**Drama During Difficult Times Series**

**“Act Four – The Drama of Eliphaz”**

**Job 4 – 7**

**Introduction**

For the past few weeks we have been looking at the book of Job as a commentary on the “Drama During Difficult Times.” I believe the best way to understand the book of Job is by looking at the book as a series of nine acts performed on the stage of life.

In Act One we were introduced to Job and his family. Job was a godly man and together with his wife enjoyed a great relationship with their 10 adult children. Job was very wealthy and was admired by people throughout the region. (1.1-5)

But in Act Two Job was informed of a series of devastating events where Job lost all of his possessions by foreign invasions, all of his children were killed by a terrible tornado, Job developed a serious life threating illness, and his wife left him. (1.13-19, 2.7-10) However, *through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.* (1.22)

In Act Three the curtains open to find Job sitting on an ash heap, scraping his skin with a broken piece of pottery, trying to find relieve from wart-like sores covering his body causing his skin to become dark and peel like a snake. (2.7b-8) Now when Job’s three friends, who lived in surrounding countries, heard about all of the adversity that had fallen upon Job, they agreed to meet together in Job’s hometown *to sympathize with him and comfort him.* (2.11) But as they came closer to where Job was sitting his condition had deteriorated to the point where they did not recognize him. (2.12a) They never imagined that Job would be in such a dreadful condition.

Immediately they began to weep aloud. (2.12b) In horror they tore their robes and began throwing dust into the air covering them in a blanket of dirt symbolizing death and disease. (2.12c)

In a state of shock, Job’s friends fall onto the ash heap in front of Job and for seven days and seven nights don’t speak a word. (2.13a) And after sitting there in silence, staring at Job suffering in extreme pain for seven days and seven nights, *Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.* (3.1) Job wonders why he was ever born, or why he didn’t just die at childbirth (3.11), and why he can’t just die now (3.20-21a).

Job does not curse God but rather he is just being honest with his emotions – He is not asking why God allowed all this to happen – but rather He is wondering how is God getting any glory from all this suffering. And after Job finishes the first of his three friends, Eliphaz, shares his opinion as to why Job is experiencing all of this suffering.

Welcome to Act Four – “The Drama According to Eliphaz.”

**The Drama According to Eliphaz**

Eliphaz is presumably the oldest and therefore has the right to speak first. All of Job’s friends believe in God but each of their perspectives will be inaccurate and insufficient to bring any relieve or comfort to Job during his time of affliction. They came to sympathize with Job and to comfort him (2.11) but their words only cause frustration and discomfort.

In the chapters that following each of Job’s friends will make a series of speeches sharing their perspective as to why Job is suffering. Job will respond to each speech with honesty and integrity towards God and man. As the drama transitions from one act to another the speeches will grow in intensity. The next thirty-four chapters will contain lengthy speeches, with a lot of repetition, and provide no quick answers. During these chapters I will only focus on the main points and not a verse-by-verse teaching. Therefore, in the next four weeks we will focus on the main perspective of each of Job’s so called friends, learn from Job’s responses, and seek biblical truth to guide us as we journey through difficult times.

We will see that each of Job’s three friends and a forth one who will eventually join them believed that Job in some degree deserves this torment. Before arriving at Job’s ash heap they adopted the view that all human suffering is directly attributed to a person’s sin. Before coming to Job at the ash heap they rehearsed their speeches in order to tell Job that his illness was clear evidence that he is a sinner who had been hiding his sin from others and that if he doesn’t confess and repent he is certain to die a miserable death. Great friends, huh?

Eliphaz begins by attacking Job’s character saying, *“If one ventures a word with you, will you become impatient? But who can refrain from speaking? “Behold you have admonished many, And you have strengthened weak hands. “Your words have helped the tottering to stand, And you have strengthened feeble knees.**“But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; It touches you, and you are dismayed. “Is not your*

*reverence of God your confidence, And the integrity of your ways your hope?* (Job 4.2-6)

**Eliphaz’s Insulting Interlude**

Eliphaz begins by asserting that Job would become angry if he told him the reason behind his suffering saying, *“If one ventures a word with you, will you become impatient? But who can refrain from speaking?* (4.2) Eliphaz is implying that Job will become irate with him for speaking his mind. But Eliphaz doesn’t care Job gets angry or not because he is going speak his mind no matter what! In his insulting interlude Eliphaz reminds Job of all the grateful reactions of those that Job had instructed in the past during their difficult times. “*Behold you have admonished many*” but Eliphaz doubts that Job will respond with the same gratitude to what he has to say. Eliphaz mentions that Job *strengthened weak hands, helped the tottering to stand, and strengthened feeble knees.* (4.3-4)

Job’s past action towards others is exactly what the inspired writer of Hebrews instructs believers to do for others in need. As believers in Christ we are called to *strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble.* (Heb.12.12) Eliphaz, in a backhanded way, is underscoring the fact that Job’s life prior to his downfall had been a testimony of faithfulness to God and compassion to others. (Job.1.1) *“But now it has come to you, and you are impatient.”* Eliphaz’ previous comment was only to serve as a slap to Job’s face because in Eliphaz’s opinion Job is acting like an impatient little child because now that Job is suffering he want immediate healing.. Eliphaz is convinced that now that tragedy and sickness has touched Job’s life he is acting inappropriately by being impatient.

Eliphaz challenges Job’s integrity by saying sarcastically, *“Is not your reverence of God your confidence, And the integrity of your ways your hope*? Eliphaz knew that people viewed Job as a man that had reverence for God and lived his life with integrity. Here Eliphaz joins Satan and Job’s wife by belittling Job’s faith and steadfastness towards God. In essence Eliphaz is saying “Now that tragedy has collided with your family where is your confidence in God now? Now that sickness has invaded your body where is your integrity now?” (4.5-6) Eliphaz is judging Job’s heart saying that he has lost his confidence and hope in God.

**Eliphaz’s Main Point**

But after his insulting interlude Eliphaz exposes his main point saying, *“Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?”* (4.7) Basically, Eliphaz believes that only those who pretend to be innocent and upright suffer. Since Job is experiencing an avalanche of anguish he must be the biggest pretender of all time. Eliphaz is a firm believer that the innocent never perish and the upright is never destroyed. And in Eliphaz’s opinion Job is not innocent but guilty. In Eliphaz’s opinion Job is not the upright guy people think that he is. Because if Job was the innocent and upright guy everybody thinks he is he wouldn’t be suffering like this. Eliphaz’s main point is that the innocent never perish and the upright is never destroyed. Therefore, Job is neither innocent nor upright because he is a big faker.

Then Eliphaz shares his personal perspective saying, *“According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it.”* (4.8) From Eliphaz’s perspective Job’s situation goes beyond “you reap what you sow.” What he is saying is that like a farmer plows deep into the soil Job has plowed iniquity deep into his heart. Eliphaz is accusing Job of regularly sowing sin in his life and now he is reaping the harvest of God’s judgment. (4.9-11) Eliphaz has no proof to back up his accusations. Those who lived in the land of Uz with Job considered him blameless, an upright man who reverenced God and turned away from evil. (4.1) But Eliphaz the Temanite walks onto the stage of Job’s life acting as Job’s judge who issues the verdict that Job is a pretentious sinner. But Eliphaz is not a righteous judge. He is a self-righteous jerk!

**False Accusations**

Before we look closer at Eliphaz’s main point I want to take a moment to speak about how wrong it is to make or receive a false accusation against another person. The Lord tells us in the book of Deuteronomy, *“A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”* (Dt.19.15) God’s Word tells us, “*Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.”* (ITim.5.19) I suggest that we all set a standard in our life that we will not make or receive an accusation against anyone without two or three witness especially a Pastor or Church leader. Why, because making accusation against an individual without witnesses causes personal damage to that person’s repetition. And making an accusation against a Pastor or church leader without witnesses destroys the church. Don’t be like Eliphaz who had no proof to back up his accusations. I my opinion Eliphaz joins Satan as an accuser of the brethren.

**Eliphaz’s Main Point**

Eliphaz makes his main point by asking, *“Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?”* (4.7) Eliphaz believes that willful sinners suffer and Job has to be the greatest of all sinners to suffer in such a terrible way. But lets look a little closer at Eliphaz’s point when he asks, *“Who, being innocent, has ever perished?* (4.7a) Well, a lot of people! What about the twenty children between the ages of six and seven who were killed in the school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012? Those little children were innocent. They were just sitting at their school desk with their crayons learning their A, B, C’s. What were they guilty of? And what about the High School students and teachers that were kill at Stoneman Douglas in Parkland? What wrong had they committed to be shot and killed? The point is that the innocent do suffer. And Eliphaz’s second point, “*Where were the upright ever destroyed?”* Well what about the Lord’s prophets and Christian martyrs who have been killed throughout history? They were upright. What about the Lord Jesus *who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth*? (IPt.2.22) Jesus was upright to the fullest degree yet He suffered for us. As I said last week theses guys didn’t believe the Gospel. They did not believe that an “innocent” suffers, which is in direct contradiction to the Gospel.

Adopting Eliphaz’s point of view makes God is a cosmic child abuser instead of our loving Heavenly Father. Brothers and Sisters, God is a loving Father who *causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the*

*unrighteous.* (Mt.5.45) It is true that there are consequences for our sin but to believe that the reason a person is experiencing a sickness, a lost of a loved one, or a financial collapse because God is blasting His anger on you (4.9-11) because of your sin is a flawed theology that cannot be proven in Scripture.

But Eliphaz doubles down on his position by claiming that he received it through direct revelation from God. Eliphaz tells Job, *“Now a word was brought to me stealthily, And my ear received a whisper of it.**Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men,**Dread came upon me, and trembling, And made all my bones shake. Then a spirit passed by my face; The hair of my flesh bristled up.* (4.12-15)

**Eliphaz’s Vision**

Eliphaz claims that the Lord appeared to him in a vision and disclosed to him the reason behind Job’s suffering. Personally, it is always frustrating when someone who has asked for my advice to say, “But God told me such and such!” Who can argue with that? “God told me” is the spiritual trump card! When a person says that “God told them” I always want to ask, “Well, if God has told you why are you asking me?” Barbara and I attend the same Bible College our freshman year. Before we started dating a guy came up to Barbara and said, “God told me that you are going to be my wife!” Barbara responded saying, “Well, when God tells me I’ll let you know!”

Eliphaz says that the vision made his bones shake and his hair to stand up. And even though Eliphaz couldn’t discern the Lord’s appearance he states that a form was before his eyes, there was silence, (4.16) and then he heard a voice saying, *“Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?”* (4.17)

**Eliphaz’s Vision**

*“Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?”* (4.17)

We learn a lot about Eliphaz’s theology from this statement. Eliphaz did believe some good things. He believed that God is the Supreme Being. He believed that God is our Maker. He believes that God is pure and just. But he also believes that an unjust and impure person cannot stand before a holy God. Remember that Eliphaz believed the Lord spoke these words to him in reference to Job. Eliphaz is claiming that God told him in a vision that Job is not a just or pure man and that is reason for Job’s suffering.

But what Eliphaz says next is really scary. He tells Job that (God) *puts no trust even in His servants; and against His angels He charges error.**‘How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are crushed before the moth! ‘Between morning and evening they are broken in pieces; Unobserved, they*

*perish forever.* (4.18-20) He explains to Job that God is a divine faultfinder who puts no trust in His angels let alone those who live in clay houses with no foundation, like Job. In Eliphaz’s opinion people like Job who are spiritual impostors God will crush and break into pieces.

Now you might be saying, “Pastor, aren’t you reading a little too much in the text?”

Well, lets just consider Eliphaz’s own words found in his second speech to Job when he says, *“Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, And the heavens are not pure in His sight; How much less one who is detestable and corrupt, Man, who drinks iniquity like water!* (Job 15.15-16) It is clear the Eliphaz believes that Job is detestable and corrupt man who drinks iniquity like water and God has finally punishing for his deceit. His advice is that Job would seek God and plead to Him for forgiveness for being a fraud and impostor. (5.8)

Eliphaz finishes his speech saying, *“Behold this; we have investigated it, and so it is. Hear it, and know for yourself.”* (5.27) Notice that he uses the plural saying, *we have investigated it,* exposing the fact that Eliphaz and the two other so-called friends have conspired together about what they were going to tell Job about his suffering. They are emphatic in their opinion why Job is suffering saying, “*so it is. Hear it, and know yourself.*” Eliphaz and the others are self-righteous jerks. They should have given heed to the words of Scripture that reads, “*If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”* (Gal.6.3) Eliphaz definitely thinks that he is something and he certainly considers himself to be spiritually superior. But the fact is that Eliphaz is deceiving himself and the Lord Himself will eventually tell Eliphaz.

**Job’s Response**

Job responds telling Eliphaz that his words are like “tasteless food” like “the white of an egg.” (6.6) Job refuses to accept Eliphaz’s words to be true. He refuses to receive them treating them like a plate of rotten food. (6.7) Eliphaz’s words have swept over Job’s heart like the torrents of a river that have overflowed the boundaries of its banks tearing away everything in path. (6.15-16) Job expected kindness from his friend but Eliphaz has acted deceitfully (6.14) coming across like a self-righteous judge.

Job’s friends supposedly came to sympathize and comfort him but there is no sympathy or comfort in their words. Being disappointed by his earthly friends, Job is compelled to look anew to his heavenly Friend and divine Redeemer. So instead of seeking consolation from his friends Job while suffering unrelenting pain finds consolation and joy that he had not denied the words of the Holy One. Job declares, *“But it is still my consolation, And I rejoice in unsparing pain, That I have not denied the words of the Holy One.”* (6.10)Though his friends forsook him Job knew that he was not alone. Job knew that he couldn’t rely on his strength and that his deliverance did not resided in him. (6.11-13) Job was living out the words of the Psalmist, *Let those be ashamed and humiliated together who seek my life to destroy it; Let those be turned back and dishonored who delight in my hurt.* *Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, “Aha, aha!” Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let those who love Your salvation say continually, “The Lord be magnified!” Since I am afflicted and needy, Let the Lord be mindful of me. You are my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God.* (Ps.40.14-17)

Even though Job was afflicted and needy he was going to look to the Lord to be magnified in his life and bring help and deliverance. Job was not going to restrain his mouth from lamenting righteously to the Lord saying, *“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”* (7.11) If the lost of his family, his business, the death of his employees, and his wife leaving him wasn’t enough now Job’s anguish of spirit and bitterness of soul has expanded to the rejection and betrayal of his friends. Wounds from a friend can hurt much more than those from an enemy. It’s the kind of pain that cuts deep.

Job is feeling despised and rejected much like King David expressed in Psalm fifty-five: *For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, then I could hide myself from him. But it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend; We who had sweet*

*fellowship together walked in the house of God in the throng*.(Ps.55.12-14) I think this is how Job felt as he sat in extreme physical and emotional pain as he listened to his friend Eliphaz.

Brothers and sisters, we can take refuge in the fact that our Savior, Jesus Christ, knows what it’s like when friends fail us, reject us, and abandon us. For Christ was despised and rejected by men; He was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. (Is.53.3) Jesus was rejected His neighbors in His hometown of Nazareth. (Mk.6.4) Those who waved palm branches shouting, “Hosanna,” as Jesus entered Jerusalem are the same people shouting, “Crucify Him,” one week later. Judas betrayed Jesus and all of His disciples abandoned Him in the Garden. My point is when we go through times of rejection we need to know that Jesus truly sympathizes and cares for us. We need to have confidence that our closet Friend, Jesus Christ, has promise to never leave us or forsake us. (Heb.13.5) *“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”* (7.11)

**Closing Thoughts**

The lights on the stage go dark and the curtain closes. Act Four: The Drama of Eliphaz is over.

As I conclude this morning let me share us ways we can learn from the Drama of Eliphaz.

First, don’t allow the self-righteous opinion of the few rob you of the beauty of the gospel of grace, especially when you are going through difficult times.

Secondly, don’t allow rejection from others to cause you to become isolated and discouraged. Remember the words of the old hymn that says, “Though friends despise, forsake me, I shall not walk alone.”

Third, don’t place your confidence in your strength or your ability but place your confidence in Christ and place Him at the center of your life. Crown Christ at the center of it all.

**Call to Prayer**

*“But it is still my consolation, And I rejoice in unsparing pain, That I have not denied the words of the Holy One.”* (6.10)

**Benediction**

*May the Lord bless you, and keep you; and make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; May the Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.’*