

Today's Quick Word Job 6:8-10

By Bruce Christian

JOB 6:8-10 “Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut me off! Then I would still have this consolation - my joy in unrelenting pain - that I had not denied the words of the Holy One.”

In these desperate words we see the essence, the heart, of Job's integrity and faith. Eliphaz, the first of his three 'friends' to speak, has just spent two chapters (4-5) giving a clear and theologically astute description of one aspect of God's nature and character: God is sovereign, just and faithful; if we acknowledge this and walk in obedience before him we will enjoy his blessing. “Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope?” (4:6). QED. “This is the way it ALWAYS works”, implies the confident, self-assured Eliphaz! Under normal circumstances, Job would have happily and wholeheartedly agreed with Eliphaz's thesis - except that in his present case it just wasn't working out like this. We know (but Job doesn't) that the Accuser [Satan]'s challenge to God was: “But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.” (2:5). Now the pressure is really on. Job knows in his heart that in his present circumstances, for some inexplicable reason, Eliphaz's thesis doesn't fit - his present

suffering, whatever the reason for it, is NOT God's normal response; he KNOWS his own conscience is clear. The case put by Eliphaz demanded repentance and a radical change of ways for Job, 'the sinner', but Job knew this wasn't the appropriate response for him in this circumstance. This was a real 'Catch 22' dilemma for this godly man. If he doesn't follow the 'repentance' option, the only alternative would be for him to turn against the God he believed in, to 'curse him to his face' - just as Satan had predicted! What shows the strength of Job's integrity and the depth of his faith is that he would rather die than cave in under such pressure. Do we sometimes complain about God's providence on far shakier grounds than Job had? Are we willing at times to accept God's seemingly 'out-of-character' providence at the expense of our 'correct' theology in a way of which Eliphaz did not appear to be capable? The Greek word Paul uses in Philippians 4:5, translated in our English versions as 'moderation/forbearance/reasonableness/gentleness', seems to express Job's understanding of this problem. It is the sort of attitude we should have to complex and inexplicable examples of God's providence instead of insisting on being 'right', or 'having all the answers'.