

JOB

Chapter 5

Call now; is there anyone who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn? 2 Surely vexation kills the fool, and jealousy slays the simple. 3 I have seen the fool taking root, but suddenly I cursed his dwelling. 4 His children are far from safety; they are crushed in the gate, and there is no one to deliver them. 5 The hungry eat his harvest, and he takes it even out of thorns, and the thirsty pant after his wealth. 6 For affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble sprout from the ground, 7 but man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. 8 “As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause, 9 who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number: 10 he gives rain on the earth and sends waters on the fields; 11 he sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. 12 He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success. 13 He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end. 14 They meet with darkness in the daytime and grope at noonday as in the night. 15 But he saves the needy from the sword of their mouth and from the hand of the mighty. 16 So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts her mouth. 17 “Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty. 18 For he wounds, but he binds up; he shatters, but his hands heal. 19 He will deliver you from six troubles; in seven no evil shall touch you. 20 In famine he will redeem you from death, and in war from the power of the sword. 21 You shall be hidden from the lash of the tongue, and shall not fear destruction when it comes. 22 At destruction and famine you shall laugh, and shall not fear the beasts of the earth. 23 For you shall be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you. 24 You shall know that your tent is at peace, and you shall inspect your fold and miss nothing. 25 You shall know also that your offspring shall be many, and your descendants as the grass of the earth. 26 You shall come to your grave in ripe old age, like a sheaf gathered up in its season. 27 Behold, this we have searched out; it is true. Hear, and know it for your good.”

5:1 *To which ... will you turn?* To plead your case with God. The idea of a mediator, someone to arbitrate between God and Job, is an important motif in the book. (CSB)

Eliphaz’s opening statement in this chapter was a cruel challenge to Job. He looked at Job in his misery and concluded from Job’s circumstances that no one would answer him when he called out for help and comfort. Such unsympathetic words must have cut deeply into the heart of Job. (PBC)

holy ones. Holy angels, the “sons of God” in the prologue. (CSB)

Angels that serve the Lord (cf Dt 33:2). No angel could serve as mediator between God and Job. Not even these extremely powerful beings could intercede for him before the Lord. (TLSB)

5:2 Without mentioning him, Eliphaz implies that Job is resentful against God and that harm will follow. (CSB)

fool. One who pays no attention to God. (CSB)

One who denies God and lives a life of self-indulgent wickedness (cf Ps 10; 14). Job was no fool. (TLSB)

vexation. Eliphaz wants to make the general point that a constant state of anger or jealousy destroys a person's health (Pr 14:29–30). Eliphaz warns Job that if he continues in his agitated emotional state, he will suffer the same fate as the “fool” or the “simple,” even though Job was neither. (TLSB)

A Eliphaz again made the point that it's the evildoer who suffers in this world. He called the evildoer a “fool.” That word in this passage means not merely a stupid person but one who rebels against God and therefore lacks true wisdom. While Eliphaz spoke of this “fool” anonymously, it's clear that what he said indirectly pointed to Job. He as much suggested to Job, “If the shoe fits, wear it.” (PBC)

5:3 *A fool taking root*. A wicked man prospering like a tree taking root (see Ps 1:3). (CSB)

Eliphaz described the downfall of a fool. His manner of speaking is pompous and judgmental. While it's true that in many cases the kinds of misfortunes mentioned in these verses have been experienced by the foolish and godless, it's not true in all instances. It was surely not true in the case of Job. Eliphaz was wrong. (PBC)

I cursed his dwelling. The “fool” opposes God, seeks his own welfare, acts aggressively toward his neighbors, and refuses instruction. In contrast to the security of the righteous believer (v 24), the home, business, and family of the “fool” are fleeting. Eliphaz vividly draws the distinction between the fool's eventual outcome and the believer's final disposition. (TLSB)

5:5 *even out of thorns*. Desolation of the fool (the wicked) will be so complete that even the hard-to-reach grains (those that sprouted among thorns and produced little) will be lost to others. (TLSB)

5:6 Unlike a weed, trouble must be sown and cultivated. (CSB)

Eliphaz points out that people reap what they sow; those who reap trouble and loss (as did Job) do so because they did something wrong. In other words, trouble does not just happen—it happens for a reason. (TLSB)

When he concludes what the godless person suffers is a just reward of his own folly he is again misses the point in applying that to Job. (PBC)

5:7 *man is born to trouble*. See 14:1; proof that no one is righteous in the eyes of God (see 4:17–19). Job should stop behaving like a fool (see vv. 1–7) and should humble himself. Then God would bless, and injustice would shut its mouth (see v. 16). (CSB)

sparks. Lit. “sons of Resheph.” In Canaanite mythology, Resheph was a god of plague and destruction. “(Sons of) Resheph” is used as a poetic image in the OT for fire (SS 8:6), bolts of lightning (Ps 78:48) and pestilence (Dt 32:24; Hab 3:5). (CSB)

As surely as sparks from a fire fly upward on the heated air, so people are born to a life of trouble, sorrow, and endless toil. “Sparks” may refer to the Canaanite god Rephesh, associated with fire. (TLSB)

5:8–16 Eliphaz praises God as the One who provides for all people and rescues the poor and downtrodden. By implication, Job should entrust his problems to the Lord and bear his present (temporary) troubles in confidence. (TLSB)

5:8 He continued his prominent references to himself, in effect telling Job, “Now if I were in your place,” etc. What Eliphaz said is indisputably true. Of course Job ought to appeal to God and lay his cause before him. We are left with the feeling that Eliphaz was coldly mouthing pious platitudes without any appreciation or feeling for Job’s condition. He is also guilty of oversimplifying and of assuming that what he said applied to Job. Throughout all of his speeches and those of his friends one important thing was lacking, and that was love – love for their suffering friend. (PBC)

seek God. In contrast to the “fool” who ignores God, Eliphaz turns to God for direction, purpose, and meaning in life. In times of trouble, he advises Job, turn to God for help (as David advises in Ps 37:5). (TLSB)

5:13 God’s wisdom seems foolish to humanity’s sinful nature (Paul’s point when he quotes this verse in 1Co 3:19). All the plans and crafty schemes of wicked people eventually come to nothing because God rules the world with perfect justice. (TLSB)

5:14 Instead of enlightening, human wisdom darkens the mind. Human wisdom leads away from the true light, God, and seeks only its own welfare. This blindness is no accident—it is inspired by Satan and empowered by human will. Cf 2Co 4:4. (TLSB)

5:16 Although Eliphaz ends his hymn of praise on a note of hope, he has not helped Job at all. Job knows God, appreciates God’s providence, and understands God’s rescue of the poor and downtrodden. Eliphaz’s worldview assumes that suffering happens only in response to sin. Even Job, generally righteous, must have sinned somehow to bring about his suffering. Eliphaz thinks this suffering will not last long and that God will eventually rescue Job. Human wisdom has no room for a theology of the cross. (TLSB)

5:17–26 While the preceding hymn (vv. 8–16) spoke of God’s goodness and justice, this poem celebrates the blessedness of the man whom God disciplines (see Pr 1:2, 7; 3:12; 23:13, 23). Eliphaz believed that discipline is temporary and is followed by healing (v. 18), and that the good man will always be rescued. But with Job’s wealth gone and his children dead, these words about security (v. 24) and children (v. 25) must have seemed cruel indeed to him. (CSB)

5:17 *God reproves.* Eliphaz reminds Job that suffering can serve to show people their sin and as a discipline to correct rebellious behavior before it is too late (cf Heb 12:3–11). (TLSB)

Almighty. The first of 31 times that the Hebrew word (CSB)

Shaddai is used in Job (*God Almighty*). The Hebrew (*El-Shaddai*) perhaps means “God, the Mountain One,” either highlighting the invincible power of God or referring to the mountains as God’s symbolic home (see Ps 121:1). It was the special name by which God revealed himself to the patriarchs (see Ex 6:3). *Shaddai* occurs 31 times in the book of Job and 17 times in the rest of the Bible.) (CSB)

the discipline of the Almighty – In spite of his pious words Eliphaz really did not believe that God intended Job’s suffering to be a discipline to strengthen his faith. As we shall see, he clung to the mistaken notion that Job was suffering as a consequence of some special sins. Eliphaz failed to distinguish between God’s punishment of the ungodly and his wholesome chastisement of the godly. (PBC)

5:18–27 The Lord does not deliver Job from his troubles right away. Eliphaz suggests that Job should cheer up because God will eventually restore him when he had suffered enough. Throughout his speech, Eliphaz misses the point entirely. (TLSB)

5:19 *six ... seven*. See 33:29; 40:5; Pr 6:16; 30:15, 18, 21, 29; Ecc 11:2; Am 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; Mic 5:5. Normally, such number patterns are not to be taken literally but are a poetic way of saying “many.” (CSB)

Rhetorical device to indicate complete protection from all evil (cf Pr 6:16). (TLSB)

5:21 *lash of the tongue*. Poetic; accusation and slander from enemies (cf Ps 64). (TLSB)

5:22 *shall not fear the beasts of the earth*. Wild animals, as distinct from domestic animals (cf Gn 1:24–25). Wild animals, such as lions, leopards, and crocodiles, were a real threat to people throughout Canaan. (TLSB)

5:23 *league with the stones*. A figurative way of saying that stones will “be at peace with you” and will not ruin the crops (see 2Ki 3:19; Isa 5:2; Mt 13:5). (CSB)

5:24 *tent is at peace* – Try to put yourself in Job’s place as he sat on his heap of ashes and heard these words of Eliphaz. He spoke of a man who was “blessed” or “happy” and described someone whose situation was the very opposite of Job’s. For Job there seemed to be no healing or relief from his excruciating physical pain and mental anguish. To be told that what verse 24 says was no comfort whatever to Job after his great loss. (PBC)

5:24 *fold*. Sheepfold, protective enclosure for livestock. (TLSB)

5:25 *your descendants*. All Job’s children are dead! Eliphaz paints a rosy picture for those favored by the Almighty. No doubt Eliphaz’s “comfort” hurt Job deeply and galled him immensely, making him feel much worse. (TLSB)

as the grass. As numerous as blades of grass (see note on Ge 13:16). (CSB)

5:26 Eliphaz’s prediction was more accurate than he realized (see 42:16–17). – Is there any possible way Job could identify with such a person? Wouldn’t he rather have to conclude that his friend was judging him to be the very opposite, an ungodly man? In later speeches Job’s friends would more directly accuse him of being such a person. (PBC)

5:27 *it is true*. Eliphaz shared the day’s conventional wisdom. Those who have not experienced the loss, suffering, and grief of Job offer “expert” advice and proclaim it “true.” (TLSB)

know it for good. Eliphaz’s conclusion: Job must turn from unrighteousness (4:7) and resentment against God (v. 2) to humility (v. 11) and the acceptance of God’s righteous discipline (v. 17). Eliphaz’s purpose is to offer theological comfort and counsel to Job (2:11), but instead he wounds him with false accusation. (CSB)

Chs 4–5 Eliphaz, the first friend who tries to comfort Job, only adds to Job’s misery. His “encouragement” discourages Job because Eliphaz never really connects with Job or his pain. He only offers platitudes. When you reach out to a friend or family member, do not give answers that simply bandage deep hurts. Listen carefully to the sufferer and learn to share the pain. God does use adversity to discipline His people, as Eliphaz pointed out (5:17–18; cf Heb 12:1–13). In the midst

of trial, we might doubt God's love for us. But the cross shows us the measure of God's love. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can see suffering as a tool to refine faith and strengthen our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Luth: "When faith begins, God does not forsake it; He lays the holy cross on our backs to strengthen us and to make faith powerful in us.... Where suffering and the cross are found, there the Gospel can show and exercise its power. It is a Word of life. Therefore it must exercise all its power in death. In the absence of dying and death it can do nothing, and no one can become aware that it has such power and is stronger than sin and death" (AE 30:126). • Father, strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit so that we do not despair or falter when pressed by trial and tribulation; for Jesus' sake. Amen. (TLSB)