

# JOB

## CHAPTERS 4, 5, 6 & 7

### Introduction

What's your opinion of this statement:

Job 4:7 "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?"

Those words summarize the theology of Job's friend Eliphaz. Eliphaz believed that God always blessed you if you were blameless, and that He only buffeted you if you were bad. Applying it to Job, he said that Job must therefore be bad rather than blameless, that in his suffering he was being buffeted by God for his sin, and that he needed only to confess his sin in order to receive the blessings of God again.

Job maintained that he was blameless though buffeted! He said, in verse twenty-nine of chapter six, "My righteousness still stands." We know that he *was* blameless; God Himself had said as much in chapters one and two. We must conclude that Eliphaz was wrong, and that God *can* buffet a blameless man. In fact, Job teaches us that God can bring blessings out of buffetings.

As we listen to the discussion between these two men in chapters four through seven, we'll see two things:

#1 Eliphaz Is Wrong In Assuming That  
God Is Bound By His Law To Bless You

#2 Job Is Right In Asserting That  
God Is Bound By His Love To Buffet You

## #1 Eliphaz Is Wrong In Assuming That God Is Bound By His Law To Bless You (Chapters 4 & 5)

From this point in Job and continuing through chapter thirty-one you have the record of the dialog, discussion, and debate between Job and his three friends who came to comfort him – Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Each friend spoke and was in turn answered by Job. This cycle occurs three times, with the exception that Zophar doesn't speak the third time.

Throughout their speeches they all assumed that God blesses the blameless and buffets the bad:

▶▶ The summary of what Eliphaz said is found in 4:7,

Job 4:7 "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?"

Eliphaz applied this to Job in 5:17 when he said,

Job 5:17 "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty."

▶▶ The summary of what Bildad said is found in 8:20,

Job 8:20 "Behold, God will not cast away the blameless, Nor will He uphold the evildoers."

Bildad applied this to Job in 8:6 when he said,

Job 8:6 "If you were pure and upright, Surely now He would awake for you, And prosper your rightful dwelling place."

▶▶ The summary of what Zophar said is found in 20:5,

Job 20:5 "... the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment..."

Zophar applied this to Job in 11:6 when he said,

Job 11:6 "... Know therefore that God exacts from you Less than your iniquity deserves."

Their reasoning was simple: All suffering is punishment for sin; Job was suffering; therefore Job was a sinner.

Each round of speeches becomes more direct and heated; instead of *consoling* Job, they end up *condemning* him. Through it all Job maintains that he is blameless, and we know that he was.

Job's friends had a very limited, a very narrow, a very legalistic view of God. They could reduce Him and His dealings with mankind

to simple formulas that never allowed for any variables. They saw God as bound by certain laws that He had established. Suffering always meant you were sinning; success always meant you were spiritual.

We looked at the opening words of Eliphaz in our last study; let's pick-up the dialog in verse seven of chapter four.

Job 4:7 "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?

Job 4:8 Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same.

Job 4:9 By the blast of God they perish, And by the breath of His anger they are consumed.

Job 4:10 The roaring of the lion, The voice of the fierce lion, And the teeth of the young lions are broken.

Job 4:11 The old lion perishes for lack of prey, And the cubs of the lioness are scattered.

Several times in his speeches Eliphaz said, "I have seen." Eliphaz based his theology on his experiences. He had two kinds of experiences: Social and Spiritual.

First, he based his theology on his social, or sociological, experiences – on what he had observed among humans. He had never seen the righteous suffer, or the wicked prosper. He compared Job to a field sown with sin that was now reaping what he'd sown. He compared Job to a lion who, though seemingly strong, could be broken and whose cubs could be scattered by a hunter – in this case, God being the hunter and Job deserving destruction.

Eliphaz had insufficient social experiences! Many times the innocent *do* suffer, and often it is the wicked who seem to have no problems. Scripture confirms this:

1 Peter 2:19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

1 Peter 2:20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

Eliphaz also based his theology on a *spiritual* experience, and he described it in the rest of chapter four:

Job 4:12 "Now a word was secretly brought to me, And my ear received a whisper of it.

Job 4:13 In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men,

Job 4:14 Fear came upon me, and trembling, Which made all my bones shake.  
Job 4:15 Then a spirit passed before my face; The hair on my body stood up.  
Job 4:16 It stood still, But I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes; There was silence; Then I heard a voice saying:  
Job 4:17 'Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?  
Job 4:18 If He puts no trust in His servants, If He charges His angels with error,  
Job 4:19 How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are crushed before a moth?  
Job 4:20 They are broken in pieces from morning till evening; They perish forever, with no one regarding.  
Job 4:21 Does not their own excellence go away? They die, even without wisdom.'

At best, Eliphaz had a bad dream; at worst, he was visited by a demon! The spiritual experience he had was *real*, but it was not *right*. The philosophy of the “spirit” that spoke to him was hellish and demonic, what I would call existential: God is either uninterested in mankind, or He is interested in destroying them. Only a good or blameless man can survive God’s anger by earning the right to be blessed. Then God is bound by His law to bless you, even against His will.

I’m not against spiritual experiences... But they must be tested by the Word of God; they must be right.

Eliphaz applies his theology to Job’s sufferings in chapter five:

Job 5:1 "Call out now; Is there anyone who will answer you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn?  
Job 5:2 For wrath kills a foolish man, And envy slays a simple one.  
Job 5:3 I have seen the foolish taking root, But suddenly I cursed his dwelling place.  
Job 5:4 His sons are far from safety, They are crushed in the gate, And there is no deliverer.  
Job 5:5 Because the hungry eat up his harvest, Taking it even from the thorns, And a snare snatches their substance.  
Job 5:6 For affliction does not come from the dust, Nor does trouble spring from the ground;  
Job 5:7 Yet man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward.

This is what Eliphaz is saying: Job is the foolish man who, thinking he could hide his sin, began to take root only to be destroyed. Affliction does not come for no reason; it comes from within, from hidden sin.

Imagine for a moment Job’s pain, knowing that he had done nothing to deserve his suffering, yet being accused of hiding his sin.

## Having prosecuted Job, Eliphaz gives him his prescription:

Job 5:8 "But as for me, I would seek God, And to God I would commit my cause;

Job 5:9 Who does great things, and unsearchable, Marvelous things without number.

Job 5:10 He gives rain on the earth, And sends waters on the fields.

Job 5:11 He sets on high those who are lowly, And those who mourn are lifted to safety.

Job 5:12 He frustrates the devices of the crafty, So that their hands cannot carry out their plans.

Job 5:13 He catches the wise in their own craftiness, And the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them.

Job 5:14 They meet with darkness in the daytime, And grope at noontime as in the night.

Job 5:15 But He saves the needy from the sword, From the mouth of the mighty, And from their hand.

Job 5:16 So the poor have hope, And injustice shuts her mouth.

The analysis Eliphaz gives here is sound, but it is misapplied. These are true statements about God, but Job had not sinned and could therefore not seek God through repentance.

Eliphaz concludes his thoughts in verses seventeen through twenty-seven:

Job 5:17 "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.

Job 5:18 For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole.

Job 5:19 He shall deliver you in six troubles, Yes, in seven no evil shall touch you.

Job 5:20 In famine He shall redeem you from death, And in war from the power of the sword.

Job 5:21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, And you shall not be afraid of destruction when it comes.

Job 5:22 You shall laugh at destruction and famine, And you shall not be afraid of the beasts of the earth.

Job 5:23 For you shall have a covenant with the stones of the field, And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.

Job 5:24 You shall know that your tent is in peace; You shall visit your dwelling and find nothing amiss.

Job 5:25 You shall also know that your descendants shall be many, And your offspring like the grass of the earth.

Job 5:26 You shall come to the grave at a full age, As a sheaf of grain ripens in its season.

Job 5:27 Behold, this we have searched out; It is true. Hear it, and know for yourself."

The gist of what Eliphaz was saying is that, if Job would repent, God would be obligated to bless him. No harm would ever come to a blameless man; even his fields would be blessed by not having rocks ahead of the plow, or vermin to eat the blossoms. You'd live in constant peace to a ripe old age, leaving behind a legacy of children to carry on your blessings. In other words, God is bound by His law to bless you.

**Not true!** And Job is the illustration that it is not true. Instead of charging Job with sin, Eliphaz ought to have been charged with his own shallowness. He was more interested in proving his theology true than in ministering to his friend.

There's nothing worse than shallow, empty counsel that is based on either a wrong view of God or a misapplication of God's Word. Your own limited social experiences, and even your spiritual experiences, must be subordinated to God's Word if you hope to ever be of any help to others.

God is not bound by His law to bless you. That is, He is not bound to bless you *materially* and *physically*. Job's own words are more accurate when, in 2:10 he says,

Job 2:10 "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"

He **is** bound to bless you spiritually... And that is why He allows you to be buffeted.

## #2 Job Is Right In Asserting That God Is Bound By His Love To Buffet You (Chapters 6 & 7)

"Buffet" or "buffeting" are words that summarize your suffering under the watchful care of your loving heavenly Father. It is suffering for your good, for His glory, by His grace – and every saint worth his or her spiritual salt will experience buffetings.

Job answers Eliphaz in chapter six. He *defends* his complaining, *despairs* of his suffering, and shares his *disappointment* with his friends.

### ▶▶ Job defends his complaining:

Job 6:1 Then Job answered and said:

Job 6:2 "Oh, that my grief were fully weighed, And my calamity laid with it on the scales!

Job 6:3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea; Therefore my words have been rash.

Job 6:4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; My spirit drinks in their poison; The terrors of God are arrayed against me.

Job 6:5 Does the wild donkey bray when it has grass, Or does the ox low over its fodder?

Job 6:6 Can flavorless food be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?

Job 6:7 My soul refuses to touch them; They are as loathsome food to me.

He complained because of the heaviness of his trials. A wild donkey doesn't bray and an ox doesn't low when they have food; Job would not have complained if his situation hadn't warranted it. Just as food needed salt, and egg whites flavoring, so Job's suffering and his complaining went together and should be excused.

Whether his complaining should be excused or not, I can't say; but it should have been expected. Give people room to complain when they're suffering.

►► Job despairs of his suffering:

Job 6:8 "Oh, that I might have my request, That God would grant me the thing that I long for!

Job 6:9 That it would please God to crush me, That He would loose His hand and cut me off!

Job 6:10 Then I would still have comfort; Though in anguish, I would exult, He will not spare; For I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.

Job 6:11 "What strength do I have, that I should hope? And what is my end, that I should prolong my life?

Job 6:12 Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh bronze?

Job 6:13 Is my help not within me? And is success driven from me?

Job hoped for death, knowing that death would free him of suffering. Hoping for death is not the same as contemplating suicide. He wanted to be "loosed," a word meaning to be set free. His one comfort had been that he was innocent; now his friends were trying to convince him he was guilty. They spoke to him as if he had the strength of stones or bronze – not considering the effect chronic suffering can have. Their counsel was that he could help himself by repenting – yet this left him hopeless, since he had nothing to repent of.

►► Job's disappointment with his friends:

Job 6:14 "To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend, Even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

Here is a good principle to adopt when dealing with those who are afflicted: Show kindness regardless their complaining. God does the same for you!

Job 6:15 My brothers have dealt deceitfully like a brook, Like the streams of the brooks that pass away,  
Job 6:16 Which are dark because of the ice, And into which the snow vanishes.  
Job 6:17 When it is warm, they cease to flow; When it is hot, they vanish from their place.  
Job 6:18 The paths of their way turn aside, They go nowhere and perish.  
Job 6:19 The caravans of Tema look, The travelers of Sheba hope for them.  
Job 6:20 They are disappointed because they were confident; They come there and are confused.  
Job 6:21 For now you are nothing, You see terror and are afraid.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were afraid to admit that a blameless man could be buffeted. *Why? Because it meant they might have to endure suffering one day!* Their view of God was not big enough to believe that His grace could sustain them in an hour of great trial.

Job 6:22 Did I ever say, 'Bring something to me'? Or, 'Offer a bribe for me from your wealth'?  
Job 6:23 Or, 'Deliver me from the enemy's hand'? Or, 'Redeem me from the hand of oppressors'.  
Job 6:24 "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred.  
Job 6:25 How forceful are right words! But what does your arguing prove?  
Job 6:26 Do you intend to rebuke my words, And the speeches of a desperate one, which are as wind?  
Job 6:27 Yes, you overwhelm the fatherless, And you undermine your friend.  
Job 6:28 Now therefore, be pleased to look at me; For I would never lie to your face.  
Job 6:29 Yield now, let there be no injustice! Yes, concede, my righteousness still stands!  
Job 6:30 Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my taste discern the unsavory?

Job was open to their counsel, but found their words *wounding* rather than *wonderful*. He wouldn't have minded honest words, even though they be painful; but these words were hopeless. He was righteous, yet suffering; blameless, yet buffeted.

### Job turns toward heaven in chapter seven:

Job 7:1 "Is there not a time of hard service for man on earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hired man?  
Job 7:2 Like a servant who earnestly desires the shade, And like a hired man who eagerly looks for his wages,  
Job 7:3 So I have been allotted months of futility, And wearisome nights have been appointed to me.  
Job 7:4 When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise, And the night be ended?' For I have had my fill of tossing till dawn.  
Job 7:5 My flesh is caked with worms and dust, My skin is cracked and breaks out afresh.

Life is hard, says Job. Walking with God is like being a soldier, a servant, or a slave. In his case, he's a soldier on the front lines, a servant assigned to hard labor, a slave who works without any comfort or relief.

Job 7:6 "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, And are spent without hope.

Job 7:7 Oh, remember that my life is a breath! My eye will never again see good.

Job 7:8 The eye of him who sees me will see me no more; While your eyes are upon me, I shall no longer be.

Job 7:9 As the cloud disappears and vanishes away, So he who goes down to the grave does not come up.

Job 7:10 He shall never return to his house, Nor shall his place know him anymore.

Job was overwhelmed by the brevity of life, and evidently felt as if his was being wasted. He was, in a sense, disagreeing with God's management of his life.

Job 7:11 "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

Job 7:12 Am I a sea, or a sea serpent, That You set a guard over me?

Job 7:13 When I say, 'My bed will comfort me, My couch will ease my complaint,'

Job 7:14 Then You scare me with dreams And terrify me with visions,

Job 7:15 So that my soul chooses strangling And death rather than my body.

Job 7:16 I loathe my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone, For my days are but a breath.

Job knew that God was allowing his distress, and allowing it to continue. He reacted the way we normally react – by complaining to God! Remember, though: In Job's case, he knew nothing of what was happening behind the scenes. We have so much more revealed to us than Job did.

What Job says in the next three verses is really profound:

Job 7:17 "What is man, that You should magnify t him, That You should set Your heart on him,

Job 7:18 That You should visit him every morning, And test him every moment?"

Job 7:19 How long? Will You not look away from me, And let me alone till I swallow my saliva?

Even though it is a complaint, Job recognizes that God has you under His magnifying glass from morning till evening. He doesn't look away from you long enough for you to even swallow your spit without His noticing! When He visits you with suffering, it is not to harm you: On the contrary, He has His heart set on you! He is testing you – a word used of testing precious metals to prove their worth.

Job 7:20 Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, So that I am a burden to myself?

Job 7:21 Why then do You not pardon my transgression, And take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust, And You will seek me diligently, But I will no longer be."

Perhaps there was some "secret" or hidden sin, unknown even to Job himself. If so, he was open to having it exposed so that it could be forgiven by God's grace. Job knew that part of what his friends had said was true. God can bring hardship into our lives as a rebuke for our sin. God does punish sin. But in his case there was nothing to be punished for. He was suffering for the glory of God, to prove God is worthy to be worshipped apart from the blessings He bestows.

Job may not have known it, but he was teaching future generations of believers that God is bound by His love to buffet them. God has you under His magnifying glass from morning till evening. He doesn't look away from you long enough for you to even swallow your spit without His noticing! When He visits you with suffering, it is not to harm you: On the contrary, He has His heart set on you! He is testing you – a word used of testing precious metals to prove their worth.

### Conclusion

Too often we agree with the theology of Job's friends. We believe God blesses the blameless, and that He buffets the bad.

He also buffets the blameless for their good, for His glory, and by His grace.

Remember that when God visits you with suffering... And when you visit those whom God has visited with suffering.