***Job: A Study in Suffering…And Faith***

Lesson Six: Eliphaz’s Second Speech and Job’s Reply

(Job 15:1 – 17:6)

***Objective:***

1. Be able to supply adjectives to describe the obvious emotions of Eliphaz and Job as they made their speeches.
2. **Eliphaz’s second speech (15:1-35)1**
   1. Eliphaz rebuked Job (vv. 1-13). In his opinion…
      1. Job’s speeches had been just so much vain talk (vv. 1-3).
      2. Further, Job had put aside reverence for and fear of God (vv. 4).
      3. Eliphaz claimed that Job’s own speeches were evidence of his guilt (vv. 5-6). It may be that Eliphaz was suggesting that Job’s words were enough to condemn him apart from any sin that he might have committed in the past (v. 6).
      4. Eliphaz accused Job of arrogance (vv. 7-11).
         1. “Does Job think that he is the only one to have wisdom?”
         2. “Is Job privy to the secret wisdom of God?”
         3. Eliphaz claimed the backing of age and experience for himself and the other two friends (vv. 9-10).
         4. “Does Job disdain the ‘comforts of God’?” (Eliphaz was probably referring to the words of the friends or at least to his speeches - v. 11).
      5. Eliphaz rebuked Job for his rash speech (vv. 12-13).
   2. Eliphaz asserted the inevitability of sin and thus suffering (15:14-16).
      1. These verses are similar to a section in Eliphaz’s first speech (4:17-19; see pages 8-9 of these notes for a discussion of that passage).
         1. In 4:17-19, the emphasis is upon the frailty of man, particularly in verse 19; here man’s corruption is highlighted (v. 16), perhaps even overstated for emphasis.
         2. Although Eliphaz did not apply these words directly to Job, there seems to be little doubt that he had Job in mind.2
      2. A progression can be seen in the speeches of Eliphaz as he grew more impatient and harsher with Job.
   3. Eliphaz reaffirmed his theory regarding suffering and the fate of the wicked (vv. 17-35).
      1. He prefaced his remarks by appealing to their antiquity and purity (vv. 17-19).
      2. The wicked man is pictured as dreading future calamities even during temporary prosperity in the present (vv. 20-24).
      3. Eliphaz described the wicked man as being rebellious against God and portrayed him as a warrior charging God with full armor (vv. 25-26).
      4. Note the comment of Driver and Gray on verses 27-28:3
         1. *Grown rich and prosperous, he has become confirmed in his insensibility to God and all that is spiritual: for this figurative use of fatness, cp. Deut. 32:15, Jer. 5:28, Ps. 73:7, 119:70. Being indifferent to God (27), he builds up and inhabits sites which have been reduced to ruins by some judgment of God, and on which accordingly the curse of God rests, virtually carrying with it a decree of God that such places are not to be rebuilt (cp. Josh. 6:26, 1 Kings 16:34, Deut. 13:17).*
      5. Eliphaz asserted that even if the wicked man was presently prosperous, his wickedness would “catch up with him” and his prosperity would fail (vv. 29-31).
      6. By the use of agricultural figures, Eliphaz emphasized the ultimate fruitlessness of the wicked (vv. 32-35).
3. **Job’s reply (16:1-17:16)**
   1. Job depicted his friends as “miserable comforters” (16:1-5).
      1. He could speak the same meaningless things if their situations were reversed, but he would seek instead to strengthen and comfort.
      2. Some commentators suggest that Job was being sarcastic in verse 5 – mocking his friends for their “strengthening and solace” (see the ESV).4 Note the implication of the NKJV translation. The addition of the word “but” by the translators indicates that they did not believe that Job was being sarcastic. “I could do as you have, ***but*** I would act differently.”
   2. Job described God’s hostility toward him (16:6-14).
      1. Neither speech nor silence eased his grief (v. 6).
      2. Notice Gibson’s comment on the “witnesses” of verse 8:5
         1. *Job means to say that the fact that God has thus laid His hand upon him and afflicted him is the visible proof to men that He is holding him guilty. His miserable emaciat­ed state is the best evidence of this.*
      3. In picturesque language, Job accused God of having practiced violence against him. Andersen identifies the figures in the following comment:6
         1. *Only literal translation can do justice to the savagery of Job’s description of God’s vicious attack. He is like a ferocious beast (9f.), a traitor (11), a wrestler (12a, b), an archer (12c, 13a), a swordsman (13b, 14).*
   3. Job continued to plead his innocence (16:15-17:5).
      1. He spoke of his mourning (sackcloth; strength [literally, “horn”] in the dust; etc.) despite his innocence.
      2. He addressed the earth in an apostrophe, demanding vindication. Gibson comments:7
         1. *The idea is that blood, unjustly shed, cries to God for vengeance so long as it remains upon the face of the ground. Cf. Gen. 4:10, “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground”; and the remarkable passage in Ezekiel 24:7-8, “For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the bare rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust; that it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance, I have set her blood upon the bare rock, that it should not be covered.”*
      3. Finding no comfort or help in his friends (16:20), Job expressed the wish for a mediator (v. 21).
      4. Affirming that his time to live is short, Job makes the unusual request that God provide a surety (of his innocence) against Himself.
         1. His friends have mocked his claim to innocence (17:2).
         2. They are unable to act as witnesses to his innocence because they are blinded to his case (17:4).
   4. Changing direction, Job claimed that God had made him a “byword” (vv. 6-9).
   5. Job challenged his friends (17:10-16).
      1. The friends had predicted light (life, blessings) if Job would only repent.
      2. Job declared that he had no hope of such blessings.

**Endnotes:**

1I am indebted to Edgar Gibson for the basic outline of this chapter.

2Driver and Gray, pp. 131-2, 136.

3Driver and Gray, p. 139. 4Jackson, p. 48. 5Gibson, p. 82. 6Andersen, p. 180.

7Gibson, p. 84.

***Study & Discussion Questions:***

1. What charges did Eliphaz make against Job?
2. How did Eliphaz describe the wicked man (15:17-28) and what did he say was the future of the wicked man?
3. Compare 15:14-16 with 4:17-19.
4. How did Job refer to his friends (16:1-5)?
5. How did Job describe God’s treatment of him?
6. For what did Job plead in 16:18? 16:21 (NKJV)?

**Additional Discussion Question:**

1. What unusual request did Job make of God in 17:3? Why did he make this request of God instead of his friends?