

**Job 4: 1-11; “Christ’s Integrity – Your Real Hope”, Sermon # 8 in the series entitled – “Remember to Magnify His Work”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

As we enter upon this next section in the book of Job we need to understand, first of all, that these men who are attempting to address Job in his situation of extreme grief and distress, are called “his friends” in chapter 2, verse 11. Even though they are called Job’s friends, they surely had a lot to learn about what it meant to be a true friend. Eliphaz the Temanite begins the dialogue with Job to try to help him think spiritually and correctly about the sad situation that he was in. We will see in this chapter, and in coming chapters, that Eliphaz will give Job much good truth, but he will proceed not so much in a sympathetic way as in a questioning way. Why will Eliphaz do this? I believe that he did not believe that any righteous man could be dealt with, in the way that Job had been, by God, without in some way being a sinner or a hypocrite.

His two friends Bildad and Zophar were in agreement with him in this, and so we will see this come out in their speeches to Job all the way to chapter 32. So here in this first half of chapter 4, Eliphaz is trying to persuade Job to receive the truth that he could have confidence for a good outcome in this trial if indeed he was a man a man of integrity. He will remind him, 1<sup>st</sup> of all – That it is a most important truth when you are undergoing trial, to reverence God. (verses 1-6) And 2<sup>nd</sup> – That it is a most important truth to remember; not to lump the righteous and the wicked together in terms of God’s judgment. (verses 8-11) And 3<sup>rd</sup> – When we come to the Lord’s table, I will show you that it is a most important truth to remember that it will be Christ’s integrity alone which will bear you up during the worst of your trials. (verse 7)

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Eliphaz reminds Job of the all-important truth of remembering to reverence God.** (verses 1-6)

Let us consider what was happening here with Job and his 3 friends. After Job was attacked by Satan, and lost his children, lost his possessions, and lost his health because of sore boils; after he had also lost the approval of his wife, it was then his three friends came to visit him. They had made an appointment to come to him, so that they might mourn with him, and to comfort him. This was a very good thing for them to do. It is an act of Christian love to think upon of the difficulties and distresses which your brethren are going through, so that hopefully, you might minister grace in your words them. But it says in verse 12 of chapter 2 that when they came, they raised their eyes from afar, and they did not recognize Job. This was very disconcerting to them. They were dismayed. And they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe, and they sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven, to show that they truly cared for his loss.

We see also, then, that no one spoke a word to him for seven days and seven nights. At the end of that time, however, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day that he was born. The whole of the third chapter, then, is taken up with Job’s questioning, of why he was ever born. He did not know why these things had happened to him, and he did not know why he had been given so much understanding by God if his life was going to come to such a bitter conclusion. Why would God keep him in life? In verse 20 of chapter 3, he says – “Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, who long for death, but it does not come, and search for it more than hidden treasures; who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave?” “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?”

All these things that had happened to him, his losing all of his children, his having all of his livestock stolen or destroyed, his losing the confidence and approval of his own wife; all of these things were so contrary to how God had blessed him so greatly, for so many years. He could not understand why this would happen to him; a man of integrity. And now, he was a man in emotional, physical, and spiritual pain. It was the kind of pain and grief which he thought would never go away. When Job cursed the day of his birth and came forth with this strong language,

about God hedging him in, and the thing that he greatly feared coming upon him, it was not that he was confessing that he had committed any sin. And yet Eliphaz believes that it is time to speak, before asking any questions. Let us all take notice of this truth; that just because a person is going through a trial, it is not necessarily true that it is because of some sin that they have committed or secret hypocrisy. In this case, it was because Job was attacked by Satan, and the issue was his integrity. It was Satan who was accusing Job of hypocrisy and a lack of real integrity; that if all were taken away from him, that he would curse God to His face.

And yet here we find Eliphaz becoming a tool in the hands of the Devil, to also impugn Job's righteous character; that somehow he is at this point inconsistent, that he is hypocritical in his reaction of saying that God had hedged him in. Let us understand that it is possible for well-meaning Christians to unknowingly become pawns of the Devil even in the good things that they attempt to say by way of reproof. This was what happened here. And therefore, it behooves us to think carefully about the conclusions that we might draw, from bad things which have happened to Christian people that we know. When we see a Christian undergoing a trial, and hear them say hard things against themselves, and vent their fears and grief and trouble openly before God and others, let us not conclude the worst about them. Let us not conclude that they are hypocrites or sinners, hiding their sins and thinking to prosper.

Let us rather determine to think the best of them, and remember all the good things that they have said and done in the past which were consistent with the Bible's definition of righteousness and the good works which they engaged in. If they were consistent in the past, in godliness, then why should we conclude differently right away, when a great trial comes upon them and they speak of their longing for death. Do we know their pain? Can we sympathize with how shaken their faith must be, if great and sudden loss has come to them? I do not believe that Eliphaz was totally unsympathetic to Job's plight. He heard Job beginning to question God's wisdom in bringing him into the world. And there was no doubt that his impulse was right to defend the honor God in this situation. But he didn't need to make a case against Job's integrity to do so.

He was attempting to warn Job of venting too much of what he was feeling, in his speech. And it is true, that in Proverbs chapter 10, verse 19 it says – "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise." But Eliphaz didn't like the fact that Job was venting all of his grief in this way. He did not think that Job was reverencing God in doing so. "If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary?" "But who can withhold himself from speaking." And right away, we see that he does not show any sympathy, or any understanding of what Job was going through. He right away shows Job his supposed inconsistency. He says – "Surely you have instructed many, and you have strengthened weak hands." "Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees; but now it comes upon you, and you are weary." "If it touches you, you are troubled." "Is not your reverence your confidence?" "And the integrity of your ways your hope?"

Now, we must remember that it is indeed an all-important truth; that of reverencing God in our speech and actions. It is our highest calling. May it always be pursued by each of us, even when we go through trials; especially when we go through trials. Reverence, or holding God in the highest esteem, is an integral part of godly fear. It is indeed our confidence to have regard for God's wisdom in ordaining every situation in our lives for our good; not to destroy us, but to build our faith in Him. But in this case we need to see that Eliphaz and his friends were very poor physicians. They were misdiagnosing Job's spiritual condition, and in doing so, they also then, misapplied the cure. If they only knew the truth; that it was because Job was a man of integrity that these terrible things had come upon him. It was not because he was a hypocrite.

By way of application, it is not a good thing to do, to judge a man's spiritual state by the things that he is passing through, and the painful words of doubt and discouragement and frustration that he was expressing. But that is what Eliphaz did, and so he ends up reproving Job in a way that he believes will reveal the truth. Instead of helping and comforting Job he causes further grief to him,

and even dishonored God by his false insinuations of Job's character. Unbeknownst to him, he was inadvertently helping the Devil.

My brethren, let us learn to deal gently with those Christians who are going through trials. Let us learn to encourage them, if they have always been consistent Christians in past. Let us be those who listen well, ask questions, and believe the explanations that we are given, rather than thinking that we have to make declarations and judgments to disprove their integrity. Let us learn to strengthen the heart of those who can give an answer for the hope that is within them, and to build up those whose faith is being tested. Let us be willing to believe that their integrity is being proved by God in such situations rather than doubting that God loves them.

Let us see that a righteous person can, by reason of the strength of the trials that he is passing through, fall prey in his own heart and mind, to venting expressions of a desire to die, and fall into questioning God; he or she who has been very confident in their faith and a great help to others in the past, now seems unable to be strong when a great trial comes to them. Let us see that we only further the work of the Devil, when we point out the inconsistencies of those righteous persons who are going through great grief and pain, and can't speak and act for a time, in the way that they could when everything was going fine for them.

Let us remember that God is sovereign over every situation which a Christian goes through, and He is working it for their good. Let us therefore learn to help them in the right way. Yes, we should study to say things which will justify God. Let us say words which will help them to exercise patience during their trial. Let us, by our words, give them every reason to trust in God, even when their hearts are breaking; even when their hearts are questioning God's wisdom and faithfulness. That is reverencing God.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – It is a most important truth to remember; not to lump the righteous and the wicked together in terms of God judgment.** (verses 8-11)

Eliphaz says in verse 8 – “Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.” “By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His anger they are consumed.” Here Eliphaz once again speaks a very profound truth which everyone needs to take notice of. He had looked and had seen that those persons who plowed iniquity and sowed trouble, reaped the same. God will indeed reward a wicked man according to his works. It is true what Eliphaz is saying. Those who plough at sin, who work the ground of sin, planting the seeds of unrighteousness and looking for something pleasurable or profitable from it, will eventually reap a harvest of trouble and judgment from it.

It is a truth that we all need to take notice of; that whatever a man sows, he shall also reap. If he sows to the flesh, he will reap corruption. If he sows to the Spirit, he will reap eternal life, it say in Galatians 6: 8. But it goes on to say, “And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”; that is, that person will reap good things of blessing and rewards related to doing good, from God Himself. But Eliphaz takes notice of Job's fainting right out of the gate. Affliction has “touched you” he says. (such an under evaluation of Job's sufferings!) And so he falsely concludes that Job has been serving God for what he could personally profit from it; not from pure motives.

This too, is the exact charge which Satan brought before God in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter, verse . “Does Job fear God for nothing?” “Have you not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?” “But if you put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, he will renounce You to Your face.” We should be very careful not to think that the afflictions that other Christians are passing through are something little; that they are something that should be easy to bear simply because they are older and mature in their faith. You don't draw comparisons between how they ministered to others before, but how they can't seem to do it now, as if all rests upon their strength apart from God's grace. Let us remember that the most mature Christian is the one who has the tenderest heart before God concerning sin and righteousness. They have a tender heart before people around those whom they truly love. Do you love the brethren in this way?

Especially when they are in the weakness of grief? When they have lost of family members, we should not speak lightly of their loss, or reprove them over their grief.

It is true that a Christian should not grieve as one who has no hope. But that does not mean that they cannot express their grief over those who they do not understand why they were taken, or why so many were taken. It is the person who believes in the goodness of God and the sovereign exercise of that goodness, who truly knows how to righteously grieve. The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Job worshiped in his grief. Eliphaz reproves Job over his reaction to his loss, as though he knows better, when he knows not at all.

Instead of comfort, Eliphaz speaks of how the wicked perish by the breath of His anger, as though Job might want to think about whether he has been wicked. What unthinking, unfeeling statements he made. Truly, the Lord does know how to deal with sinners who act like lions seeking their prey. He can blast them and break their teeth; the teeth by which they hunt in their sin for others. He can make their prey scarce so that the old lion perishes and the cubs are scattered. This is truly a tremendous picture of what God does do with wicked people who think much of what they can do to others in a sinful way. But how did all this apply to Job? Well, it would only apply to him if he was a hypocrite. Truly, he was not. And so I would have you come down to the table now, with me, and I will give you a few thoughts on verse 7.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – I want to show you that it is a most important truth to remember that it will be Christ's integrity alone which will bear you up during the worst of your trials.**

Verse 7 says – “Remember now who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?” Eliphaz is saying, was there ever an upright man cut off from God's blessings, like you have been Job, and been innocent of wrong-doing? He is saying – No, it is not the case, and so you are guilty of some great sin Job, and you need to fess up to it. But Job was not guilty of any sin in relation to the trial he was going through. God actually had boasting about him behind the scenes to Satan. “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” No, Job was being wounded in this gathering with his friends. They thought he was guilty when he was not.

But do you remember the One who was “wounded in the house of his friends”; the One whom we have come to remember at this table, at this hour? It was our Lord Jesus Christ who bore all our sorrows and did not hide His face from shame and spitting; even though there was no sin in Him. I want you to see, as we partake of these elements, that even in Job's day, that his integrity rested upon the perfect integrity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was He who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. It was Christ who enabled Job to maintain his integrity all through this time of his trial. His sin was that he justified himself more than he did God.

But the Lord Jesus said in Psalm 41, verse 7, in prophetic language – “All who hate me whisper together against me; against me they devise my hurt.” “An evil disease, they say clings to him. And now that he lies down, he will rise up no more.” “Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.” “But You, O Lord be merciful to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them.” “By this I know that You are well pleased with me, because my enemy does not triumph over me.” “As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your face forever.” This, Christ's integrity, His perfection of obedience, His perfect in character, His being righteous in all of His ways, is what the integrity of every Christian rests upon by faith. He had no evil disease, either spiritually or physically, but Job had boils all over his body from Satan's attack.

Do You see, that Christ died for Job; that He bore all of his iniquities, even as a man of integrity, so that he could stand in this test of his faith? Job's own familiar friends in whom he trusted lifted up their heel against him. But the Lord upheld him all through the trial and raised him up; not that he might repay them, but that they too, might be taught to see that the strongest most spiritual man's integrity rests up Christ and is upheld and established by Christ.