

Eliphaz's Religion of Work's Righteousness (Job 15)

NOTE: The thrust of Eliphaz's speech is that only those who are wicked suffer in this life. While we understand that there is eternal suffering waiting for those who are found outside of perfect righteousness, Eliphaz asserts that Job must be wicked because of what he is going through. This is in contradiction to what we know God said about Job in the beginning of the book. While there are consequences for sin, sometimes the wicked prosper in this life and the righteous suffer. Eliphaz refuses this – He has no grace in his theology. Those who do good things get good things, and those who do bad get bad things. The problem is that Romans 3 says there is no one who does good. Not even one.

I. Eliphaz Accuses Job With Dishonesty (1-16)

A. Eliphaz Claims Job's Words are Nonsense (1-3)

1. He says Job is answering with "windy knowledge" and filling his belly with the east wind (1-2)
 - a. In chapter 13-15, Job asserted he was innocent of what the friends are charging him with
2. He claims Job is arguing with unprofitable talk (3)
3. He claims Job's words can do no one any good
 - a. Eliphaz is convinced that good people don't suffer
 - b. Eliphaz cannot accept the idea the suffering can be redemptive in the hands of God

B. Eliphaz Claims Job's Words are Sacrilegious (4)

1. Saying Suffering comes to the righteous denies God's goodness
 - a. He says Job is doing away with the fear of God
2. Saying Suffering comes to the righteous leaves no motivation for meditation before God
 - a. Why would anyone fear or be devoted to God without reward?
 - b. If God allows the righteous to suffer, why would anyone want to be righteous?
 - c. Eliphaz's religion is a works system where you earn the blessings of God. He doesn't understand why people would desire God if God did not protect them from suffering.

c. Eliphaz Claims Job's Words are Self-Justifying (5-6)

1. Job's words are meant to defend his wickedness (5)
 - a. Eliphaz believes Job must have secret sins which are the cause of his suffering. Job's iniquity is informing his mouth – meaning Job is justifying his sinful actions by saying he doesn't deserve what is happening.
 - b. Eliphaz believes Job is setting himself and his ways above God.
2. Job's words themselves condemn him (6)
 - a. By denying guilt, Job is condemning himself all the more

- b. Job does understand that he has sin, but he trusts in the Lord's word as he has offered sacrifices for atonement and followed the ways of God
 - c. Eliphaz refuses to believe Job has been devoted to God
 - 3. Eliphaz Claims Job's Words are Prideful and Arrogant (7-10)
 - a. Job's claims are flying in the face of all the wisdom of men (7)
 - 1. He asks if Job thinks he is the first man born
 - 2. He asks if Job thinks he was born before creation
 - 3. The point is that Eliphaz believes Job is arrogantly going against the established understanding of God's ways.
 - b. Job's claims are defying the religion of men (8-10)
 - 1. He asks if Job has a direct line to God?
 - 2. He wonders why Job thinks he knows more than other men
 - 3. He asks why Job would think he would know better than all the elders and wise men?
 - 4. Eliphaz Claims Job's Words are Enmity Against God (11-13)
 - a. Job's claims make light of God's blessings (11)
 - 1. Here it seems that Eliphaz is saying that Job deserves a lot worse than he is getting.
 - b. To claim right standing with God while enduring such suffering is to let your "heart carry you away" from God
 - c. To let your "eyes flash" in anger because you think you have right standing with God is sinful in the face of suffering
 - d. Eliphaz sums up this thought by saying Job has turned his spirit against God – this is the only way he could think that God would allow such suffering to fall upon someone devoted to Him.
 - 5. Eliphaz Claims Job's Words are Impossible (14-16)
 - a. Job cannot be correct in his assertions (14-15)
 - 1. Man cannot be pure before God as Job claims to be
 - 2. Man cannot be righteous before God as Job claims
 - 3. Even the heavens and the holy ones are not pure in God's sight
 - b. Job must be worse than other men (16)
 - 1. Eliphaz calls Job abominable and corrupt, how could God see him in right standing?
 - 2. Eliphaz claims Job drinks injustice like water
 - i. Here Eliphaz is judging the heart and motives of Job.
 - ii. He doesn't know Job's heart but he believes he can assess Job's spiritual state by examining the suffering that Job is experiencing.
- II. Eliphaz Believes Only the Wicked Suffer in This Life (17-35)
 - A. Eliphaz Trusts in a Traditional Religion (17-19)

1. Eliphaz Gets this Knowledge from Man's Traditions (17-19)
 - a. Eliphaz speaks with surety because of all he has seen
 - b. Eliphaz speaks with surety because of what he has learned from wise men who have passed down knowledge through their fathers
- B. Eliphaz "Knows" the Wicked Suffer Continually (20-24)
 1. The Wicked Dwell in Pain (20)
 - a. He writhes in pain all his days
 - b. He writes in pain through all his years
 - c. We know this is not so – many of the OT prophets cry out to God because they see the wicked prospering in this life
 - d. Standing with God cannot be measured by the level of comfort or prosperity in which one lives.
 2. The Wicked Dwell in Fear (21-22)
 - a. He claims that the wicked are fearful all their days as they await the destroyer coming upon them (21)
 - i. Most of the wicked are wicked precisely because they do not fear the consequences of their actions
 - b. He claims that the wicked are fearful because they don't believe they can escape their fate (22)
 - i. Most of the wicked are wicked precisely because they give no thought to the ultimate consequences of their actions
 3. The Wicked Dwell in Need (23)
 - a. He claims the wicked never have enough and wander for bread
 - b. He claims the wicked are always anticipating the day of darkness in which they live
 4. The Wicked Dwell in Anguish (24)
 - a. He claims the wicked are always in anguish
 - b. He claims terror and anguish are always attacking as a king going to battle

NOTE: Eliphaz's implication is clear. He is describing the exact things that Job is now going through. Therefore, Job must be lying about being right with God. He knows that God only sends suffering like this to the wicked therefore, Job must be wicked and under God's condemnation.

- C. Eliphaz "Knows" the Wicked Suffer Because they Disobey (25-28)
 1. The wicked (those who are suffering) have defied God (25-26)
 - a. He is imply that Job has done this – he stretched out his hand against God
 - b. He has defied the Almighty
 - c. He has run stubbornly against God's will
 - d. this is the only explanation of Job's suffering
 2. The wicked have run after their own lusts (27-28)
 - a. He implies Job has loved his comfort and pleasure (27)

- i. He has covered his face with his fat – i.e. he has indulged in gluttony and pleasure.
 - ii. He has gathered fat upon his waist – he has lived for the pleasures of life
 - b. He implies Job has followed disobedient paths (28)
 - i. he has lived in desolate cities and houses that should not be inhabited (i.e. his lifestyle is one of disobedience)
 - ii. his life of disobedience is like a house ready to become ruins (he is getting what he deserves)
- D. Eliphaz “Knows” The Wicked will Never Prosper (29-35)
 - 1. The wicked will not be prosperous in this life (29)
 - a. He will not be rich and his wealth won’t endure
 - b. This flies in the face of some of Jesus’ own teachings about the rich. (easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle and the rich man and Lazarus)
 - c. The implication is that Job is wicked therefore his wealth was taken
 - 2. The wicked will progress toward darkness in this life (30)
 - a. He will not depart from darkness
 - i. he is implying that this is why Job won’t repent. He will not turn from his wickedness. Yet, the New Testament is filled with sinners who turned toward Christ. Here, Eliphaz is trying to explain why Job refuses to listen to reason
 - b. He will burn up by the breath of his own mouth
 - i. His words will be his condemnation
 - 3. The wicked will reap what they sow in this life (31-32)
 - a. Those who live for emptiness will reap emptiness (31)
 - i. it is true that one reaps what he sows but Eliphaz is speaking about suffering in this life. The fact is that many wicked are prosperous with the things of this life – yet we know that the things of this life are emptiness in themselves. This is not what Eliphaz means. He means that those who go after emptiness will suffer in this life
 - b. Those who live for emptiness will be paid back in this life (32)
 - He will be paid “before his time”
 - His branch will not be green – meaning he will never prosper in this life
 - Once again he implies that Job must be lying because he is going through such suffering
 - 4. The Wicked Will Only Experience Suffering (33-35)
 - a. His vine (his prosperity) will shake off like an unripe grape and blossom of an olive tree (33)
 - b. Fire will consume all he tries to build (34)

c. Everything they “give birth” to will be evil and deceit

Eliphaz makes a very unsubtle point. He claims that true religion which has been handed down by tradition says that Job is lying. God does not allow people in right standing with Him to suffer. Of course Eliphaz is mistaken and Job is right with God. So everything Eliphaz has been saying is incorrect. Eliphaz's religion is one that makes no room for grace or repentance. Only those who do good get good things and only those who do bad things experience suffering. This is not the religion of the Bible.