

DON'T REBUKE THE DOWNTRODDEN! (Scripture - Job: 4:12-17)

Introduction:

Job:4:1,2. **1**Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:
2"If someone ventures a word with you, will you be impatient?
But who can keep from speaking?"

Eliphaz starts the conversation. He meant this way, "Will you be irritated if I say something? I cannot keep quiet always. I am compelled to speak?"

Then he begins with a great complement! It is a good strategy. Before you bring any negative comments, try to bring at least four or five positive comments before you say anything negative.

Job:4:3,4. **3**Think how you have instructed many,
how you have strengthened feeble hands.
4Your words have supported those who stumbled;
you have strengthened faltering knees.

Let us see some of Job's positive side according to Eliphaz.

Job lifted up downtrodden people with his words of comfort. His words had supported those who stumbled, and he had strengthened people who could not stand up emotionally because their knees were buckling. Job's words must have been very powerful! But now he was not exercising similar trust in God in his own situation?

Basically, Eliphaz was saying, physician heal thyself! Practice what you preach!

Job. 4:5,6. **5**But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged;
it strikes you, and you are dismayed.
6Should not your piety be your confidence
and your blameless ways your hope?

Eliphaz started very positive, but now he starts attacking Job personally. When we counsel a downtrodden person, it must be a time of comfort, and we must breathe hope in that hopeless situation and strengthen that person. Basically, Eliphaz asks where is your faith? Job, you are discouraged, and dismayed when you are in trouble. You are allowing your suffering to discourage yourself. Why Job?

But Eliphaz forgot one important point. He took everyone's suffering as same. Eliphaz felt that Job lacked faith. He was essentially saying, Job, if you were truly good and blameless, you would have more confidence and hope in God?

Accusatory God talk will only aggravate the pain for the sufferer. We may speak God's Word, but at the wrong time, or in the wrong situations, as we will see in future chapters.

But Job's suffering was indeed out of this world. He lost all his wealth, and all his 10 children and grandchildren on the same day. On top of that, he contracted a deadly disease of boil all over his body. Also, these things happened to a righteous person! Now Job wanted to know if God was

angry with him? You may be thinking that you may be going through some hardship. Think about Job's situation?

Job: 4:7"Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished?
Where were the upright ever destroyed?"

Has any innocent person ever perished? This is the question Eliphaz had in his mind from the beginning, and he was waiting for the opportunity to ask Job. That is why he said in the beginning who can keep from speaking! He had to ask that question.

Eliphaz spills out the good old Jewish theology! God rewards the righteous people and punish the wicked. The righteous will always enjoy prosperity of wealth, health, large family, peace, and joy always. Our modern evangelists also preach the same old prosperity theology. But Jesus did not care to be rich. As a matter of fact, he warns about rich people that their heart may focus not on God but on the worldly material. Paul was not prosperous materially and health wise. He had no family of his own. Yet he suffered a great deal. Jeremiah suffered so much. Bible says that we may have to take up the cross and follow Christ. Mary, mother of Jesus was not very prosperous materially. It is dangerous to judge someone's spirituality through sheer wealth and health!

The next passage is a well-known fact.

Job: 4:8-11. **8**As I have observed, those who plow evil
and those who sow trouble reap it.
9At the breath of God they perish.
at the blast of his anger they are no more.
10The lions may roar and growl,
yet the teeth of the great lions are broken.
11The lion perishes for lack of prey,
and the cubs of the lioness are scattered.

The whole Bible teaches about the judgement for the wicked in this life as well as next life. The wicked may not experience that punishment in this life, but they are sure to reap their punishment from God after death! Here, indirectly Job is compared with a proud lion that lost its teeth, and it's off springs! Eliphaz insists that bad things will happen to only bad people. In general, it may be true, but not always. Bad things can happen to good people too! We have lot of examples; Jesus is our prime example!

Now Eliphaz brings his personal testimony.

The following passage is very interesting.

We read this passage together.

Job:4:12-16. **12**"A word was secretly brought to me,
my ears caught a whisper of it.
13Amid disquieting dreams in the night,
when deep sleep falls on people,
14fear and trembling seized me
and made all my bones shake.
15A spirit glided past my face,

and the hair on my body stood on end.
16It stopped,
but I could not tell what it was.
A form stood before my eyes,
and I heard a hushed voice:

We are not sure if this supernatural experience happened in a dream or vision for Eliphaz. First his ears caught a whisper!

I had similar experience also. I had finished my college, and at that time I was lead to the Lord. I grew in the Lord rapidly and I had deep desire to study the Word of God real deep. I had gotten admission in a southern Baptist seminary, but I was not sure if I should study in a seminary setting or do a personal study while pursuing a business career. I was very much in turmoil. I really wanted God to speak to me. I went to bed with deep prayer and I begged God to speak to me clearly. That early morning, I heard a whisper. It was a whisper, but it was very authoritative. I heard it as Timothy 2, Timothy 2, Timothy 2. No. It was not a mistake. I did not hear it as second Timothy, nor did I hear it as two Timothy, but I heard it as Timothy 2. When I read that book, it was all about studying the Word really good, and proclaiming the Word in all seasons, enduring suffering! I obeyed that call boldly, and sure enough God has been blessing me ever since that calling. A little whisper of God can take us a long way!

But here Eliphaz claims that he not only heard the whisper, but he saw a spirit gliding past his face also, which made his hair stand straight, and made him fear and tremble!

There is no need to doubt Eliphaz at all because the words the spirit spoke aligns with the truth of Word of God!

Job. 4:17 17'Can a mortal be more righteous than God?
Can even a strong man be more pure than his Maker? (KJV, NIV, AND NKJV)

Job. 4:17 NASB. 17'Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? NASB tries to correct the theological problem in the real translation by paraphrasing that verse, but it totally changes the real textual meaning. You should just take it as one possible interpretation.

In the whole book of Job, the charge brought against Job by his friends was that he made God unrighteous, not that Job claimed to be more righteous than God as this text seems to imply.

But what was the purpose of Eliphaz to bring this vision to Job?

To show off to Job that he is very close to God, and God speaks to him through visions and dreams, and therefore, Job should listen to him?

Or was he trying to tell Job that Job tries to pretend that he is more righteous than God?

Or did he try to implicate that Job was a self-righteous person? It is tough to connect this context, and it is hard to understand the real meaning behind this vision.

In any case, this vision brings Christian perspective. We are all sinners and have fallen short of glory. No one is righteous, no, not one!

Jesus also reiterates this fact. We can be as good as our Teacher. Not better than Him! Just as He is, we shall be! (1 John)

What would we do in our own context? If it is a Christian friend suffering, the holy communion would bring confession, repentance, and reconciliation in no time. There is no need to go on a judgmental journey. We could just encourage everyone to examine himself or herself and confess before God all our sins, the sins we knowingly commit, and the sins that are committed unknowingly. Holy communion is the best nonjudgmental way of bringing people to reconcile with God and restore their relationship!

But we will see, Eliphaz and his friends will go on and on in trying to prove that Job was a sinner! Horrible approach to counseling!

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