

# **WOMEN IN THE WORD**

## **OF**

**FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH**

“Job: A 12-Week Study” by Eric Ortlund

Week Five: Round Two of the Debate

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All Scripture quotations are ESV unless noted otherwise

## **Chapter 15**

**15** Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:

**2** “Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge,  
and fill his belly with the east wind?

**3** Should he argue in unprofitable talk,  
or in words with which he can do no good?”

This accusation of an outpouring of worthless words comes up with great frequency in the book: from Bildad in 8:2, from Zophar in 11:2, Eliphaz here in chapter 15, and finally Job himself in 16:3, then Bildad again in 18:2.

Eventually, in the third cycle, Zophar doesn’t speak at all.

**4** “But you are doing away with the fear of God<sup>[a]</sup>  
and hindering meditation before God.”

Scholars disagree on the interpretation of this verse. Perhaps Eliphaz is saying that Job could be discouraging people from fearing God, but most emphasize that Job is harming himself and sabotaging his own religion.

**5** “For your iniquity teaches your mouth,  
and you choose the tongue of the crafty.

**6** Your own mouth condemns you, and not I;  
your own lips testify against you.”

Here Eliphaz states with conviction that he has no need to prove that Job is guilty.

**7** "Are you the first man who was born?  
    Or were you brought forth before the hills?  
**8** Have you listened in the council of God?  
    And do you limit wisdom to yourself?  
**9** What do you know that we do not know?  
    What do you understand that is not clear to us?"

Eliphaz indirectly accuses Job of claiming that he knows more than they do, although Job has never said that.

However, Job does know his own history and conscience. They can't possibly know that, which is why they can't give any genuine evidence against him.

**10**" Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us,  
Older than your father.  
**11** Are the consolations of God too little for you,  
Or the word *spoken* gently to you? " (NASB)

Eliphaz is trying to strengthen his position by stating that the old and wise are giving their counsel.

Perhaps Job is younger than the comforters, and therefore, Eliphaz thinks that Job should be listening to them.

Eliphaz also asserts that their words are comforts from God Himself, delivered to Job through the friends.

**12**" Why does your heart carry you away,  
    and why do your eyes flash,  
**13** that you turn your spirit against God  
    and bring such words out of your mouth?"

In contrast to their "gentleness," Job is harsh and angry, and Eliphaz condemns him. He can't accept that Job is frustrated and hurt because of his innocent suffering.

**14**"What is man, that he can be pure?  
    Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?  
**15** Behold, God<sup>b]</sup> puts no trust in his holy ones,  
    and the heavens are not pure in his sight;  
**16** how much less one who is abominable and corrupt,  
    a man who drinks injustice like water!"

Here Eliphaz returns to the theme of his “vision” from his first speech, that humanity is vile and corrupt and has no hope of being righteous before a holy God.

The remainder of Eliphaz’s speech is his declaration to Job of what he knows about how the wicked suffer.

He also gives the reasons why this suffering happens:

**25** “Because he has stretched out his hand against God

and defies the Almighty,

**26** running stubbornly against him

with a thickly bossed shield.”

**35** They conceive trouble and give birth to evil,

and their womb prepares deceit.”

These statements are charges against Job, and he will respond to them.

All three friends’ comments are almost exclusively diatribes against Job with exhaustive descriptions of the fate of the wicked.

## Chapter 16

Unconvinced, Job continues his opposition to their “instruction.”

**16** Then Job answered and said:

**2** “I have heard many such things;  
miserable comforters are you all.

**3** Shall windy words have an end?

Or what provokes you that you answer?

**4** I also could speak as you do,

if you were in my place;

I could join words together against you

and shake my head at you.

**5** I could strengthen you with my mouth,

and the solace of my lips would assuage your pain.”

The “worthless physicians” of Chapter 13 are still “miserable comforters.” Notice that Job acknowledges that he could speak the way that they are if he were in their place.

However, he would try to encourage and build up instead of tearing down.

In verse 6, Job declares that speaking out doesn't ease his pain, but holding things in doesn't help either.

What follows in verses 7-15 is a graphic and horrifying description of the suffering that God has brought on him.

In verse 14, Job responds to Eliphaz's comment in Chapter 15 that Job was attacking God: "He runs at me like a warrior."

Job pours out his sorrow and reaffirms his innocence:

**16**" My face is red with weeping,  
    and on my eyelids is deep darkness,  
**17** although there is no violence in my hands,  
    and my prayer is pure.

Beginning in verse 18, we see renewed resolve and hope in his heart:

**18**"O earth, do not cover my blood,  
And let there be no *resting* place for my cry.  
**19**"Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,  
And my <sup>a</sup>advocate is on high.  
**20**"My friends are my scoffers;  
My eye <sup>b</sup>weeps to God.  
**21**"O that a man might plead with God  
As a man with his neighbor!  
**22**"For when a few years are past,  
I shall go the way of no return." (NASB 1995)

According to Hartley, ancient peoples believed that the spilled blood of a murder victim was crying out for revenge, and the cry would end only when the blood was covered or revenge had been accomplished.

Although it is difficult to determine from the text exactly who Job considers this "witness" to be, most scholars find it likely that it is God. Hartley explains it this way:

While it is difficult to think that God would serve as a witness against himself...the concept is not impossible. In fact, the whole drama of redemption centers around the antinomy between God's justice that is sometimes expressed in wrath toward sinful man and his love that reaches out to redeem that same sinful man. For love to be genuine, it must be true to justice. In his redeeming work God is motivated by love and acts true to justice. Here Job appeals to God's holy integrity in stating his earnest hope that God will testify to the truth of his claims of innocence, even though such testimony will seem to contradict God's own

actions....He is not essentially pitting God against God; rather he is affirming genuine confidence in God regardless of the way it appears that God is treating him.

## Chapter 17

Job continues his lament. Because he is getting no help or solace from the people in his life, he asks God in verse 3 to put up a pledge for him.

In verse 5, Job seems to be warning the friends that a serious consequence will follow for their false condemnation of him.

Job declares himself “a byword of the people.”

His friends have sided with the scoffers, adding to his misery. All that is left for him to do, according to verse 9, is to hold to his innocence and hope to grow stronger as a result.

He ends with more lamenting, that his life is over and he has no hope:

<sup>11</sup> “My days are past,  
My purposes are broken off,  
*Even the ☩thoughts of my heart.*  
<sup>12</sup> They change the night into day;  
'The light is near,' they say, in the face of darkness.  
<sup>13</sup> If I wait for the grave as my house,  
If I make my bed in the darkness,  
<sup>14</sup> If I say to corruption, 'You are my father,'  
And to the worm, 'You are my mother and my sister,'  
<sup>15</sup> Where then is my hope?  
As for my hope, who can see it?  
<sup>16</sup> Will they go down to the gates of ☩Sheol?  
Shall we have rest together in the dust?" (NKJV)

## Chapter 18

Both Bildad and Zophar seem to take their cues from Eliphaz here.

Again, they offer no words of understanding, support or comfort. Somehow at this point, all they have to offer are scare tactics.

**18** Then Bildad the Shuhite responded,

<sup>2</sup> "How long will you hunt for words?  
Show understanding, and then we can talk.  
<sup>3</sup> Why are we regarded as animals,  
As stupid in your eyes?  
<sup>4</sup> <sup>[a]</sup>You who tear yourself in your anger—  
Should the earth be abandoned for your sake,  
Or the rock moved from its place?" (NASB)

Bildad is clearly provoked

He contradicts Job's argument that God is tearing him apart by telling Job that it's his own anger and chafing at God's discipline that is the source of his anguish.

He sees Job as expecting an upending of the moral order.

The spirit of the remainder of Bildad's speech is the same as that of Eliphaz. The wicked person languishes in darkness, loses his vigor, gets trapped in his own schemes, suffers terror and calamity, and then eventually loses everything and dies, leaving no children and no memory of his life.

The heartlessness of his speech is unbelievable.

## Chapter 19

We can learn a great deal from Job's response here:

**19** Then Job answered and said:

<sup>2</sup> "How long will you torment me  
and break me in pieces with words?  
<sup>3</sup> These ten times you have cast reproach upon me;  
are you not ashamed to wrong me?"

We truly can crush people with our words.

We cannot take back words of hate or cruel anger once they have been spoken.

Job wants them to know that it is God who has wronged him and drawn him into His net.

One of the saddest passages in the book is in this chapter, in verses 13-19. Going through times of trial is difficult enough when there are friends and loved ones to provide support, but Job has been abandoned by everyone:

- 13** "He has alienated my family from me;  
my acquaintances are completely estranged from me.
- 14** My relatives have gone away;  
my closest friends have forgotten me.
- 15** My guests and my female servants count me a foreigner;  
they look on me as on a stranger.
- 16** I summon my servant, but he does not answer,  
though I beg him with my own mouth.
- 17** My breath is offensive to my wife;  
I am loathsome to my own family.
- 18** Even the little boys scorn me;  
when I appear, they ridicule me.
- 19** All my intimate friends detest me;  
those I love have turned against me.

We know just how keenly Job feels his losses because of his description of his past life in Chapter 29.

Why was Job so honored and respected? Not because of his wealth or prestige, but because he took care of people in need.

This is another way in which Job prefigures Jesus, who was also abandoned even by his closest disciples and had to face death alone.

This should be a sobering thought to us. How do we react when people close to us are going through great suffering, especially people who have ministered to us before?

Having been completely let down by his friends, Job ponders another way he could be vindicated.

- 23** "Oh that my words were written!  
    Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
- 24** Oh that with an iron pen and lead  
    they were engraved in the rock forever!"

In the next passage is Job's most powerful expression of his faith during his trial:

**25** For I know that my Redeemer lives,  
    and at the last he will stand upon the earth.<sup>[b]</sup>  
**26** And after my skin has been thus destroyed,  
    yet in<sup>[c]</sup> my flesh I shall see God,  
**27** whom I shall see for myself,  
    and my eyes shall behold, and not another.  
        My heart faints within me!"

The word for redeemer here is *goel*, one of the most well-known terms of the Old Testament Hebrew community.

But who can Job be referring to when he speaks of his redeemer?

Based on what Job knows, it is most likely that he is beseeching the God of his faith to help him against the God who is punishing him.

At least for a moment, Job is convinced that out of his sorrow, God will rescue and restore him.

There is a great deal of debate surrounding whether or not Job is declaring belief in a bodily resurrection after death. The text of verse 26 is very difficult, so that complicates it.

Some have held that God will raise Job from the grave.

Others have said that God will appear and Job will observe as a bodiless spirit.

And some maintain that God will intervene before Job's death and restore him.

This stands out as a remarkable passage. The foreshadowing of Christ our Redeemer is unmistakable. It is likely that Job himself didn't fully grasp all that he was declaring.

Job ends his speech with a warning to his friends that they, too, will face judgment.

## Chapter 20

Zophar begins by expressing his irritation with Job's final comment. He then launches into his lecture on the fate of the wicked.

We need to remember that these speeches are indirect condemnations of Job. For the first time, we see specific accusations leveled at Job regarding his treatment of the poor:

<sup>9</sup> "The wicked will disappear from the place where they used to live;  
<sup>10</sup> and their children will make good what they stole from the poor." (Good News Translation)

<sup>19</sup> For he has crushed and abandoned the poor;  
he has seized a house that he did not build."

Eliphaz will add to these charges even more in his final speech in chapter 22.

## Chapter 21

Job's final discourse in this cycle is directed exclusively to his friends. He begins by appealing to them to please actually listen to what he is saying:

**21** Then Job answered and said:

<sup>2</sup> "Keep listening to my words,  
and let this be your comfort.  
<sup>3</sup> Bear with me, and I will speak,  
and after I have spoken, mock on.  
<sup>4</sup> As for me, is my complaint against man?  
Why should I not be impatient?  
<sup>5</sup> Look at me and be appalled,  
and lay your hand over your mouth.  
<sup>6</sup> When I remember, I am dismayed,  
and shuddering seizes my flesh."

In the ensuing verses, Job directly and emphatically contradicts the retributive justice argument of his friends. In vv. 7-13, he paints a clear picture of the wicked who continue in blessing and favor, despite their complete rejection of God.

Interpretation of verse 16 is difficult, as well as some others that seem to contradict Job's main argument here. It can be difficult to discern when Job is referring to things that the friends have said. For example, in verse 19, translators have added the phrase 'you say,' which is not in the original Hebrew, for clarity.

<sup>17</sup> "How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out?  
That their calamity comes upon them?

That God<sup>[a]</sup> distributes pains in his anger?

<sup>18</sup> That they are like straw before the wind,  
and like chaff that the storm carries away?

<sup>19</sup> You say, 'God stores up their iniquity for their children.'  
Let him pay it out to them, that they may know it.

<sup>20</sup> Let their own eyes see their destruction,  
and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

<sup>21</sup> For what do they care for their houses after them,  
when the number of their months is cut off?

Here, Job continues his challenge to their assertions with two additional points. The friends say that the wicked suffer premature death, but Job questions.

Then Job attacks their premise that God may bring punishment on the children of the wicked.

In 23-26, Job describes two people with very different life experiences.

But he notes that they both die, and death makes no distinction between them.

Job challenges his friends with a final series of questions in vv. 27-34.

Job is the only one honest enough to admit that he is perplexed by God's ways.

In verse 30, Job shows that he understands that wicked people will eventually be judged, but in the meantime, why isn't someone confronting them now and making them pay for their wrongdoing?

Job ends with a complete rejection of the "vain comfort" offered by his friends.

What Job has attempted to do here is to get his friends to see that life is more complicated than the way they see it.

A person's prosperity does not necessarily mean that he is upright. Therefore, it logically follows that the devout, like Job, might experience suffering not caused by sin.

Next week, Week Six: Round Three of the Debate, pp. 43-50 in study book  
Job Chapters 22-27