



## Job - Chapter Five

- II [Job 3:1-42:6 - Dialogue: Job, His Suffering, and His Standing before God \(continues\)](#)
- II.b [Job 4:1-25:6 - The Friends and Job: Can Job be Right Before God? \(continues\)](#)
- II.b.i [Job 4:1-14:22 - The First Cycle \(continues\)](#)
- II.b.i.1 [Job 4:1-5:27 - Eliphaz: Can Mortal Man be in the Right Before God? \(continues/concludes\)](#)

### Summary of Chapter Five

Eliphaz continues with his first dialogue stating that it is in all humans to come to trouble through their own devices and that the only solution is to turn to God, for it is he alone that can save them from the folly of their ways. Those who are disciplined by God because of the error of their ways should not be downhearted but content to know that the Lord does so for their own benefit and that through submission to him they will be brought out of their woes.

### II.b.i.1.B [Job 5:1-27 - Job Is Corrected by God](#)

Refer to the chapter summary above.

- 1 '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 fools taking root,  
but suddenly I cursed their dwelling.

- 4 Their children are far from safety,  
they are crushed in the gate,  
and there is no one to deliver them.
- 5 The hungry eat their harvest,  
and they take it even out of the thorns;  
and the thirsty pant after their wealth.
- 6 For misery does not come from the earth,  
nor does trouble sprout from the ground;
- 7 but human beings are born to trouble  
just as sparks fly upward.

### Job 5:1-7

Call now; is there anyone who will answer you? Is there any point in crying out if no one is listening? Habakkuk even believed that God was not listening to his impassioned and righteous lamentations: *<<O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save?>>* (Habakkuk 1:2).

After Eliphaz presents what he regards as the weight of his vision in Job 4:17-21, he asks rhetorically if there are any creatures left on earth, that is, anyone, or in heaven, i.e. the holy ones, servants of God to whom Job can presume to appeal: *<<a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome above all that are around him?>>* (Psalm 89:7).

Surely vexation kills the fool, their children are far from safety. These were backhanded references to Job and his own sons. Eliphaz argued that the fact that such great disaster fell upon them proves that they were foolish and in sin. Again, Eliphaz's frame of reference is recorded and noted: I have seen. He speaks from his own experience and observation on life.

I have seen fools taking root. Often those who are wealthy, as Job had been, take their situation for granted and believe they are secure in life with a safe future ahead for them and their family. They feel strongly fortified in their power, wealth and position in life, with no fear that the situation may so dramatically change: *<<Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble>>* (Isaiah 40:24). This is how Eliphaz viewed Job's current situation.

Their children are far from safety, they are crushed in the gate, and there is no one to deliver them. The reference here is to the ancient custom of holding courts of justice and wise counsel at the city gates. Here, that is not available to those who act unwisely and their children suffer along with them: <<*For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins – you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate*>> (Amos 5:12).

The hungry eat their harvest. This is an allusion to the wealth and possessions that men like Job may acquire but is eventually consumed by others: <<*They will give back the fruit of their toil, and will not swallow it down; from the profit of their trading they will get no enjoyment*>> (Job 20:18), and: <<*You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine*>> (Micah 6:15).

Eliphaz reinforces his previous point: <<*As I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble reap the same*>> (Job 4:8) by returning to the language of agriculture: misery and trouble do not grow out of the earth or ground, but out of what is sown from the day a person is born. Eliphaz believed that this trouble did not come to Job from nowhere; it did not just spring up from the ground. The implication is clear: this affliction came upon Job from God.

But human beings are born to trouble just as sparks fly upward. This point connects with the one Eliphaz just made. Trouble does not come to man from nowhere; it comes as a judgement from God, or at least because man has sown trouble so now he reaps it. In the same way that it is true that sparks fly upward, it is also true that man is born to trouble; therefore, it can also be said that all men sin and deserve the affliction and trouble that comes to them.

Just as sparks fly upward. Literally, the Hebrew can be translated, as ‘the sons of Resheph fly upward.’ There is no historic links to a man called Resheph but it was the name of one of the Canaanite gods. Therefore, it is likely that this was a proverbial saying or part of an ancient myth.

- <sup>8</sup> ‘As for me, I would seek God,  
and to God I would commit my cause.
- <sup>9</sup> He does great things and unsearchable,  
marvellous things without number.
- <sup>10</sup> He gives rain on the earth  
and sends waters on the fields;
- <sup>11</sup> 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 takes 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,  
from the hand of the mighty.
- 16 So the poor have hope,  
and injustice shuts its mouth.

### Job 5:8-16

As for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause. Eliphaz said it tactfully, yet he still said it - that Job was not seeking God and was not committing his cause to God in his affliction. Bildad would shortly make a similar case to Job: <<*If you will seek God and make supplication to the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore to you your rightful place*>> (Job 8:5-6). Job, in turn, states he would gladly make his case before the Lord: <<*But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God*>> (Job 13:3), just as others would do: <<*You will be in the right, O Lord, when I lay charges against you; but let me put my case to you. Why does the way of the guilty prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?*>> (Jeremiah 12:1), and: <<*I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me*>> (1 Corinthians 4:4).

He does great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number. According to the counsel of Eliphaz, this is why Job should seek God and commit his way to him. It is because God is a great God, great in both his power over creation, i.e. he gives rain on the earth, and in his moral justice, that is, he takes the wise in their own craftiness and injustice shuts its mouth. Again, the implication is clear. Eliphaz believed that the justice of God, at this present time, worked against Job because Job was in sin and refused to see it. Yet if Job would only see this and repent, perhaps the justice of God would once again work on his behalf.

**Paul and Barnabas used a similar argument to show that the one true God was a great God for all the people:** <<*In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in*

*doing good – giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy>> (Acts 14:16-17).*

He takes the wise in their own craftiness is a passage that Paul quotes in his letter to Corinth: <<*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness’, and again, ‘The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile’>> (1 Corinthians 3:19-20).*

The wicked sit in stunned silence at the reversal of their fortune. As is the case in several places in the dialogues, the second line of the verse, injustice shuts its mouth, is similar to a line from the Psalms: <<*all wickedness stops its mouth>> (Psalm 107:42b). Eliphaz implies in this section (vv.8-16) that Job should reconsider the reversal of his circumstances as representing God’s just purposes (v.17).*

*These lines are a fine example of hymn genre in OT poetry. A similar creedal hymn appears in: <<Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who by myself spread out the earth; who frustrates the omens of liars, and makes fools of diviners; who turns back the wise, and makes their knowledge foolish; who confirms the word of his servant, and fulfils the prediction of his messengers; who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited’, and of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt, and I will raise up their ruins’; who says to the deep, ‘Be dry – I will dry up your rivers’; who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall carry out all my purpose’; and who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be rebuilt’, and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’>> (Isaiah 44:24-28). In Eliphaz’s case what is absolutely true is misapplied - situations like this are not the place for theological strictures that may turn out to do more harm than good. Great truths misapplied only cause more hurt those who are already hurting!*

- 17 ‘How happy is the one whom God reproveth;  
therefore do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.
- 18 For he wounds, but he binds up;  
he strikes, but his hands heal.
- 19 He will deliver you from six troubles;  
in seven no harm 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 scourge of the tongue,  
and shall not fear destruction when it comes.

- 22 At destruction and famine you shall laugh,  
and shall not fear the wild animals of the earth.
- 23 For you shall be in league with the stones of the field,  
and the wild animals shall be at peace with you.
- 24 You shall know that your tent is safe,  
you shall inspect your fold and miss nothing.
- 25 You shall know that your descendants will be many,  
and your offspring like the grass of the earth.
- 26 You shall come to your grave in ripe old age,  
as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing-floor in its season.

### Job 5:17-26

How happy is the one whom God reproves. With poetic power, Eliphaz emphasised his point that Job's problems are because God corrects his sinful children, and Job is one of those sinful children.

Therefore do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. Eliphaz did not wish to push Job into despair. He believed that Job should not despise this correcting work in his life, but instead humble himself under it, forsake his sin, and learn from it: *<<Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the Lord your God disciplines you>>* (Deuteronomy 8:5), and: *<<Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live?>>* (Hebrews 12:9).

For he wounds, but he binds up; he strikes, but his hands heal. He will deliver you from six troubles. Eliphaz wanted to encourage Job further. "Job, God will heal your wounds and deliver you if you will confess your sin and turn to him." Eliphaz continued and described in detail all the blessings of restoration that would come to Job's life if he would only repent and turn to God, i.e. shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, at destruction and famine you shall laugh, you shall know that your tent is safe, and so on.

The reference to the scourge of the tongue is included in a list of troubles that threaten a person's life (vv.19-26) along with famine, war, danger of wild beasts, and anything that might endanger the peace of flocks, family, or person, e.g. disease, disaster, etc. Eliphaz uses the numerical saying he will deliver you from six troubles; in seven no harm shall touch you to draw particular attention to the final element: if Job will accept his situation as God's discipline, he will be spared from his trouble and brought to *<<a ripe old age>>* (v.26).

You shall come to your grave in ripe old age, as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing-floor in its season. Charles Spurgeon preached on these very words.

His main points were:

- Death is inevitable (You shall come).
- Death is acceptable (You shall come).
- Death is timely (in ripe old age).
- Death is honourable (as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing-floor in its season).

“Even as the colour of the wheat is golden, so that it looks more beautiful than when the greenness of its verdure is on it, so the grey-headed man has a crown of glory on his head. He is glorious in his weakness, more than the young man in his strength, or the maiden in her beauty. Is not a shock of corn a beautiful picture of the state of man, moreover, because very soon it must be taken home? The reaper is coming” (Spurgeon).

<sup>27</sup> See, we have searched this out; it is true.

Hear, and know it for yourself.’

#### Job 5:27

See, we have searched this out. Eliphaz wanted to persuade Job, so he gave his statement the authority of communal knowledge: we have searched this out. In effect, he was saying, “Job, we all together here - your friends and counsellors - have investigated this carefully and know what we are talking about.” It is worth remembering that the Lord singled Eliphaz out at the end of the book for a special rebuke: <<*the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: ‘My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has’*>> (Job 42:7b).

It is true. Eliphaz said this with absolute confidence. “Job, God’s principle of cause and effect together with your reaction to your calamity proves that you were and are in sin and you must repent to be restored.” To Eliphaz and the rest of Job’s friends this was so obvious that it did not need to be proven; he simply confidently explained, “It is true.”

Eliphaz preaches of a God who can be figured out. For Eliphaz, there are no unknowns behind the scenes; there is no drama or purpose in the heavens that motivate what God does and what he allows to be done. However, the reader knows of this heavenly drama from the first two chapters, and they can see how shallow and unknowing the counsel of Eliphaz was. Job did not know what the reader knows, but he could discern that the counsel of Eliphaz was wrong in his situation.

Hear, and know it for yourself. In the mind of Eliphaz, Job only needed to accept these obvious truths in order to find the answers to his current crisis.