



Session 3: First Cycle of Speeches

Introduction

Watch the [video](#), “Why do bad things happen to good people?” by a professor at Southern Seminary. **List circumstances** in life that lead people to ask that question.

Eliphaz’s First Speech

Job 4:1–9, 5:17–27

Literary Background

The bulk of the middle part of the book of Job is comprised of three cycles of speeches. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar take their turn, and Job responds to each of them. Like in many emotional disagreements, each person feeds off the other, and the three cycles progressively go further downhill. You could sum up the three cycles as “okay, worse, and worst.”

Assess the appropriateness of Eliphaz’s basic answer to Job’s question, “Why me, Lord?”:

1. “All the problems of life are not the fault of God. They are the fault of people.”
2. “You need to stop resisting God’s discipline and humble up, because God uses discipline to build people back up.”

Job’s Response

Job 6:14–30

Eliphaz assumed Job needed correct theology. What things did Job really need?

Bildad's First Speech

Job 8:1–7

Bildad doubles-down on Eliphaz's logic. His basic argument is, "God is just and cannot pervert justice. So suffering and evil in this world are the result of sin." **Analyze** the following statements doctrinally:

1. Job is suffering because of sin.
2. Job is suffering because he is sinful.
3. Job is suffering because he did something sinful.

Job's Response

Job 9:1–2, 15–19; 10:1–2, 14–17

Job response could be summed up like this, "I agree that God is just and punishes the wicked for their sin. But show me what I've done wrong! I'm still innocent of all this suffering." Is he right or wrong? **Defend** your answer.

Zophar's First Speech

Job 11:1–12

Zophar doubles-down on Eliphaz's and Bildad's logic. His basic argument is, "If God is just and punishes sin, then Job cannot continue to maintain his innocence before God. Job needs to be confronted, opposed, and called to repentance."

Compare the following passages. What **assumptions** was Zophar making about Job's claims?

1. Narrator: "This man was blameless and upright. He feared God and shunned evil." (1:1)
2. Job: "I am blameless." (9:21)
3. Job: "I am not guilty." (10:7)
4. Zophar: "You mock." (11:3)
5. Zophar: "You say, 'My beliefs are flawless and I am pure.'" (11:4)
6. Zophar: God "recognizes deceitful men." (11:11)

Job's Response

Job 12:1–5, 13:1–5

Job's response could be summed up like this, "Everything that my supposed friends are saying—I know already! Easy for you to say—you're not the ones suffering! Why don't you just stop talking?" As he continues, Job turns his attention away from his supposed friends to God. Is Job defending God or challenging God? **Reconcile** the following passages:

1. "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his." (12:13)
2. "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face." (13:15)
3. "How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin. Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy?" (13:23–24)
4. "If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. ... Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin." (14:14, 17)
5. "You destroy man's hope." (14:19)

Conclusion

Put everything together from this first cycle of speeches. Answer the perennial question both theologically and tactfully, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"