

Job's Three Friends - Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen explores the dynamics of Job's three friends, highlighting jealousy, misunderstanding, and the trials faced by godly individuals in a religious context.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:15

Topics: "Spiritual Maturity", "Persecution"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the story of Job and his three friends - Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar - who pretended to comfort Job but instead criticized and accused him out of jealousy. He highlights how godly men often face attacks and trials from the devil, friends, and even fellow believers who are envious of their influence and ministry. Poonen emphasizes the difference between being religious and being spiritual, noting that spiritual individuals are often misunderstood and persecuted by those who only know facts about God but not God Himself.

Transcript

When Job's three friends - Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar - heard of his adversity, they came to visit him, saying they wanted to comfort him (Job 2:11). But they didn't actually comfort him at all, when we see the way they spoke to him later on. They only criticised and accused him. All three of them were in fellowship with the devil, the accuser of the brethren.

These three men were jealous of Job, because Job was a godly man and a rich man and everything was going well for him and for his family.

Many believers are jealous of godly men, when they see their influence and ministry - and are often waiting for some calamity to hit them. We know that the devil is eager for some calamity to befall godly people. But there are believers who wait for that too, and who are secretly happy when it happens.

These three men pretended that they were very sorry for Job. They wept when they saw Job and tore their robes and threw dust over their heads. They were really good actors. But secretly they were delighted, because they were jealous of him. These three preachers only knew about God. They didn't know God personally. That's why God couldn't point out any of them to Satan.

Godly men suffer attacks from the devil, sometimes from their wives, sometimes physically, and at times financially too as God takes them through many trials to sanctify them. But perhaps their greatest trials are from their friends and brothers who are jealous of them! Unfortunately there is a lot of this in Christian work, where Christian workers hope that something bad will happen to a more anointed worker, so that that his ministry will be destroyed. When God's blessing and anointing are on a godly man, and someone else is jealous of him, God may allow some physical calamity to come to that man, in order to expose the other person's wicked jealousy. Once the other man's evil has been exposed, God will heal the sickness and restore the godly man to health.

All three of these men could not truly understand why Job suffered as he did. They could only find fault with him. That is because they were religious people like the Pharisees later on, in Jesus' time. There is a difference between a spiritual man and a religious man. Spiritual people have been misunderstood by religious people in every generation. The Bible says that "all who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2Tim.3:12). There are no exceptions to this rule. So, if you don't want to be misunderstood by other people, then don't be godly!

1Corinthians 2:15 says that "a spiritual man cannot be discerned by those who are not spiritual". A godly man is therefore a very lonely man - because very few can understand him. His actions are misunderstood and his words are misunderstood, even by those who know the Scriptures well. Religious people know only facts about God. They don't know God Himself. In the midst of many religious people, one will find only a few who know God Himself. Job was one of those rare individuals. If you are a person who knows God, you will be misunderstood by people who only know about God.

Remember that religious people could not recognise Jesus and thought He was the prince of devils. How can they recognise a godly man today? There were two religious groups in Jesus' time, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were the fundamentalists, and the Sadducees were the liberals. But of these two, the Pharisees opposed Jesus more than the Sadducees. In the same way, today, it won't be the liberals who criticise a godly man as much as the fundamentalists.

But even though a godly man may be a lonely person in this world, God does not forsake him. God allows the trials he faces to give him an education. James says, "We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome or the end of the Lord's dealings that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful" (Jas.5:11). The testimony of every godly man will be: "The Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. Even though I could not understand the difficult ways He led me through, it was to fulfill a glorious purpose in my life, and above all, to glorify God in heaven where the conflict was going on between God and Satan."

In the very first book of the Bible, we see the beginning of the modern "health and wealth gospel". Three preachers there told Job that he had lost his health and his wealth because he had lost the blessing of God. Their message was that the blessing of God always brings prosperity and health. Note that this health and wealth gospel was first preached by people who did not know God. It is the same today. Remember that. Job who lost all his wealth and his health was in the perfect will of God. But the three preachers who preached the "health and wealth" gospel were completely out of the will of God. This is clear from God's words to them: "I am angry with all of you. Ask Job to pray for you, lest I punish you"(Job.42:8).

The book of Job is a great encouragement to us because he faced what we face today.

The three preachers are not a picture of our enemies or even of unbelievers. They are a picture of believers who trouble us, misunderstand us and criticise us. It is always more painful when a believer attacks us and accuses us than when an unbeliever does the same things. In the last 40 years, I have faced a thousand times more criticism from believers than I have faced from unbelievers. That is also the history of every servant of God in the history of the church. Jesus faced more opposition from the Pharisees than from the Greeks and the Romans. Pilate wanted to release Him, but Annas and Caiaphas wanted to kill Him. So don't be surprised when you find your maximum opposition coming from believers who spread false tales about you. They are the followers of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar.

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