

### The Third Speech of Eliphaz to Job

#### Job 22

**Job 22:1-11** – *“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: <sup>2</sup>“Can a man be profitable to God, though he who is wise may be profitable to himself?<sup>3</sup> Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous? Or is it gain to Him that you make your ways blameless?<sup>4</sup> “Is it because of your fear of Him that He corrects you, and enters into judgment with you?*

*<sup>5</sup> Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquity without end?<sup>6</sup> For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing.<sup>7</sup> You have not given the weary water to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry.<sup>8</sup> But the mighty man possessed the land, and the honorable man dwelt in it.<sup>9</sup> You have sent widows away empty, and the strength of the fatherless was crushed.<sup>10</sup> Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden fear troubles you,<sup>11</sup> or darkness so that you cannot see and an abundance of water covers you.”*

#### Background Notes

In his third speech, Eliphaz mentions two items that require some background to fully understand and appreciate. Eliphaz points at Job and says, *“You have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing”* (v6). What does *“stripped the naked of their clothing”* mean? Is he accusing Job of some kind of perversion? No. He accuses Job of the wrongful practice of keeping a man’s outer cloak overnight as pledge for a loan - thus taking advantage, because the poor man needed his cloak at night for warmth. Without it, he was “naked” to the elements.

Later, in the Mosaic Law, it was illegal to keep a man’s cloak overnight as a pledge. *“If you ever take your neighbor’s garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering; it is his garment for his skin”* (Exodus 22:26-27). And the prophet Amos condemned Israel for trampling on the poor, and keeping garments taken as pledge: *“They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge”* (Amos 2:8).

The other background note concerns “gold of Ophir”: *“Then you will lay your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks”* (v24). Ophir was probably located in southern Arabia. In the ancient world it was known for its gold. King Solomon was supplied with gold from Ophir. Job apparently had some gold from Ophir, and Eliphaz accuses Job of being a materialist (v23-25). He urges Job to get rid of his gold and let the Lord be his gold and silver. These accusations were not true.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. In his third speech, Eliphaz again blames Job for practicing sin.

In verses 1-5 Eliphaz's argument seems to be that if Job were as righteous as he says, then why was God judging and reproving him? God's interest in you, Job, says Eliphaz, is not because you are righteous. No, God does not benefit or gain anything if you are righteous or blameless. The reason God is showing interest in you is because you are **not** righteous! You are a secret sinner and a hypocrite.

In verses 6-11, Eliphaz lists a number of social sins he believes Job has committed, without any evidence whatsoever:

- The sin of keeping a poor man's cloak overnight as a pledge, leaving the poor man out in the cold. *"For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing" (v6).*
- The sins of withholding bread and water from the hungry and thirsty. *"You have not given the weary water to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry" (v7).*
- The sin of believing that "might makes right": *"But the mighty man possessed the land, and the honorable man dwelt in it" (v8).*
- The sin of taking advantage of widows and orphans. *"You have sent widows away empty, and the strength of the fatherless was crushed" (v9).*

No wonder you have troubles, Job, says Eliphaz. *"Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden fear troubles you, or darkness so that you cannot see; and an abundance of water covers you" (v10-11).*

In his third speech, Eliphaz again blames Job for practicing sin.

### 2. In his third speech, Eliphaz again accuses Job of hiding his sins.

**Job 22:12-14** - *"Is not God in the height of heaven? And see the highest stars, how lofty they are!<sup>13</sup> And you say, 'What does God know? Can He judge through the deep darkness?'<sup>14</sup> Thick clouds cover Him, so that He cannot see, and He walks above the circle of heaven" (v12-14).*

In verses 12-14 Eliphaz accuses Job of thinking that God is so far removed from the events on earth that Job can get away with his hidden wickedness! How wrong could he be? Job didn't think this way at all! In fact, Job acknowledged God's omniscience! *"Can anyone teach God knowledge, since He judges those on high?" (21:22).* Job was **not** thinking that God couldn't see or wouldn't know, and Job was **not** wicked. God had said that Job was **blameless** (Job 1:1 & 8).

**Job 22:15-18** - *“Will you keep to the old way that wicked men have trod,<sup>16</sup> who were cut down before their time, whose foundations were swept away by a flood?<sup>17</sup> They said to God, ‘Depart from us! What can the Almighty do to them?’<sup>18</sup> Yet He filled their houses with good things; but the counsel of the wicked is far from me.”*

In verses 15-18 Eliphaz put Job in the category of the wicked people in Noah’s day, who were prospering under God’s grace but were unthankful and unbelieving. Thus God removed them with the judgment of the great Flood. At the end of verse 18 Eliphaz repeats what Job had said: *“The counsel of the wicked is far from me” (21:16)*. Eliphaz cruelly turns that statement around and mocks Job by putting him into the “wicked” category.

**Job 22:19-20** - *“The righteous see it and are glad, and the innocent laugh at them.<sup>20</sup> ‘Surely our adversaries are cut down, and the fire consumes their remnant.”*

In verses 19-20, Eliphaz seems to gloat over the idea that he and his righteous friends can see wicked people like Job brought to justice for their hidden sins. In his third speech, Eliphaz again accuses Job of hiding his sin.

### **3. In his third speech, Eliphaz again urges Job to confess his sins.**

**Job 22:21-30** - *“Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace. Thereby good will come to you.<sup>22</sup> Receive, please, instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart.<sup>23</sup> If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up. You will remove iniquity far from your tents.<sup>24</sup> Then you will lay your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks.<sup>25</sup> Yes, the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver,<sup>26</sup> for then you will have your delight in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God.<sup>27</sup> You will make your prayer to Him, He will hear you, and you will pay your vows.<sup>28</sup> You will also declare a thing, and it will be established for you; so light will shine on your ways.<sup>29</sup> When they cast you down, and you say, ‘Exaltation will come!’ Then He will save the humble person.<sup>30</sup> He will even deliver one who is not innocent. Yes, he will be delivered by the purity of your hands.”*

Back in his first speech Eliphaz urged Job to confess his sins and submit to God. (Read Job 5:8 to the end of the chapter.) In his third speech, Eliphaz once again urges Job to confess his sins. Job, he declares, if only you would return to the Lord, and submit to Him, and give up your materialism and hoarding of gold and silver (v21-25), then...

- You will have fellowship and delight with the Almighty (v26)
- Your prayers will be answered (v27)
- You will desire to pay your vows to the Lord (v27)
- You will have success in what you do (v28)
- You will be able to help and deliver others (v29-30).

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## **Practical Application**

### **Make sure your counsel is theologically correct!**

In both his first and third speeches, Eliphaz's counsel sounded almost tender, as he urged Job to repent and return to the Lord. But Eliphaz was wrong in his assumption that Job was a hypocrite who was involved in hidden secret sins. His accusation was wrong - and his counsel was theologically wrong as well!

Eliphaz essentially told Job that the only reason God is involved in human affairs is to punish sin (v1-5). "Listen to me, Job," he said. God isn't interested in fellowship with people. And don't think you can please God by living righteously! This counsel was **theologically incorrect**. **God is pleased** when His people do the right thing, and **God delights** in fellowship with His people! Surely Eliphaz would have known of the patriarch Enoch, who "*walked with God*" (Genesis 5). And today we have this wonderful truth stated clearly in 1 John 1:3 - "*And truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.*"

In addition, Eliphaz was **theologically incorrect** when he told Job that he had to reform his lifestyle before he could get right with God. That teaching is not in the Bible. Never counsel an unbeliever in that way! Reformation is not needed before acceptance with God. Then what is? Acknowledging before God that you are a sinner, and trusting in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior is what is needed.

Counseling believers or unbelievers is a wonderful way to serve the Lord and others, but make sure that your counsel is theologically correct!