

# An Empty Call to Repentance

Job 22:1 – 30

Nutshell: Eliphaz understood the freeness of God's grace very well. Though he offered it to Job freely, he did so on the wrong premise. We must know man's real situation to give men God's real Good News.

## Review

A. Job is the ABCs, or kindergarten, of the Bible. It lays out the **basics** of the God-man relationship. Yet it's a kindergarten where you come out with a Ph.D.

B. The Story so far

1. God told Satan that Job was THE best, 1:8
  - a. Satan objected: "Only for blessings," 1:10
  - b. God said Satan could take them away, 1:12
  - c. Job lost all children and possessions, 1:13-19
  - d. But he worshiped without protest, 1:20-21

**Kid-speak:** Could God have stopped Satan from hurting Job? Sure! So did God *want* the bad things to happen to Job? Yes, but only to do Job good, Lam 3:33.

2. God bragged on Job again, 2:3
  - a. Satan objected, "Skin for skin," 2:4-5
  - b. God said Satan could touch him, 2:6
  - c. Satan gave Job agonizing boils, 2:7-9; 30:18,30
  - d. Job still didn't sin, 2:10

3. After 7 days, Job cursed his birth, 3:1-26.

4. Most of Job is an argument cycle, chaps. 4-31.

### Argument Cycle 1

- a. Eliphaz trusted *personal revelation*, 4:12,
  - b. Bildad trusted *tradition*, 8:8,
  - c. Zophar trusted *mystery*, 11:7
  - d. *Each man had a deficient view of God, 42:7*
  - e. Job answered each one: chs. 4-14
5. They increasingly hinted that only sin could have brought on these afflictions
6. **Job has increasingly accepted that premise**
- a. Thus, he begins accusing God for wrongful punishment, 40:8; 9:15; 10:2-7.
  - b. *What Satan couldn't do, the friends did!*  
Consider your power as a friend.

### Argument Cycle 2

7. The 3 friends speak again. Job answers each one, six more speeches, chaps. 15-21

### Argument Cycle 3

8. One last cycle, minus Zophar, 22-25
9. Finally, Job insists on his uprightness, 26-31  
↓ The 3 friends bluffed no confession of sin, 32:1

**Kid-speak:** What were Job's 3 friends trying to get him to confess? That he had sinned, or else God wouldn't have clobbered him.

10. Enter the human hero of the book (a type of Christ: truth incarnate), **Elihu**, ch 32-37

- a. God corrects Job, 38:2; 40:2, 8, and his 3 other friends, 42:7, but never Elihu
- b. God agreed with Elihu, 32:2; 40:8
- c. Elihu's *last* speech, chap 37, becomes God's *whole* speech: Creation, 38-41. God teamed w/ Elihu.

**Kid-speak:** Who was the person in the book who has the right answer? Elihu!

11. Job will *sulk* in 40:4-5, then *repent* in 42:1-6

**Theme** of Job: How can *I* be right in God's eyes (justification) if *He* is not right in my eyes (sanctification)?

C. **Themes** in Job:

1. God's sovereignty: the main lesson Job learned: God is in charge, Job 42:2

2. God's righteousness. His *sovereignty* ↑ is not arbitrary.
3. The necessity of Trials, Ps 119:67, 71. Trials show me my fallen nature. Better trust God.
4. Death. Christ's abandonment on the cross is especially previewed.
5. God's faithfulness. He didn't quit until Job was restored.
6. God's justice is what Job mainly argued vs.; but God *does* begin to requite the wicked here on earth, Job, 34:10, 20

**Kid-speak:** What was the main lesson Job learned? God is boss. He's in charge.

D. Argument Cycle Recap, chaps 3-31

1. 3, Job curses his birth
2. 4-5, **Eliphaz:** make things right with God

**Kid-speak:** Job has the longest argument in the Bible ↑. What's one reason God gave us that? To teach us how to *think* right and to be able to *prove* what we're saying.

Job 22:1-30

I. Eliphaz' flow of argument

- A. Eliphaz makes an initial point about God's independence from man v 1-3.
- B. In v 4, He moves to Job's supposed sin. No more hinting around.
  1. He names (baseless) specifics, v 5-9.
  2. He attaches these charges to Job's afflictions, v 10-11.
- C. He refutes Job's alleged contention that God is disconnected from our reality, v 12-14.
  1. Eliphaz says that wicked men have always believed that, v 15.
  2. But they were deservedly judged, v 16-17.
  3. Though God had been good to them, v 18a.
  4. Eliphaz distances himself from wicked men's thinking, 18b.
  5. Eliphaz says that good people will see and testify of the wicked man's demise, v 19-20.
- D. Eliphaz calls on Job to repent, for blessings would follow, v 21-24.
  1. Particularly, the blessing of closeness to God, v 25-26.
  2. The overflow of blessings would make Job one of God's confidants, v 27,
    - a. full of wise authority, v 28.
    - b. One of God's 'spotters' for evildoings on the earth, v 29.
    - c. Able by his own goodness to be persuasive with God, even in difficult cases, v 30.

**Kid-speak:** Eliphaz said that if Job would just tell the truth about the bad things he had done, God would forgive him and start being nice to him again. But were there any bad things Job had done before all this started? No.

## II. Eliphaz' two basic ideas

- A. Job, you're not as close to God as you (and we) thought. He's judging you for obvious reasons.
- B. But if you'll confess and make things right, God's grace will more than restore you!

## III. The basic problem in Eliphaz' (and the other 2 friends') reasoning

- A. They had no proof of Job's wrongdoing.
- B. They had to invent Job's secret sins because of their view of God.
  - 1. It all came back to theology (as everything does).
  - 2. Think of similar assumptions you make. Envy robs you of giving \_\_\_ the benefit of the doubt.
- C. Their God had to enforce *moral norms* within certain **norms** of human *circumstances*.
  - 1. That is, God would not inflict as great an affliction as He did on Job *unless* Job deserved it.
  - 2. However, they could not have made this mistake unless there *were* perceivable norms in human circumstances.
    - a. We all make the same type of categories in our perceptions.
    - b. There are ups and downs in people all around us. We perceive/ create norms by these.
      - i. We draw these norms by country, region, village, or any given populace (a workplace).
      - ii. God does have a hand in these, Amos 4:7.

**Kid-speak:** If everybody we know is doing pretty well, but bad things keep happening to one person, does that make us wonder if they're doing something wrong? Sure, but we have to be careful not to think they *are* being bad unless we have real proof.

- ★ iii. But we are responsible for the perceptions we shape from them. We all see God's hand, but we interpret His activity by our *spirits*, including outright denial of God.
- iv. Without deliberate thought, we will tend to adopt community/era norms.
- c. If someone has unusual or extended ups, we tend to envy them.
- d. If someone has unusual or extended downs, we tend to assume their poor judgment.
  - i. We can usually find some poor judgment there, can't we!
  - ii. That's how Job provides a universal template. Here's a man *without* poor judgment who was nonetheless clobbered.
- 3. Can God clobber for no reason- that is, contrary to norms?
  - a. (First, it is clear that God can and does clobber for cause, e.g., Gen 38:7).
  - b. But as to the question: Yes and no. *Yes*, contrary to norms, but *no*- He still has a **reason**.
  - ◆ c. God was vindicating His dealings with man, vindicating Job in the process.
  - d. Note that God binds his reputation and His people's together.
  - e. However, He takes the responsibility to bring us where we need to be.
- D. ... *Job had fallen well outside the perceived norms*. God had obviously orchestrated the events. (true, but with the caveat of Satan's agency). Boom. Slam dunk. *How could Job not have sinned?*

## III. Particular problems in Eliphaz' thoughts

- A. Eliphaz said that God is independent of man, unaffected by our virtues, v 1-2.
  - 1. God's independence is true, but He is *not* unaffected by our goodness.

2. Eliphaz seems to be trying to unravel Job from his preoccupation with God in order to get a clean shot at him, v 3.
  3. Yet Eliphaz contradicts himself by touting God's gracious responses to the repentant, v 27-30.
    - a. Besides, Job's real position was that our virtue *doesn't* gain advantage with God, 34:9; 35:3
    - b. But Job's arguments do imply that he thought his virtue *should* have been advantageous.
- B. Eliphaz *named transgressions* Job had supposedly committed! v 6-9. Phantom transgressions! What evil judges we are.

**Kid-speak:** Eliphaz said that Job got rich by cheating other people out of money. But had Job done that? No. It's really bad to be a lying tattle-tale, but it's easy to do!

- C. Cause and Effect, v 10-11. It's **easy** to find fault in someone whose life has become a flat tire. We have to resist. Solid evidence must still *pull* us to an accusation.
- D. *Had* Job implied that God was playing hide-and-seek, v 12-14? Not necessarily.
  1. But, just as bad or worse, he implied that God knowingly perverted justice.
  2. However, he did not imply this until *they* put him on the defensive.
- E. Lumping Job in with transgressors, v 15-18. Well, that was true- *now*, 34:36-37, but not before.
- F. Was Eliphaz an American??? V 24-25, "I'm *willing* to give up \$. There, now I don't have to!"

#### IV. Eliphaz' misplaced truths

- A. Eliphaz was right about God receiving repentant sinners, v 21-26. Scary that God could say 42:7.
  1. His understanding of grace is very full. He isn't giving Job a self-righteous script to follow.
  2. But what good is great grace if you have wrongly identified the sinner and/or the sin? If God's favor is verified by earthly circumstances? If men become Grace's gatekeepers, Gal 5?

**Kid-speak:** When someone turns to Jesus, does God forgive them all the way and make them His children? YES!

- B. Eliphaz also had a properly full conception of the authority we have in God's name, v 27-30
  1. Eliphaz must have thought he had that authority, yet here he was cursing an innocent man.
  2. Reading v 27-30, where does this list intersect with those today who claim special authority?

Lesson: Though he had gotten off track, Job was a man wrapped up in God.

- A. But it does no good to be wrapped up in God if you relate to Him wrongly, 38:2-4.
  1. God *wasn't* still OK with Job, only at a lower level, 40:2.
  2. There was a rift. Job's relationship with God wasn't going anywhere but backwards, 40:8, 14.
- B. *But* does it do any good to relate to God rightly if it *doesn't* wrap you up in Him?

Wrap-up: Eliphaz held to a limitless grace of God. But he couldn't channel it to Job. Eliphaz rightly required repentance from sin for a right relationship with God, but he was off on how sin was measured. He counted sin where there was none: a subtle but very serious misrepresentation of God. He essentially made his sense of justice a gatekeeper to God's grace.

A particular: Eliphaz counted Job's affliction as God's curse. Are *we* unconsciously offering men the 'American dream' + the grace of God? (Remember the Sermon on the Plain.)