

JOB

Chapter 15

Eliphaz Accuses: Job Does Not Fear God

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: 2 “Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? 3 Should he argue in unprofitable talk, or in words with which he can do no good? 4 But you are doing away with the fear of God and hindering meditation before God. 5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty. 6 Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you. 7 “Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills? 8 Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself? 9 What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not clear to us? 10 Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us, older than your father. 11 Are the comforts of God too small for you, or the word that deals gently with you? 12 Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash, 13 that you turn your spirit against God and bring such words out of your mouth? 14 What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous? 15 Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight; 16 how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks injustice like water! 17 “I will show you; hear me, and what I have seen I will declare 18 (what wise men have told, without hiding it from their fathers, 19 to whom alone the land was given, and no stranger passed among them). 20 The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, through all the years that are laid up for the ruthless. 21 Dreadful sounds are in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer will come upon him. 22 He does not believe that he will return out of darkness, and he is marked for the sword. 23 He wanders abroad for bread, saying, ‘Where is it?’ He knows that a day of darkness is ready at his hand; 24 distress and anguish terrify him; they prevail against him, like a king ready for battle. 25 Because he has stretched out his hand against God and defies the Almighty, 26 running stubbornly against him with a thickly bossed shield; 27 because he has covered his face with his fat and gathered fat upon his waist 28 and has lived in desolate cities, in houses that none should inhabit, which were ready to become heaps of ruins; 29 he will not be rich, and his wealth will not endure, nor will his possessions spread over the earth; 30 he will not depart from darkness; the flame will dry up his shoots, and by the breath of his mouth he will depart. 31 Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself, for emptiness will be his payment. 32 It will be paid in full before his time, and his branch will not be green. 33 He will shake off his unripe grape like the vine, and cast off his blossom like the olive tree. 34 For the company of the godless is barren, and fire consumes the tents of bribery. 35 They conceive trouble and give birth to evil, and their womb prepares deceit.”

15:1–6 Up to this point Eliphaz has been the most sympathetic of the three counselors, but now he has run out of patience with Job and denounces him more severely than before. (CSB)

15:2 *windy*. The Hebrew for this word is translated “long-winded” in 16:3, where Job hurls Eliphaz’s charges back at him. (CSB)

Not empty and unsubstantial, but like the “east wind”—a destructive, scorching wind. Unlike God’s words, Job’s words are not only unprofitable but also destructive. (TLSB)

east wind. See 27:21; 38:24; the sirocco that blows in from the desert. (CSB)

15:4 *fear of God.* Short for the “fear of God” that is equated with wisdom. By casting such wisdom aside, Job diminishes the ability to have meditative prayer. Eliphaz is concerned that Job is destroying his faith. (TLSB)

meditation. Lit, “concern”; what focuses the mind. (TLSB)

15:7–10 Job, says Eliphaz, presumes to be wise enough to sit among the members of God’s council in heaven (see note on 1:6) when in reality he is no wiser than ordinary elders and sages on earth. (CSB)

In a sarcastic manner Eliphaz bombarded Job with six questions, all of which suggest a negative answer. (PBC)

15:8 *council of God?* Eliphaz accuses Job of claiming privileged access to the council of God as if he is the wisest human of all. The “council” is the gathering of the heavenly hosts before God’s throne, as leading officials would gather at the throne room of a king (cf 1:6; 2:1; 1Ki 22:19). (TLSB)

15:10 Age, with its tested experience, was equated with wisdom in ancient times—a truism denied by Elihu (see 32:6–9). (CSB)

Eliphaz appears to be speaking of his generation. He and Job are mature men. The LXX reads that Job lived 170 years after his trial to the age of 240. According to this tradition, Job was 70 when he was sorely afflicted. (TLSB)

15:11–13 Eliphaz chides Job for replying in rage to his friends’ attempts to console him with gentle words, which Eliphaz believes come from God himself (v. 11). But Eliphaz has been guilty of cruel insinuation (ch. 5), and the other two counselors have been even more malicious. Genuine words of comfort for Job have been few indeed (see 4:2–6). (CSB)

15:11 *comforts of God ... word that deals gently.* Eliphaz thinks Job is haughty to reject the consolations of God transmitted “gently” by Eliphaz. Eliphaz thinks his own words are inspired (4:12–16). (TLSB)

15:14–16 See 25:4–6. Eliphaz repeats what he had already said in 4:17–19, perhaps because he thought the earlier words had come to him through divine revelation. (CSB)

15:14 *born of woman.* An echo of Job’s words in 14:1. (CSB)

Cf 4:17–21; 14:1–4, where Job concedes the negative answer. Eliphaz says that if Job admitted mankind’s mortality and frailty in general, he should also concede his own particular wickedness. In this context, it is impossible for a person to be accounted righteous, because humans are morally weak by nature. (TLSB)

15:15 *holy ones.* Even the angels and the heavens are finite and consequently are not absolutely beyond the possibility of sin and contamination. I.e., these superior spirits are still so inferior to God that He does not entrust His secrets to them. (TLSB)

15:16 *drinks up injustice like water.* See Elihu's description of Job in 34:7. (CSB)

Not referring to just Job, but to any human being. Such an absolute standard does not cancel the distinction between good persons and evil. (TLSB)

15:17–26 Eliphaz now bolsters his earlier advice with traditional wisdom: The wicked man (a caricature of Job) can never escape the suffering he deserves. (CSB)

15:18–19 *from their fathers.* Eliphaz tells Job he can trust these words because they come from the wise, whose teaching was reviewed by an earlier generation. The tradition goes back three long generations. (TLSB)

the land ... no stranger. The fathers lived where no foreign influence corrupted their teaching. (TLSB)

15:20–35 A poem on the fate of the wicked (see 8:11–19). Eliphaz's caricature continues with a variety of figures: a belligerent sinner who attacks God (vv. 24–26); a fat, rich wicked man who finally gets what he deserves (vv. 27–32); a grapevine stripped before the fruit is ripe (v. 33a); "an olive tree shedding its blossoms" (v. 33b). As long as Eliphaz rejects Job's insistence that the wicked go on prospering, he does not have to wrestle with the disturbing corollary: the mystery of why the innocent sometimes suffer. (CSB)

15:21 *prosperity.* Hbr *shalom*, "peace." (TLSB)

destroyer will come. Dreading the loss of security, the wicked keep hearing the sound of their impending doom. (TLSB)

15:23, 30 *darkness.* Death, characterized by the journey to the netherworld. (CSB)

15:24 *distress and anguish terrify him.* Inner anguish and distress dominate the life of the wicked; they are forever plagued by an awareness of their doom. Does not contradict v 26; the wicked remain defiant toward God in their terror. (TLSB)

15:26 *thickly bossed shield.* Shield made in a bulging shape; thick embossment forms a hump. Symbolic for the insane stubbornness and hostility the unrepentant display against God; they are thickheaded and thick hearted. (TLSB)

15:27 *covered his face with his fat.* Describes fleshly security against all unrest and pain. The wicked person's fatness is a mark of strength and is also ascribed to the arrogant. It signifies trust in self, instead of in God. (TLSB)

15:30 *he will depart.* The wicked die like plant life stripped of its vitality; they breathe their last breath. (TLSB)

15:32 *branch.* Offspring. *not be green.* Renewal is not possible for this tree because its life is squeezed out of it. (TLSB)

15:33 New growth symbolizes life and fruitfulness. The wicked suffer devastation of their blooms long before the harvest. (TLSB)

15:35 *They conceive trouble and give birth to evil.* Repeated in Isa 59:4 (see note there). Once initiated, sinful thoughts develop quickly into evil acts. (CSB)

“Evil” has the sense of “self-deception, vanity.” People who mischievously plan (or birth) evil for others deceive themselves. (TLSB)

Ch 15 Eliphaz admonishes Job to receive his inspired counsel, since he feels that Job thinks too highly of himself and his own wisdom. Today, we must not assume that someone’s mental, emotional, and/or spiritual agony is the result of unrepentant rebellion; it could very well be that God is refining that person’s faith. Just as the afflictions of Christ overflow into our lives, so also our comfort in Christ overflows; we are being made like our Savior (1Co 1:5; Php 3:10). When we are perplexed in our affliction, may we—through the eyes of faith—see Christ, whose affliction saved us from sin and death! • Lord, may the pains and struggles I experience teach me the wisdom of fearing You, and may Your comforts and gentle words quench the flames of distress. Through the merits of Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)