

October 30, 2016

- Job 4:1-27 -

“Salting Job’s Wounds”

Introduction:

On the night of December 28th 1879, despite a storm with record wind speeds gushing up to 80 mph a locomotive foreman named James Roberts volunteered to cross the Tay Bridge of the Scottish City, Dundee. At the time it was the longest rail bridge in the world and stood 88ft high spanning two miles across the inlet of Tay. Only one train was able to cross the bridge at a time. At 7:13 PM on the fateful night the train entered the bridge but the signalman on the other side never received the train. Robert volunteered to check it out. He was forced to crawl as he made his way across the bridge to avoid being blown off by the intensity of the winds. However, he did not let the storm deter him and he struggled on in search of the train and its passengers. His crossing was cut short when he reached the center section of the bridge and was greeted by a gaping hole in the tracks; the train’s fate became horrifyingly clear. The structure had failed and collapsed into the inlet of Tay taking the train and its 75 passengers with it. Sadly, there were no survivors, and it remains one of the worst engineering disasters in British history.

There was another British disaster less tragic when Scottish poet William Topaz McGonagall penned his poem ‘The Tay Bridge Disaster’ which gives an account of the bridge’s collapse. It is widely considered to be one of the worst poems in the history of the English language. His questionable talent is demonstrated in the opening of the poem; it reads:

“Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silv’ry Tay! Alas! I am very sorry to say, That ninety lives have been taken away, On the last Sabbath day...” Audiences found his poetry so bad that they would often heckle him at readings and even resorted to throwing rotten fish at him to show their displeasure. However his career lasted 23 years writing his terrible proses.

The Book of Job is done in proses. So it too is a poem and it too is a disaster. Not in its literature form but in its arguments of Job’s comforter; their attack on the integrity of the life of job was a real train wreck that we will study for some 23 chapters.

Hebrew poetry is not characterized by the rhyming of sounds, but rather by the counterparts of thoughts, therefore it can be cumbersome to translate and to develop congruent thoughts. The Bible contains many varieties of different types of literature. It is not all narration of historical fact in straight prose. The serious student of scripture understands that for a correct understanding and interpretation one must discern what one is reading. There is poetry, parable, allegory, type, simile, hyperbole, metaphors, fables, parables, and irony which we seem to have quite a bit of in the book of Job.

These all have their peculiar laws. Therefore grammatical-historical interpretation must give attention to rhetorical forms and poetic symbolism, as well as to the laws of grammar and the facts of history." The books of Job along with Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations are highly poetic. When examine almost one-half of the OT is written in this poetic style. Now I said all that you understand the complexity of the reading.

As we enter this next section of Job, we are about to hear from Job's three friends. These three associates; Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were the devil's deadly devices. They attacked Job's integrity and misjudged his situation. With friends like this one does not need enemies.

We will witness a prolonged series of dialogues between Job and his friend. This will encompass chapters (4-26). Each friend speaks in three consecutive cycles, with the only exception being the third friend, Zophar, who remains silent in the third round. In response to each discourse by his friends, Job replies in return. Throughout these speeches, the three friends essentially say the same thing; that all suffering is punishment for sin. Every round of dialogue recorded becomes increasingly more intense. What begins as a discussion turns into a debate and ends in a dispute. In the end, it gets so out of control that only God Himself can bring resolution to it. The first speaker that we meet is Eliphaz.

He is oldest of the three, and his speech to Job is recorded in the fourth and fifth chapters of this book. He has obviously witnessed Job's suffering and has come to his own conclusions concerning it. We begin with the first discourse.

I. An Affirmation & an Agitation (vs. 1-6)

1. Eliphaz begins his discourse with Job by making a positive, affirming statement in an attempt to connect with him. Job's friends witnessed his speaking and sighing, "let me die ... better for me to die. Job, if one attempts a word with you, will you become weary? But who can withhold himself from speaking? I've got something to say to you, what's wrong with you man? You've encouraged others throughout your life and now, it's time to apply a little spiritual insight to yourself." Look at v. 3: "Surely, you have instructed many."

Eliphaz states (v. 6) that piety ("reverence" or "fear of God") is the basis of assurance and that one's integrity (or blamelessness) is the basis of hope.

2. Eliphaz is saying this: "Job, it was one thing when you were called upon to counsel others who were hurting. You helped them face their own hurts. But now it's you on the hurting end. You were great when you were giving advice, but now it's your turn to take it and you are weary and troubled." He was literally accusing Job of not practicing what he preached, that Job could dish it out, but he couldn't take it. Eliphaz also insinuates in verse 6 that if Job was truly a godly man of integrity, then he should not suffer from worry. Sarcasm is a mean tool that we should beware of using especially when someone is hurting. Hurting people need help.

II. An Axiom & an Assumption (vs., 7-11) "Whoever perished being innocent"

1. Eliphaz believes Job has sinned against God and should confess his sin if he is to be restored. Eliphaz says, "*Remember now, who ever perished being innocent?* Consider this fact, who being innocent has perished? "Where were the upright ever destroyed? I've observed this, that those who plow evil and trouble reap it". Or where were the upright ever cut off?" Here is the logic that he lays out: If you do what is right, things will go well for you; but if you do what is

wrong, God will send judgment, for God is a righteous judge.. His assumption was wrong regarding Job. **—Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. --- (Galatian 6:7)** There is some truth here however the answer that he gives is not the right answer.

2. To get the right answer you need to be sure about the question. His assumption sprang from his observation “I have seen” (v. 8, 5:3 “I have seen the foolish taking root” (4:12) “a word was secretly brought to me.” Sometimes people will say, “God spoke to me” but we need to be sure it lines up with the Word of God.

Eliphaz gives Job theological points rather than comfort and consolation. Job certainly didn't need correction and chastisement.

3. Proverbs 17:17 puts it this way: **"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."** When you are going through difficult times, you need your friends to pick you up, encourage you and instruct you but not put you down!

III. An Authority and Arrogances (vs. 12-21) “Can a mortal be more righteous than God?”

1. Arrogance arises in Eliphaz when he takes the occasion to reveal that he had received his knowledge from a spirit in the middle of the night, one who argues that humans cannot be trusted because of their sin. This seems to have been some type of special revelation that apparently no one else heard of.” In verses 13-14, Eliphaz then relates that he was given a secret word in a frightening dream. *It came to me in a disturbing vision at night,*

2. In this vision the spirit frighten him and his hair stands up. This spirit asks Eliphaz some questions (17-18) that he uses to indict Job. These are things that are supposedly meant to help Job, but just look at these words and ask yourself if you would like to be at the other end of this when you are going through pain and suffering. Now this is a distressing section but remember this did not come from God. It does not add up to who He is and His nature.

3. Eliphaz states, “If I were you I’d stop griping and start asking God for His help, God can punish you - but He can also rescue! If you are suffering it must be because God is trying to teach you a lesson.”

Sometimes people will say, “God spoke to me” but we need to be sure it lines up with the Word of God. Check it out with God’s Word...Sometime they will say it is God punishing you but only God knows that.

Conclusion: Story of the man with the dirty windshield.

Critical people often view others through their own dirty glasses. People can make our life difficult because of their very critical and judgmental spirit. Are you being pelted by unfair criticism as you are serving Christ? If so, keep on going and God will reward your efforts. Or do you recognize yourself as one who tends to be critical of others? If so, it's time to quit the demolition team and join the construction crew.