-on examples are concerned?

A: Eliphaz uses a natural phenomenon which affects everyone on the planet regardless of their spiritual condition. He then applies this to all of the following examples which all involve people in their specified spiritual condition. It is an incorrect comparison.

...for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:45b)

Q: Is it true that no matter what, “the helpless has hope” and “unrighteousness must shut its mouth”?

A: This final state, and the eight conditions stated leading into them, certainly describe the ultimate resolution when God brings all things to a close in eternity, but none of them are absolute guarantees in the course of earthly temporal conditions. There is no promise any of them will be resolved in this life.

Point: Omitted from Eliphaz’s “*wisdom*” and “*experience*” is any reference to the sovereignty of God. Every instance cited has to do with some kind of cause and effect of sin or less than ideal circumstance to which he attributes sin. For instance, every martyr in history has exited this life in the face of such circumstances going unresolved.

Q: How can we see that Eliphaz is not merely offering an opinion, but is making this more and more personal where Job is concerned?

A: In the opening section (v.1-7) Job is told he is immature, lacking any wisdom (earthly or spiritually), and in a poetic way that he is basically a whiner responsible for his own mess. The closing statement here, “*unrighteousness must shut its mouth*” reinforces this further by telling Job that since it is obvious to Eliphaz that this is Job’s chief malady—unrighteousness, that Job should shut up now.

Observation: *When we dig through the poetic dressing, it becomes clear why Job becomes more and more impassioned in his responses, because what at first blush seems like someone just editorializing or perhaps taking the opportunity to deliver a sermon, is actually a direct, personal accusation and assumption. There is no third party detachment in what Eliphaz is stating.*

Q: Overall, what might Eliphaz have failed at where his intentions are concerned?

A: If he intended to provide Job assurance or consolation, he has missed the mark completely.

Application: *God is not obligated to respond or take action under any and every circumstance. But this does not stop others from stating in absolutes what God often, but not always, chooses to do.*

¹⁷Behold, how happy is the man whom
God reproves,

So do not despise the discipline of the
Almighty.

¹⁸For He inflicts pain, and gives relief;
He wounds, and His hands also heal.

¹⁹From six troubles He will deliver you,
Even in seven evil will not touch you.

²⁰In famine He will redeem you from
death,

And in war from the power of the
sword.

²¹You will be hidden from the scourge
of the tongue,

And you will not be afraid of violence
when it comes.

²²You will laugh at violence and famine,
And you will not be afraid of wild
beasts.

²³For you will be in league with the
stones of the field,

And the beasts of the field will be at
peace with you.

²⁴You will know that your tent is
secure,

For you will visit your abode and fear
no loss.

²⁵You will know also that your
descendants will be many,

And your offspring as the grass of the
earth.

[Read v.17-27]

Q: In his first argument, Eliphaz asserts that Job’s affliction is actually self-inflicted, and in the above follow-on argument asserts this is proven alone by Job’s circumstances, that God never allows the righteous to undergo these things. How would you summarize his third and final point?

A: Because this has come about as a result of sin and nothing but sin, Job must not remain blind to the “fact” (as Eliphaz sees it) that Job is experiencing “*the discipline of the Almighty*”. (v.17)

Q: In this context, when does Eliphaz assert that God “gives relief” or heals?

A: Only when the malady is inflicted by God for the purpose of discipline in the first place.

Q: What are the main things Eliphaz lists in v.19-24 which he asserts, “He will deliver you” and “evil will not touch you”?

1. (v.20) Famine
2. (v.20) War
3. (v.21) Verbal persecution (“*the scourge of the tongue*”)
4. (v.21) Violence
5. (v.22-23) Wild Beasts
6. (v.24) Personal Loss

Q: What may be biblically ironic about this list? How is this same list replayed elsewhere in Scripture where believers are concerned?

A: These are all things which Jesus states in the Olivet Discourse, and in parallel in the Seal judgments of Revelation 6, which will be experienced by everyone, believer and non-believer alike, leading into the Rapture. Even for believers who are ultimately rescued, resolution never automatically comes in the course of this life, but only in eternity.

²⁶You will come to the grave in full vigor,
Like the stacking of grain in its season.
²⁷Behold this; we have investigated it,
and so it is.
Hear it, and know for yourself.”

Point: *These are also things which God historically employed many times to discipline the unrighteous, whether it be Israel or a surrounding nation. But throughout Scripture, God always publicly documents this as the reason he invokes such things in the context of discipline.*

Q: *How might v.24-26 be particularly pointed directly at Job and his present circumstances?*

1. (v.24) His “tent” and “abode” have suffered catastrophic loss.
2. (v.25) He and his wife have suffered total loss of their offspring.
3. (v.26) He is anything but “in full vigor” where his personal health is concerned.

Point: *The assumption from which Eliphaz proceeds is that there is no possibility of any other cause other than Job being disciplined by God for his own sin-based behavior. No one without sin could possibly experience these things in Eliphaz’s estimation.*

Q: *How does Eliphaz’s closing statement in the last verse punctuate how personal this has become?*

1. First, Eliphaz uses “we” to tie into his opening assertion that no one, not even angels, disagree with Eliphaz’s assumption.
2. Second, it an outright lie that “we have investigated it”. He substitutes their “presumption” for fact finding.
3. Third, according to Eliphaz, Job needs to be rebuked for not listening.

Point: *Eliphaz summarizes that everything is Job’s fault.*

Application: *Not everything that God uses for discipline automatically means discipline is the only thing taking place. But this does not stop others from assuming the worst without even the most cursory inquiry of God or the situation.*

Overall Application

*Eliphaz assumes he understands the situation and applies some truth and a lot of opinion to what, in reality, he does **NOT** know. His admonition to Job, “Hear it” is a call to respond to God’s Word, which Eliphaz insists is the source of what he has just presented. Because what he offers is at most a personal observation of truth which does not directly apply to Job, he has acted out everything for he has accused job. It is Eliphaz who lacks both spiritual and earthly wisdom and in need of godly discipline for his assumptions.*

This is an example of the scriptural principle,

²“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. (Matthew 7:2)

Eliphaz, in his attempt to judge Job, has only succeeded in judging himself.