

JOB 4-13

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Introduction

Last week we considered the faithful responses of Job to his suffering; he received it from the Lord in submission and he cried out in holy bitterness and agony. The bulk of the rest of Job is a cycle of arguments between Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Job answers each of them in turn (ch. 3-32:1).

Eliphaz's First Speech

Eliphaz begins the interaction and says that he has seen a vision in his dreams (4:12-13). A terrifying spirit spoke to him and asked, 'Shall mortal man be more just than God?' (4:17) The spirit says that God puts no trust in his servants and charges his angels with folly (4:18). Eliphaz says that there is no one who is innocent, no one who is righteous (4:7), and therefore Job ought to submit to God and commit his cause to Him (5:8). If Job does this, he will be blessed and prospered in the long run (5:17ff).

Job's Response to Eliphaz

Job responds with amazement and continued grief. He says that his calamity and sorrow ought to be weighed on the balances, but they would be heavier than the sand of the sea (6:1-2). Job repeats the implied request of his first lament, which is that he wants God to strike him dead (6:8-9). Job disagrees with Eliphaz that he trusts in his own strength (6:11-12), but he refuses to admit that he has sinned or is foolish for his lamentation (6:14). Instead, Job says that his friends are the foolish ones and acting deceitfully (6:14-15). They are fair-weather friends (6:16-18). They are not trustworthy and cause shame (6:19-20), and fear is driving them (6:21). Presumably, they are afraid for the kingdom, afraid for their own positions of authority, afraid that the evil will come upon them as well. Job insists that he did not ask anything of them (6:22-23). But their words are "wind" (6:26), and like the "great wind" in 1:19, they are plundering the fatherless and their friend (6:26-27). Job says that he knows that his days have all been appointed by God and they will be few, and therefore it is right for him to speak out his anguish while he lives (7:1-11). But the words of Eliphaz make him want to commit suicide (7:13-15). Job wants Eliphaz to leave and quit tormenting him (7:16), and Job asks God if there is any sin to be forgiven (7:17-21).

Bildad's First Speech

Bildad immediately accuses Job of being full of hot air; his words are a bunch of "wind" (8:2). It's striking that he calls Job's words a "strong wind," and then he says that if Job's children were destroyed it was because they sinned against the Lord (8:4). Bildad remains hard on evil doers throughout his speeches (e.g. ch. 18). Bildad says that men are like plants which are cut down (8:11-19). But God does not cast away the perfect; God will cause Job to rejoice and his enemies will be put to shame (8:20-22).

Job's Response to Bildad

Job says that what Bildad says is true enough, but it doesn't get to the point. Job's question has to do with being just before God (9:2). He knows that man is not qualified to contend with God, and all attempts will only prove the opposite (9:3-21). Job says that if he lets his complaint go, his friends will still consider him a sinner and cast him in a ditch (9:28-31). Job wants an answer to this dilemma, but he knows that he cannot just set up a day in court with God (9:32-33). So Job determines to hold his complaint, and he now directs it more explicitly at God (10:1-2). His prayer reminds God that He is his Creator and Preserver (10:3-13). Job knows that God punishes sin, but Job is confused because he is not aware of anything (10:14-18). Job closes again requesting that he be allowed to die (10:18-22).

Zophar's First Speech

Zophar doesn't call Job's speech a bunch of "wind," but a "multitude of words." He calls Job a liar and mocker (11:2-3). He says that Job is actually getting less than he deserves (11:6). And even if Job is a complete fool, if he will only confess his sins he will be cleared and blessed (11:12-20).

Job's Response to Zophar

Job knows that these three men are not really comforters or friends. They are accusers, satans, and they are after Job like their father, the devil. The pious line that Job is a sinner and needs to confess his sins, is a thin veneer for looking for ways to discredit and undermine Job. Job agrees with Zophar that God rules over all things and that all things come from His hand, but he says that Zophar is a liar and all three of them are physicians of no value (13:4). He wishes that they would leave him alone (13:5). Job turns the tables on Zophar and asks if he could stand up to the scrutiny of God (like they are doing to him) (13:8-13). Job insists that he will plead his ways to God and that he will be justified (13:15-18). Job asks God to remove His hand from him and forgive his sins, but this request could almost as easily apply to the friends to get their hands out of his back pocket (13:21) and tell him what his sins are and quit making vague accusations (13:23-28). This points to the fact that the "friends" are a continuation of God's trial of Job.

Conclusions & Applications

Eliphaz said that a terrifying spirit came to him and gave him some questions to ask. This accusing spirit is the spirit of the Accuser, The Satan. And the "friends" pile on. They are attackers, liars, and cheaters. They are more plague, more wind.

What are ways that we intentionally or unintentionally become accusers rather than friends? Husbands, do you blame your wives instead of looking for ways to help? Wives do you nag your husband rather than looking for ways to praise him and respect him? Do you get frustrated with your children and only see their faults rather than believing the promises of God regarding them?

Another way of looking at the argument is recognizing the validity and truth of what the friends say but which is misapplied drastically. Saying the right thing at the wrong time or in the wrong way is folly or worse. Just because something is true doesn't make it edifying.



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