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**Day 255 - September 12**

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**The Exiled Nation (585-535 BCE)**  
***Job and the Problem of Suffering***

**Readings: *Job 15:1-17:16***

***Reflections:***

- Eliphaz returns for another round with Job. In this next series of discourses, the intensity starts to heat up as Job's friends become increasingly pointed and heated in confronting what they perceive as Job's pride and arrogance. Again we see a pattern of human wisdom tending to turn everything into a black and white religious approach to God and the result is that people who are really struggling and suffering end up experiencing more pain as they are constantly attacked and put down.
- Eliphaz's first point is that Job refusing to accept that his sin is the cause of his own pain is undermining other people being truly devoted to God. "But you even undermine piety and hinder devotion to God." People who live with a judgmental, legalistic, mechanical approach to God see those that live by grace or seek grace as undermining their community approach to being righteous. The law must be enforced or people will dive into sin and not truly seek God. Their belief is that sinful hearts must be attacked with harsh condemnation of sin and hyper-personal responsibility or people will languish in their sinful self-centeredness. They can't imagine how grace can actually call people out of self-centeredness and lead them into true humble dependence on God.
- Eliphaz again appeals to the historic and popular beliefs about God and rejects Job's vision for a different answer before God. Job's desire for a clear answer from God calls to the future rather than simply resting on past conclusions. In a sense we can see Job's unanswered questions pointing to Christ. If he accepted the popular notions of God, he would offer us nothing worth considering. Yet, in the story of what doesn't work, Job's unanswered questions prepare us for God's ultimate answer in Jesus.
- In Job 14:14-16, Job again refers to the fall of angels, "If God places no trust in his holy ones, if even the heavens are not pure in his eyes..." Again we see that Eliphaz has some form of spiritual connection with a being that has influenced his thinking.
- Eliphaz then raises his attack against Job's claim of innocence: "All his days the wicked man suffers torment..." In essence, "JOB, YOU ARE WICKED!" Job's desire to have an answer from God is viewed as shaking his fist at God and bringing false charges against God. Eliphaz declares that this kind of arrogant pride will experience terrible judgment and if it gives birth, it will only foster further deceit. "They conceive trouble and give birth to evil, their

womb fashions deceit.” Eliphaz in this final verse returns to his opening complaint against Job: Job you have a negative influence on other people by your unwillingness to own that this is all your fault. In other words, the legacy Job will leave because he refuses to repent is a legacy of inspiring others to evil and lies. Great encouragement for Job in his suffering.

- Job nails it: “...miserable comforters are you all! Will your long-winded speeches never end?” From his experience of suffering, Job declares what people truly need to offer those in pain, “But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief.” Yet, Job can’t comfort himself. He can’t be the sole source of his own encouragement as his pain is a terrible constant.
- Job turns his entire attention to God and again states that his suffering is the direct result of God making him a target. In a very real way, according to this parable, Job is accurate. It is very fair for him to say that he was made a target based on the opening sequence of this story. Job declares the way his suffering has brought him to humility, and “yet my hands have been free of violence and my prayer is pure.” Job maintains that he has lived justly and his heart remains fully devoted to God.
- Job then makes a statement that is striking: “O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest! Even now my witness is in heaven, my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.” First, we see that innocent blood that is shed cannot be silenced. It remains as a lasting testimony. This image will obviously take on significant meaning with the death of Jesus and what Jesus describes as the new covenant in his blood. Second, we see that Job has a vision of God as his advocate rather than judge. In fact, Job envisions someone defending him before God as his friend. Job has a relational view of God and in his sense of right standing with God believes that truth and justice will win out. Even though all of his friends attack him and abandon him, he will still have an advocate in God’s presence. Here again we see the door is left wide open for the revelation of Jesus, our advocate. “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2)
- Job then again acknowledges that his life is almost over and even though he is left in isolation, his heart is not set on treating his friends badly, “If a man denounces his friends for reward, the eyes of his children will fail.” In other words, if a man rejects his friends, even for personal gain, his children (his legacy) will be blind and useless. He has lost his vision for the future. This statement really turns what Eliphaz was saying on its head. Eliphaz was declaring that Job was corrupting the next generation of God-worshippers by his refusal to accept this suffering as the consequences of his personal sin. Job declares back that those that abandon their friends will corrupt the future generation with spiritual blindness and the inability to discern the truth.
- Yet, Job is not swayed from his position. “Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger.” Those who are right before God know it

deep down inside. They can't be shaken from that conviction. On top of that, in fact they grow stronger in their conviction even as they experience difficulty. We see this modeled over and over with Paul. No matter how much persecution he experienced, his conviction before God remained unshakable. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-39)

- Job concludes his response to Eliphaz with a challenge to his friends to keep up their attacks. He is strong in spirit and he declares that by confronting them that he will show that "I will not find a wise man among you." Those are fighting words! Even though he has lost everything, he will not sit back and take what they are saying. He seems to be saying sarcastically that they turn the night into day and that the light is near. They are not offering him hope. They are trying to drive him to hopelessness. Job rejects this. If he bonds with the idea of dying, then where is his hope? Obviously not in God. Who will see his hope if he no longer has it? No one will. Will he allow his hope to the grave? Will he be party to all of them going down into the dust? Job declares something profound: If Job gives up, then everyone around him will go down into despair with him. His friend's approach to life will ultimately take them all down into despair. Job must hang on to his hope so that those around him have a chance to come to their senses and not end up in the grave of despair as well. Even as his friends are abandoning Job and attacking him, he is not abandoning them. He is holding on to them and holding on to his convictions in the hope that it will rescue them as well from the lies that blind them.
- What a powerful testimony of enemy love and the power of those who cling to their hope in God. Our love, faith and hope in God can be used to transform the lives of even those who are attacking us and completely disagree with us. "Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." These inner character qualities have the power to sustain us even when faced with the most difficult circumstances. It is God working through us to complete his will.
- Job was being sustained by God in his suffering as testimony to his relationship with God. Satan, who had abandoned his relationship with God in his desire to rise to power, was being confronted by a tiny, frail creature that even in the midst of the worst possible suffering would not abandon his relationship to God. Even though God would slay him, he would trust in God. What a powerful truth to declare in the unfolding story of the meta-narrative!