

Chapter 16 begins the second of three rounds of speeches, by Job and his three friends. Eliphaz speaks in chapter 15; Job responds in chapters 16-17. We can divide Eliphaz's second speech into three parts: he rebukes Job (vv1-13); he corrects Job (vv14-16); he instructs Job (vv17-35). We will move quickly through the first two, spending most of our time on the third.

- I. Eliphaz Rebukes Job (vv1-13)
- II. Eliphaz Corrects Job (vv14-16)
- III. Eliphaz Instructs Job (vv17-35)

I. Eliphaz Rebukes Job (vv1-13)

1. Eliphaz rebukes Job basically for three things: folly (vv1-6), pride (vv7-10), and ingratitude (vv11-13).
2. (1) Folly (vv1-6), v2—"Should a wise man answer with empty knowledge, and fill himself with the east wind?"
3. In other words—"If you were truly wise, you would not answer with empty knowledge and fill yourself with east wind."
4. Eliphaz is accusing Job of being filled with empty and useless knowledge and strong wind (or he was filled with hot air).
5. V3—"Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or by speeches with which he can do no good"—his words were unprofitable or useless.
6. V4—"Yes, you cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God"—that is, he undermined piety and thus hinder devotion.
7. V5—"For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty"—he's accusing Job of harboring sin that leads to deceit.
8. V6—"Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; yes, your own lips testify against you"—this is a bold statement.
9. Eliphaz says he can merely appeal to Job's own words—his words are evidence that proves he's guilty.
10. (2) Pride (vv7-10), v7—"Are you the first man who was born? Or were you made before the hills?"—that is, do you claim to be old and filled with wisdom?
11. V8—"Have you heard the counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?"—have you received special revelation from God? Do you have special and unique wisdom?
12. V9—"What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not in us?"—in what way are you special or different from us?
13. V10—"Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us, much older than your father"—because they were older, they were wiser.
14. (3) Ingratitude (vv11-13)—in these verses, Eliphaz accuses Job of being ungrateful for their prior counsel.
15. V11—"Are the consolations of God too small for you, and the word spoken gently with you?"—by "the consolations of God" and "gently spoken words" are meant their prior words.
16. Eliphaz is here asserting that they spoke comforting and gentle words, that Job has considered "too small."
17. That is, he despised their counsel—he failed to give their words proper consideration—he was unthankful.
18. Observation 1—A person can be very old and yet very foolish—Eliphaz's and his friends were older than Job and seemingly, Eliphaz was the oldest of Job's three friends.
19. It seems Eliphaz claims to be older than Job's father (this would mean he was at least 20 years older or more).

20. And yet, when we read through vv1-13, I feel embarrassed for Eliphaz—I cringe when I read his response.
21. (a) Unkindness—of all of the speeches of Job's friends, none of them are more unkind or rude than this one.
22. Tremper Longman—"Eliphaz begins with insults, and the barrage that he lets loose in the first part of this chapter is one of the longest and most biting of all the insults of the book."
23. (b) Hypocrisy—by this I mean, much of what Eliphaz says of Job, is actually true of Eliphaz himself.
24. (c) Ignorance—many of the statements made about Job are simply untrue—void of truth and contrary to facts.

## II. Eliphaz Corrects Job (vv14-16)

1. In these verses Eliphaz seeks to correct what Job said in the previous chapter about man born of a woman.
2. If you remember, Job used this phrase back in 14:1—"Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble."
3. He then described man as not only temporary but sinful, v4—"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing?"
4. Job has already affirmed the depravity of man—thus, why does Eliphaz reiterate and expand on it here?
5. Well, as we will see in a moment, he intends to apply this truth directly to Job (it's as if he's suggesting, Job has somehow excluded himself).
6. It's as if he's saying—"I know that you've affirmed man's depravity, but have you applied that to yourself?"
7. (1) A question, v14—"What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?"
8. This is a rhetorical question that desires to answer—man can do nothing to render himself pure or righteous.
9. (2) An assertion, v15—"If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heavens are not pure in His sight."
10. (a) He puts no trust in His saints—the Hebrew word rendered "saints" means "holy ones" and here refers to angels.
11. Although angels are pure beings who serve God willingly without fault, God put's no confidence in them.
12. The reason being—they are inferior to Him—they are not His equal—He puts no confidence in them.
13. (b) The heavens are not pure in His sight—by "heavens" is meant the "sun" and the rest of the "stars."
14. Though these are bright and pure in our sight, they are nothing compared to the blazing purity of God.
15. (3) A conclusion, v16—"How much less man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!"
16. The point being—if God doesn't trust His angels, and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less does He trust man, and how much less is man pure in His sight?
17. To add to his conclusion, Eliphaz further describes man as—"abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water."
18. The words "abominable and filthy" have reference to man in relation to God—he is repulsive and offensive to Him.

19. The reason being—"he drinks iniquity like water"—that is, it's native to him—it's what he is and does.
20. This is in contrast to Angels and stars—neither of these have sinned, but man "drinks iniquity like water."
21. Observation 1—Man by nature is a very wicked creature—these verses clearly affirm the native depravity of man.
22. (a) This depravity is universal—Eliphaz doesn't describe some or most men, but all men born of a woman.
23. (b) This depravity is native—Albert Barnes—"He practices it as if it were his very nature – as much so as it is to drink water."
24. (c) This depravity is repulsive—that is, it's offensive to good men (or men with sense), and to God Himself.
25. Observation 2—God and His creation are very different—even the purest creation is impure before God.
26. James Durham—"God is so spotless pure, that holy angels and the congregation of heaven, being compared with the infinite and independent holiness of God, are unclean."

### III. Eliphaz Instructs Job (vv17-35)

1. Beginning with v17, Eliphaz instructs Job on three basic characteristics of a wicked man (with a sinister purpose).
2. He basically implies these are descriptions true of Job—this is how a wicked man acts and God treats him (and as we shall see, Eliphaz always has an eye to Job).
3. Verses 17-19 are an introduction to this section, wherein, he strongly encourages Job to take heed to his words.
4. He basically says, he's received these truths or knows these truths from two sources—experience and tradition.
5. V17—"I will tell you, hear me; what I have seen I will declare (experience), what wise men have told, not hiding anything received from their fathers (tradition), to whom alone the land was given, and no alien passed among them."
6. In other words, Eliphaz has been taught these things from experience and from the tradition of his fathers.
7. (1) His anxiety (vv20-24), v20—"The wicked man writhes with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden from the oppressor."
8. To "writhe" means "to twist in pain or anguish"—it here refers to a spiritual or mental pain or suffering.
9. The word "oppressor" refers 'to a violent or tyrannical person'—it means, the number of days he suffers is hidden to him.
10. Thus, by "the wicked man" and "the oppressor" are meant the same person—he writhes in pain not knowing the number of his days.
11. V21—"Dreadful sounds are in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer comes upon him"—he never has any peace.
12. Regardless of his outward circumstances, he hears dread sounds in his ears (that is, the ears of his heart).
13. V22—"He does not believe that he will return from darkness, for a sword is waiting for him"—he fears the darkness, from which he will never return (what is meant by 'darkness' is clarified in v23).
14. V23—"He wanders about for bread, saying, 'Where is it?' He knows that a day of darkness is ready at his hand."

15. By a "day of darkness" is meant "a day of calamity and death"—he knows it's coming but isn't sure when.
16. V24—"Trouble and anguish make him afraid; they overpower him, like a king ready for battle"—trouble and anguish are like a preview of what's coming.
17. (2) His mutiny (vv25-26)—these verses switch from the wicked man's dread to his wicked behavior (a common phrase is 'against God' 'against the Almighty' and 'against Him')."
18. V25—"For he stretches out his hand against God, and acts defiantly against the Almighty, running stubbornly against Him with his strong, embossed shield."
19. To "stretch out the hand against God" refers to aggression and hostility—he lifts his hand against God to strike Him.
20. Verse 26 uses the imagery of a warrior, who with his shield, runs headstrong into an opposing enemy.
21. What a tragic description of wicked and carnal men—they rebel against God in their words and works.
22. (3) His futility (vv27-35)—in this final section, Eliphaz describes the futility of his trust and possessions.
23. This is in many ways, the reason behind his dread and anxiety (vv17-24)—life is futile and death is certain.
24. (a) His things are temporary (vv27-29)—v27 describes him as overweight as a sign of his prosperity.
25. Verses 28 speaks of him as dwelling in cities that will be desolate and houses "which are destined to become ruins."
26. Verse 29 describes the temporary nature of his riches and wealth—"He will not be rich, nor will his wealth continue."
27. (b) His death is eternal (vv30-31), v30—"He will not depart from darkness; the flame will dry out his branches, and by the breath of His mouth he will go away."
28. Here "darkness" refers to death and all that follows—breath of God will "dry out" or remove him from earth.
29. V31—"Let him not trust in futile things, deceiving himself, for futility will be his reward"—because he trusts in empty things, he'll receive an empty reward.
30. Put another way—he trusted in his riches which will be taken from him—he deceived himself in thinking these would last.
31. (c) His life is short (vv32-35)—these verses use several imageries to underscore the shortness of life.
32. V32—"It will be accomplished before his time"—by "it" is meant death—death will come before he wishes.
33. V32—"And his branch will not be green"—that is, it will die before it becomes green (or flourishes).
34. Verse 33 describes the wicked man by an unripe grape or a blossom on an olive tree—both fall to the ground prematurely.
35. Tremper Longman—"The wicked are like plants that wither in a season when they should thrive, and their fruit and their blossoms fall off."
36. V34—"For the company of hypocrites will be barren, and fire will consume the tents of bribery"—literally, the congregation of hypocrites and the tents (tabernacles) of bribery.
37. In other words, the man described for the previous 17 verses, is not atheist, but is a "religious" person.
38. 2Tim.3:1-5—"For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud...unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good...having a form of godliness but denying its power."

39. V35—"They conceive trouble and bring forth futility; their womb prepares deceit"—sin is as natural to them as children are to their mother.
40. Now, having briefly examined this slobber description, let's keep in mind the obvious—he's thinking of Job.
41. Tremper Longman—"Although the modern reader often misses the point that these barbs (points) are all directed at Job, we can be sure that Job himself felt their sting."
42. Derek Thomas—"We must not miss the point, that Eliphaz intends to suggest that if Job doesn't repent—and that, quickly—he, too, is in danger of falling into this very punishment."
43. This passage describes native and wicked man in a highly instructive way; it describes him gripped with anxiety (an inward pain and anguish).
44. John Calvin—"The wicked are never at rest and are in such a state of anxiety that they need no other executioner than themselves to torment them."
45. And thus, in closing, I want to address this subject of anxiety under three considerations—the nature, causes, and cure for anxiety.
46. Consideration 1—The nature of anxiety—by anxiety I mean, a deep-seated fear and dread that cripples the soul.
47. Now, before I go any further, let me clarify—I know there are Christians who struggle with forms of anxiety.
48. Thus, I am not here saying, all forms of anxiety are the direct results of sin, and can only be cured by Christ.
49. There are forms of social anxiety that can have various causes, and thus, not be in and of itself sinful.
50. I can even go a step further and say—it's possible that some of these forms of anxiety can be biological.
51. But the Bible clearly describes a form of anxiety that is sinful and can only be cured by the gospel of Christ.
52. And I suggest, nowhere in the entire Bible, is the subject of this anxiety described more fully than Job 15:17-35.
53. Thus, I want to be rather careful to, here under this first consideration, define what I mean by anxiety.
54. I trust most of us are aware, that we live in a day when anti-anxiety medication is a billion-dollar enterprise.
55. Furthermore, addiction to various anti-anxiety medications rises every single year (it's a huge tragedy).
56. Thus, the million-dollar question becomes—How are we to know what anxiety is spiritual in nature?
57. Well, I can answer this question rather dogmatically—whenever our anxiety resembles that of Job 15:17-35.
58. The anxiety of the wicked results from an internal controversy, that is ultimately and finally with God.
59. He knows he will not return from darkness (v22); he knows that a day of darkness is ready at his hand (v23).
60. Thus, this anxiety here spoken of (and that I'm referring to), is a fear and dread of death and what follows.
61. It's a fear and dread that cripples the soul—that grips the soul with such anxiety that it writhes in pain.
62. Now, obviously this condition may vary in degree, but nevertheless, it is actually only a preview of what awaits.

63. Consideration 2—The causes of anxiety—here I want to suggest, largely from Job 15, a few causes of anxiety.
64. But before I come to these, let me clarify—the type of anxiety of just described characterizes the wicked.
65. It cripples him and overtakes him like "king ready for battle"—it's this type of anxiety we are saved from.
66. Prov.28:1—"The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion"—the wicked flee because God pursues them through their conscience.
67. And yet, while Christians are not overcome or defeated by this anxiety, they can for a time fall prey to it.
68. Thus, all that I'm about to say concerning the wicked man, can be said (in some sense) of the righteous man.
69. And thus, let me say rather simply, the fundamental cause of this anxiety is a bad or condemning conscience.
70. There are three things true of the wicked man that troubles his conscience and creates this crippling anxiety.
71. (a) He knows there's a God—necessary for this anxiety is a native knowledge of God to whom he's accountable.
72. Rom.1:18-19—"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them."
73. This anxiety is the result of suppressing the truth about God, that's known by creation and conscience.
74. Knowledge of God outside of Christ can only lead to fear and dread—this is the root cause of this anxiety.
75. Ps.77:3—"I remembered God, and was troubled"—his conscience was troubled as he remembered God.
76. These are the words of a man reconciled to God—who knew God in Christ—and yet, he had a glimpse of God outside of Christ and it troubled him.
77. If your thoughts of God trouble you, there's a problem—you have a controversy with God on some level.
78. Either in the fullest sense (as in the case of the wicked man), or else, only partially (as in the case of the Psalmist).
79. (b) He knows he's against God—that is, he not only knows there's a God but that God is against him.
80. And one obvious reason he knows this, is because he's against God—the one necessarily argues the other.
81. Verses 24-25—"Trouble and anguish make him afraid; they overpower him. like a king ready for battle. For he stretches out his hand against God, and acts defiantly against the Almighty, running stubbornly against Him with his strong, embossed shield."
82. Jas.4:4—"Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God"—he opposes God.
83. Nobody really likes having an enemy (especially if the enemy is strong and fierce)—it breeds anxiety.
84. But how much more so, if that enemy is God—the only enemy that God destroy body and soul in hell.
85. But instead of finding peace with God, he takes up arms against Him—he charges Him with his shield.

86. This is at the heart of why he is crippled with fear and dread—he is at war with his Creator and Judge.
87. And where does this war take place? Where is the battle field that he fights? It's within his heart and soul.
88. (c) He knows he will be judged by God—he knows he will die and fall into the hands of an angry God.
89. V21—"Dreadful things are in his ears"—he knows death is coming and a sword is waiting for him (v22).
90. These "dreadful things" are but a preview of what awaits him—they are but the forerunner of hell itself.
91. Consideration 3—The cure for anxiety—there is really only one cure for anxiety and that's the gospel.
92. Heb.2:14-15—"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."
93. This is a tragic description of all men by nature—enslaved to a fear of death that cripples and pains the soul.
94. Conscience is God's voice within the soul of man—He speaks to man and warns him through this means.
95. The fear and dread a wicked man hears is a warning from God—"Prepare to meet your Maker and Judge."
96. Rom.3:19—"Whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."
97. God speaks to man through the law and it brings terror—but He does this for you to close your mouth and take your place before Him as a guilty sinner.
98. God speaks two words to us—the first is from the law that says we are guilty; the second is from the gospel that says we are pardoned.

John Calvin—"When reading holy Scripture, we must always pray that God will give us wisdom and discernment to know where he is leading us and what his intention is so that we can profit from what we are being taught, for we will always miss the point if God is not directing us."