

...Therefore Am I Troubled at His Presence ~

Job 22:1 – 23:17

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~ Our Spiritual Safari is considering a true war of words between Job and his three so-called friends – Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar; and their battle of condescension and denigration reveals intensely deep division. These three acquaintances are discovering they really don't know each other at all. They continue to provoke Job into admitting some sin that doesn't exist; because they want to stone him to death with the crowd watching — right there in the landfill garbage dump in an ancient city named Uz — where Job is scraping his open sores with a piece of broken pottery. Job is struggling very hard to maintain his dignity and integrity as we enter the twenty-second chapter of this dreadfully wearisome dialogue.

This report encompasses round three of this discourse — with Eliphaz speaking again — and Job's third response to him. It has become painful to read and watch what these men are saying. I doubt any of them are listening to the other; because they are too busy thinking about what they want to say next. Remember, Eliphaz is the spiritualist who has had weird, strange and spooky visions in the night. He told us all about an obvious hallucination in chapter four – but it was just an empty and meaningless dream. I personally doubt he ever really had the dream. If someone told me that story today, I would question if they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It seems Eliphaz was up all night with an excruciating, hair-raising experience — only to realize the triteness of his statements and clunky clichés that he has pawned off as deep wisdom are merely puerile and jejune common knowledge. If you haven't been with us since safari report number one, I suggest you go all the way back and start there.

To be fair, we have seen the discourse of a truly intellectual battle; and some of the things that have been said so far have been very good – except they have not been applicable to Job — who is suffering immensely. I know the intellectual forum is not appealing today. The average attention span is less than thirty seconds. Today's college debate teams are few and far between; and they draw even less people to observe the proceedings.

Today, we build ever-bigger football, basketball – and every other kind of sport stadiums and arena we can imagine and design. We demolish small venues to build much larger stadiums. They are typically hundred-million-dollar projects located in bankrupt cities — in poverty-stricken neighborhoods — and some cities have multiple such sites; but people don't seem to be interested in anything except brute strength and physical force.

No, friends, people today aren't interested in intellectual academics; and they're even less interested in the spiritual side of life from the Word of God being taught properly, correctly and completely in an educated, systematic, sincere and competent manner — because this is true wisdom — and the natural man does not desire wisdom, although he insists that he does. Well, the intellectual battle we're witnessing in the Book of Job is Scriptural spiritual warfare. This is where each and every one of us are fighting today; but most people are woefully defeated — and so abjectly morally bankrupt — that they can't stand any longer. I see myriad defeated Christians that I have to step over the spiritually dead bodies of just to move around in Christian circles.

Modern Christians seem to have some dim awareness of fighting a spiritual battle; but they can't join in standing with me for Christ because they are totally and completely ignorant of the Word of God. They fold up at the first sign of trouble. If everything isn't "love, love, love" they simply do not know how to react appropriately; and that's when the insults start flying. Well, that's *EXACTLY* what is happening here with Job and his three friends at the time in which we are studying. There is nothing new under the sun, my beloved....

XXII

¹ Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

² Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?

³ Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?

⁴ Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? will he enter with thee into judgment?

⁵ Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?

~ The very nature of the questions reveal man *CANNOT* be profitable to God. These are truly wonderful questions and, strangely, Job has the same point of view Eliphaz does. Many church members today seem to think God could never live without them. There are some church members who give me the impression they make such a contribution to God down here that they are going to complete the fulness of God's Heaven when they get up there. They unwittingly assert the Lord is lucky to be on their "team." They'll tell you God should be honored they chose Jesus. Well, friends, I hate to tell you this, but a man isn't profitable to God – not even a little bit. God says, "... they are ALL unprofitable." Frankly, we're all just a bunch of spoiled fruit. That's the final conclusion God has about all of us – whether you understand it, agree with it, accept it, like it — or not.

While some of the things these men are saying is correct, they have altogether misdiagnosed Job's malignant spiritual disease; and they have no clue what a remedy for him might be. So, they are utterly incapable of bringing the help they should have brought to Job. Now, I recognize most people reject my teaching – and they generally don't like me, personally, either – and that's fine; because they probably stopped reading a long time ago. They sure do not support this ministry of sound doctrine through Scriptural teaching. But it isn't me they despise — because this isn't about me. All I am doing is passing along what the Word of God teaches. They do not desire Christ, you see. I am not here to make friends and influence people because, if I were, I would use a totally different tact....

⁶ For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing.

7 Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.

8 But as for the mighty man, he had the earth; and the honourable man dwelt in it.

9 Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.

10 Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee;

11 Or darkness, that thou canst not see; and abundance of waters cover thee.

12 Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!

13 And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud?

14 Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.

15 Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden?

16 Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood:

17 Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?

18 Yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

19 The righteous see it, and are glad: and the innocent laugh them to scorn.

20 Whereas our substance is not cut down, but the remnant of them the fire consumeth.

21 Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.

22 Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart.

23 If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles.

24 Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks.

25 Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver.

26 For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God.

27 Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows.

28 Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways.

29 When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person.

30 He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.

~ The gist of Eliphaz's argument was that, because Job thought God might derive some benefit from him, it is as if God was restraining Job so that Job didn't become too strong for God. Eliphaz accuses Job of assuming that Job would become too powerful for God to control. So, Eliphaz basically says,

"... I might as well just tell you what you're guilty of and what your problems are, Job." Then, Eliphaz goes on to allege Job has been unfair in business and cheated in his dealings with others and all of that. Of course, we know none of this is true, and it is all just wild, hurtful meanness of spirit by Eliphaz. That's when a little thing called gossip always begins — and it happens every time this way — even today.

Whenever gossip begins, it puts men and women on the defensive; and, instead of glorifying God, they defend themselves. Eliphaz asserts there *MUST* be something wrong with Job; and if there is nothing wrong with Job, then there must be something terribly wrong with God — and blaming God is always the alternative! Turn all that over in your minds a few times, dear readers, because this is all important to learning the Bible.

Everything Eliphaz has just said rests upon a flawed premise; one that declares Job to be hiding some secret sin in his life. Eliphaz says that no one knows about Job's sin, and that is why God has brought judgment upon Job. Eliphaz also says Job cannot see or understand God, but God sees and understands Job. That's not helpful to a man in Job's sad state. Eliphaz hasn't said anything new or helpful since his original argument; and everything he professes as wisdom rests on some spiritual experience, dream, vision of special revelation he has received from God — and no one else understands what he does, of course — which is absurd.

It is interesting, in verse twenty-one, that Eliphaz gives Job a genuine Gospel invitation. Unfortunately, Job didn't need that — because Job was already in a right relationship to God. Here is the Gospel in the Old Testament; but, Eliphaz is simply being profane and completely obnoxious with it. Many people today accuse others of needing to turn to Christ when the accused is probably closer to Christ than the accuser. That is a very real and common problem in our modern-day Christian circles, friends. These men cannot stop harping on Job to deal with some non-existent secret sin in his life. Sound familiar?

Eliphaz assumes God is Job's enemy because Job will not confess said non-existent secret sin. That is still one of the biggest deterrents today to preaching the Gospel correctly, too. We know men are sinners — and that

should be made very clear — however, God is *NOT* at enmity against this world. God has no reason to be angry at this world. It's all His, anyways. The Gospel makes it clear God is reconciled to the world. We don't have to do anything to reconcile God – Christ did that for us, and reconciliation is complete. God has His loving arms outstretched to a lost and dying world. The only nuance is that we *MUST* come to God His way – through the One Who said He is the way, the truth, and the life — or we cannot approach God in any capacity. When we do things God's way, we are brought into the presence of God with great welcome, abundance and boldness....

XXIII

¹ Then Job answered and said,

² Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.

³ Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!

⁴ I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.

⁵ I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.

⁶ Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.

⁷ There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.

⁸ Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him:

⁹ On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him:

10 But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

11 My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

13 But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

14 For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.

15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him.

16 For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me:

17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.

~ This is where we begin to see the chink in Job's armor. That deficiency will become glaring and apparent in a just a few more short chapters. These so-called friends are sensing it, too. Just because God has called Job perfect, upright, a man that hates evil and never sinned with his lips, does *NOT* mean God is jumping up and down clicking His heels with joy for Job. Again, I have a feeling that many, if not most, church members – and I use that term because I seriously doubt the salvation of many “church members” – because they seem to rest so heavily on themselves and who they are – believe they are indispensable to God Almighty – El Shaddai. I think not.

Those types of church members are the ones who erroneously believe that, because they are good little Sunday school boys and girls, who have perfect attendance pins – which most do not have, in fact, they usually show up late, but I digress – they think the Lord is just uncontrollably delighted with

them and their life. They usually call themselves missionaries or evangelists. Well, they are so far from reality they cannot even see the shoreline of truth and wisdom. Of course, they totally disagree with me, because they cannot recognize who they are themselves. They cannot even sense their complete dependence upon God and they, honestly, see no need for Him. They never really look to Him and trust Him – although they insist that they do. It's frightening – but I'm just calling it like I see it.

Job, on the plus side, stood in a right relationship with God; and that's why God called him perfect. Job brought the burnt offerings in chapter one; and those sacrifices speak of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even so, Eliphaz asked Job if Job thought God was afraid to deal with him. Apparently, God was not afraid to allow Satan to give Job a rough time. Well, Eliphaz was just being plain mean – and many Christians indulge in the exact same thing – it's called *G-O-S-S-I-P*. See, when all of this happened to Job, it caused the entire land to ask themselves, "*.... I wonder what the sin is in Job's life that is causing Job such awful and terrible problems?*" Naturally, they could not pinpoint Job's problems, so they resorted to guessing. The result was that Eliphaz spun a huge ball of yarn from the tiniest of manufactured hateful projection.

Well, our Spiritual Safari concludes this leg of our expedition with Job continuing to complain bitterly. I don't blame him for that, either. Job's condition is worse than it appears; and it's worse than Job can articulate or express. These three friends are not representing God in any way, shape or form; and they are not helping Job in this time of profound trouble, either.

So, Job has answered their outright blaspheme and heresy for the seventh time; and he is now feeling a true longing to come into the presence of God – but he still cannot find the way. Job wishes he knew where he might find the Savior – and he has a desire to hear from God – but it is all so elusive. It would have been nice if these "*friends*" had known how to convey hope from the throne of grace instead of continuing with pious and hypocritical insults. Well, many of the truths in the Word of God cannot really even be learned by studying the Bible; no, many of them have to be learned from life-experience and God's judgment. I can promise you dear readers that I write from both; I certainly don't guess at the judgment of God, friends –

you can just write that down. Job doesn't need more judgment; he's already there.

Unfortunately, Job still thinks he can go into the presence of God and defend himself. He thinks he has a pretty good case to present to the Lord. Well, we don't defend ourselves in God's presence, friends – we just plead guilty – because we *ARE* guilty; irrespective of how good you think you are.

As we move forward in our safari, Job is going to figure this all out; and he will change his doctrine completely. Right now, though, Job is running down every spiritual rabbit trail that comes to mind; but he didn't find God like that — because we can't find God like that. Frustration is the only fruit on that road. God is right next to us – very near – closer than our breath. Job is now discovering that God is using all of the problems in his life for a very definite purpose. Have you discovered that troubles in your own heart and life have been used to strengthen you? Does that give you a moral character that you never had before; and does it make you honestly desire to find God – to be closer to Him? God never promised us we would miss the storms of life; what He did promise is that we would make the harbor! Any man that has it in his heart to honestly find God is going to find God; I can promise you that. But I do issue this warning: it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the true and living God ~

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