

JOB

Chapter 22

Eliphaz Speaks: Job's Wickedness Is Great

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: 2 “Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself. 3 Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are in the right, or is it gain to him if you make your ways blameless? 4 Is it for your fear of him that he reproves you and enters into judgment with you? 5 Is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities. 6 For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing and stripped the naked of their clothing. 7 You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry. 8 The man with power possessed the land, and the favored man lived in it. 9 You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless were crushed. 10 Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden terror overwhelms you, 11 or darkness, so that you cannot see, and a flood of water covers you. 12 “Is not God high in the heavens? See the highest stars, how lofty they are! 13 But you say, ‘What does God know? Can he judge through the deep darkness? 14 Thick clouds veil him, so that he does not see, and he walks on the vault of heaven.’ 15 Will you keep to the old way that wicked men have trod? 16 They were snatched away before their time; their foundation was washed away. 17 They said to God, ‘Depart from us,’ and ‘What can the Almighty do to us?’ 18 Yet he filled their houses with good things—but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. 19 The righteous see it and are glad; the innocent one mocks at them, 20 saying, ‘Surely our adversaries are cut off, and what they left the fire has consumed.’ 21 “Agree with God, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you. 22 Receive instruction from his mouth, and lay up his words in your heart. 23 If you return to the Almighty you will be built up; if you remove injustice far from your tents, 24 if you lay gold in the dust, and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent-bed, 25 then the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver. 26 For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. 27 You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows. 28 You will decide on a matter, and it will be established for you, and light will shine on your ways. 29 For when they are humbled you say, ‘It is because of pride’; but he saves the lowly. 30 He delivers even the one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands.”

22:1–26:14 The third cycle of speeches, unlike the first (chs. 4–14) and second (chs. 15–21), is truncated and abbreviated. Bildad’s speech is very brief (25:1–6), and Zophar does not speak at all. The dialogue between Job and his friends comes to an end because the friends cannot convince Job of his guilt—Job cannot acknowledge what is not true. (CSB)

22:2–4 Eliphaz’s odd reasoning is as follows: Since all things have their origin in God, man’s giving back what God has given him does not enhance God in any way. Indeed, God is indifferent to man’s goodness, because goodness is expected of him. It is when man becomes wicked that God is aroused (v. 4). (CSB)

Rhetorical questions. Grammar demands a negative answer in vv 2–4. People were created solely because of God’s grace and mercy, not for divine profit. Eliphaz argues that if God should chastise someone, it must not be for a selfish purpose, but because of human sin. (TLSB)

22:2 *profitable*. Can also be translated “useful.” (TLSB)

22:3 *is it gain to him if you make your ways blameless?* Though God does not personally benefit from the blameless deeds of the righteous, He certainly takes pleasure in them (1:8) and uses such deeds to benefit others. Cf Mt 5:14–16. (TLSB)

22:4 *fear*. literally – fear of God. (CSB)

Is it for your fear of Him that He reproves you. With this sarcastic question, Eliphaz makes Job responsible for his own suffering, suggesting that God was punishing Job for his sins. (TLSB)

No one is rebuked for his piety. Therefore the implication was that Job was not pious, but ungodly, for he was suffering so much. (PBC)

22:5–11 In his earlier speeches, Eliphaz was the least caustic and at first even offered consolation (4:6; 5:17). But despite what he said in 4:3–4, Eliphaz now reprimands Job for gross social sins against the needy, who are naked and hungry (vv. 6–7), and against widows and the fatherless (v. 9). The only proof Eliphaz has for Job’s alleged wickedness is his present suffering (vv. 10–11). In ch. 29 Job emphatically denies the kind of behavior of which Eliphaz accuses him. (CSB)

In the original Hebrew the four verbs in verses 6 and 7 (“demanded,” “stripped,” “gave,” and “held”) are all in the tense called the “imperfect.” The use of that tense indicates that those were repeated occurrences in the past. Eliphaz not only accused Job of treating his fellow human beings shabbily, but of doing so regularly. (PBC)

22:5 *Is not your evil abundant?* Grammar demands a positive answer. Observing Job’s sorry condition, Eliphaz concludes that Job must certainly be horribly evil. Yet righteousness or wickedness is not determined by appearances, but solely by God’s gift of faith. Cf Rm 1:16–17. (TLSB)

22:6–11 Accusations have no basis other than Eliphaz’s imagination, as he attempts to think of reasons for Job’s suffering. Against this, Job maintains his innocence (23:7, 11). (TLSB)

22:6 *exacted pledges*. In order to borrow money, people needed to provide a pledge (e.g., cloak or donkey) as collateral. Eliphaz accuses Job of treating his poorer neighbor ruthlessly, perhaps by demanding too much collateral or by foreclosing on the loan early, thereby keeping the collateral. (TLSB)

22:9 *widows ... fatherless*. See 24:3; Isa 1:17 and note (Represented the weak and often oppressed part of society. Rulers were warned not to take advantage of them); Jas 1:27. (CSB)

strength. Lit. “arms” (as in 38:15). (CSB)

22:10 *snare*s. The wicked may get themselves into trouble. (CSB)

22:11 *dark ... flood of water*. Two common figures of trouble and distress. Often taken to be an allusion to the cascading waters of the upper Jordan as they rush down from Mount Hermon. It is more likely, however, that this is a literary allusion to the “waterfalls” by which the waters from God’s storehouse of water above—the “deep” above—pour down into the streams and rivers that empty into the seas—the “deep” below. It pictures the great distress the author suffers, and the imagery is continued in the following reference to God’s “waves and breakers” sweeping over

him. God's hand is involved in the psalmist's suffering, at least to the extent that he has allowed this catastrophe. He seems to the psalmist to have "forgotten" (v. 9)—to have "rejected" (43:2)—him. But he makes no link between this and any sin in his life (see Ps 44; 77).]; Isa 8:7–8, 22; 43:2). (CSB)

22:12–20 Eliphaz finally appears to support the argument of Bildad and Zophar, who were fully convinced that Job was a wicked man. Eliphaz makes a severe accusation: Job follows the path of the ungodly (v. 15), who defy God's power and say, "What can the Almighty do to us?" (v. 17; see vv. 13–14). They even have contempt for God's goodness (v. 18). (CSB)

22:12 *high in the heavens?* Though Scripture speaks of God in this way (Ps 2:4; 113:5–6), it does not mean He is far from us. Such phrases mean that He is present everywhere (e.g., Eph 4:10). (TLSB)

22:13 *but you say.* After accusing Job of sinning against his neighbor (vv 5–9), Eliphaz now accuses him of despising God. (TLSB)

22:14 *clouds veil Him.* Eliphaz puts words into Job's mouth, suggesting that Job acts in unrepentance because he thinks God is unable to see him. (TLSB)

Eliphaz had apparently misconstrued some earlier statements of Job. Job had spoken of God's majestic greatness, but Eliphaz interpreted his remarks to mean that God was ignorant of the affairs of human beings. Eliphaz pictured Job as a deist, one who believes in an impersonal god who does not care about what goes on in this world. As a friend, Eliphaz ought to have known that Job was a godly man who faithfully practiced his religion. (PBC)

vault of heaven. Firmament or "expanse" (see note, Gn 1:6). Eliphaz refers to this as the place where God walks. (TLSB)

22:15 *Will you keep to the old way.* Eliphaz's call to repentance for the wickedness he supposed Job committed. In Eliphaz's estimation, the only way to cure Job's suffering is for Job to turn and do good. (TLSB)

22:16 *their foundation.* Perhaps refers to the flood (Gn 6–8). Everything the wicked had built their lives on was destroyed in the water of God's judgment. (TLSB)

22:17–20 Here Eliphaz echoes what Job said in 21:14–16, but in the context of his entire speech, Eliphaz applies these words to Job himself. (TLSB)

22:18 See 21:16 and note. (CSB)

Yet He filled their houses with good things. "God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people" (SC, Fourth Petition, p xxxviii). Cf Mt 5:45. (TLSB)

22:20 *what they left the fire has consumed.* Where v 16 possibly alludes to the flood, the reference to fire here evokes the memory of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 19). The things the wicked accumulate as evidence of their power and greatness will at last be destroyed. Scripture also associates the Last Day with destructive fire. Cf Heb 10:27; 2Pt 3:7. (TLSB)

22:21–30 Eliphaz makes one last attempt to reach Job. In many ways it is a commendable call to repentance: Submit to God (v. 21), lay up God’s words in your heart (v. 22), return to the Almighty and forsake wickedness (v. 23), find your delight in God rather than in gold (vv. 24–26), pray and obey (v. 27) and become concerned about sinners (vv. 29–30). But Eliphaz’s advice assumes (1) that Job is a very wicked man and (2) that Job’s major concern is the return of his prosperity (see v. 21). Job had already made it clear in 19:25–27 that he deeply yearned to see God and be his friend. (CSB)

22:21–26 Eliphaz’s call to repentance contains many good points. What he says about God is often correct. Sinners must not only recognize their sin (v 21) but also hear and believe the Word (v 22). Acts that show love for God rather than for money are also part of repentance. The problem is that Eliphaz’s exhortation is completely irrelevant in Job’s case. Eliphaz fails to recognize that Job is already repentant (19:25–27) and that Job’s suffering has nothing to do with unrepentant sin or divine punishment (1:6–12). (TLSB)

22:21 *Agree with God.* Eliphaz argues that Job must first admit his accusations (22:6–10, 13–14) are true before God will relieve his suffering. (TLSB)

The Hebrew word translated “submit” suggests that Job place himself in God’s service and make himself useful to him. Eliphaz’s words subtly imply that Job has not served God even though God himself had commended Job as his servant. (PBC)

22:23 *return.* From Hbr *shub*; common term for repentance. (TLSB)

Eliphaz was right in urging Job to turn to God. Job needed to do so, just as Eliphaz, you, and I, and all people need to repent. Like all of us, Job also needed to turn to God in prayer. There is much truth in Eliphaz’s words in the opening verses of this section (verses 21-30). And yet his words have a hollow ring. They reveal a lack of true sympathy for his friend. Worse yet, some of his words subtly suggests that Job many have gained his wealth from unjust practices (verse 23 and 24). (PBC)

22:24 *gold of Ophir.* Known for its fine gold. Cf Ps 45:9. Exact location unknown. Solomon later received 420 talents of gold from Ophir (cf 1Ki 9:26–28). (TLSB)

In this and the next verse gold is mentioned three times and silver once. These verses might suggest that Eliphaz’s name, which means “my God is gold,” was indeed appropriate. It seems as if he liked to talk about it. However, it would be more charitable to interpret his name to mean “God is his treasure” than to mean his treasure is his god. (PBC)

stones of the torrent-bed. Stones from the creek bottom. Eliphaz wants Job to throw away all of his riches. (TLSB)

22:27 *pay your vows.* Voluntary expression of love for God, often a special sacrifice offered to God. Other vows could also be taken. Cf Nu 6:1–21. Once undertaken, a vow could not be broken. (TLSB)

22:28 *light will shine on your ways.* Through obedience to the word of God (see vv. 22, 27; 29:3; Ps 119:105). (CSB)

Eliphaz assumes that when people repent of their sin, everything automatically improves and goes well for them. Job is living proof that this is not so. (TLSB)

22:29 *they*. This pronoun could refer to “your ways” (v 28) or to “the lowly” (v 29) because of the parallelism of the poetry. The latter best fits the sense of the passage. (TLSB)

It is because of pride. See ESV note. Translation is difficult. Expression of encouragement may be intended, as we say, “Take pride.” (TLSB)

the lowly. Hbr expression unique to Job; lit, “one lowly of eyes,” a person who looks downward in humility. (TLSB)

22:30 *cleanness of your hands*. Right attitudes and motives. (CSB)

Intercessory prayer by a believer, similar to Abraham’s prayer for Sodom. Cf Gn 18:22–33. See Jesus’ words to Peter: “When you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22:32). (TLSB)

Ironically Eliphaz’s statement in verse 30 was fulfilled in that incident, and he himself was one of the “ungodly” whom God delivered through Job’s prayer. (PBC)

Ch 22 Eliphaz’s speech calls Job to repentance, and as such, this chapter is profitable for meditating on one’s own sin and the need for God’s deliverance. Putting ourselves in Job’s place for a moment, who can argue with Eliphaz when he accuses us of failing to love both neighbor (vv 5–9) and God (vv 12–14) alike? Surely Eliphaz is also correct when he declares that God will listen to our repentant prayers (v 27)! Yet the sufferings Job bears are not because of his sin, as Eliphaz assumes. The Lord humbles him in order to exalt him. This is truly the way of the cross. See p 837. • O Lord, in all circumstances, grant us sincere repentance, delight us in Your ways, and lift our faces to behold You. Amen. (TLSB)