

## JOB 4

## THE FIRST WORDS OF ELIPHAZ

This chapter opens the controversy between Job and his friends, which runs throughout the rest of the Book until its close, when God Himself settles the dispute. Eliphaz was the first of the three friends to speak, and this chapter records the beginning of his expostulation with Job. Satan undertook to prove Job to be a hypocrite by afflicting him; and his friends concluded that he must be a hypocrite because he was thus afflicted, and showed impatience under his trials.

Eliphaz began his discourse by complimenting Job on his past services in the cause of God and in acts of charity. But from what follows, it seems that he was not intending to applaud the man of Uz in those services. Apparently, he only endeavored to more fully show that all these things were done from ostentation and hypocrisy. Eliphaz's charge was not meant to comfort the mourner or assuage his afflictions; nor was it intended to console his mind under the pleasing hope that although his outward tribulations were great and heavy upon him, yet the Lord was his Friend. Rather, the whole theme of this man's speech was to prove that Job's iniquity was found out, and that his hypocrisy was discovered.

The greatest affliction that a child of God can feel from the taunts of his enemies is certainly that which would tempt him to suspect that the Lord has forsaken him. David gave an instance of this in the case of his flight from Absalom, when Shimei came out to curse him. He could bear the curses of Shimei, for he saw the Lord's hand in this trial; but when the taunt was from many persons, who told him that there was no help for him in his God – then the cup of his sorrow ran over! However, in the midst of all, the Lord was still his shield, his glory, and the lifter-up of his head (Ps. 3:3). But after we have considered this interesting subject as it relates to Job and David and all the people of God throughout the ages; let us not overlook the One Who was assaulted by the same powers of darkness, and Who was tempted by the enemy to the same distrust. O how the afflictions and trials of the best of the Lord's servants fade away into nothing, when Christ's unequalled agonies in temptation are brought forward to our view! (See Luke 22:39-44.)

Eliphaz asserted that those who are righteous do not suffer affliction in this life. "Therefore," he reasoned, "if Job is suffering affliction, then he must be wicked at heart, because only the wicked suffer trials." And since Job had lived an outwardly Godly and righteous life, then Eliphaz concluded that he must actually be a hypocrite. This reasoning was false and ill-grounded. Many

**Outline of the chapter:**

- ❖ Eliphaz compliments Job on the profession of religion which he had formerly made, but he charges him with hypocrisy in that profession – verses 1-6
- ❖ He asserts that God's judgments come upon those who are wicked – verses 7-11
- ❖ He corroborates his assertion by recounting a vision that he had – verses 12-21

righteous persons, as Eliphaz surely knew, had been afflicted and persecuted. The murder of Abel by Cain was the first instance of this, and the history of the world provides many more examples. Thus Eliphaz brought forward an argument to distress Job, which he himself ought to have known the falseness of.

In order to support his false assertion, Eliphaz proceeded to relate a fearful vision that he had, in which he heard a voice asking whether a sinful man should pretend to be more just and pure than God, Who – being his Maker – is his Lord and Owner. How dreadful is the pride and presumption of man! And how great is the patience of God! The frail human body is only a cottage of clay, with its foundation in the dust. Some people have a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others; but it is still the earth that holds us up, and it will shortly swallow us up. And if a lingering sickness is sent to consume us like a moth, we cannot resist it. Beauty, strength, and learning not only fail to secure us from death; but these things shall also die with us. Pomp, wealth, and power will not continue in the grave. And shall such a weak, sinful, dying creature pretend to be more just than God, and more pure than his Maker? No indeed! Can such a creature be cleansed without his Maker? Even angels who rebelled against Him received the just recompence of their deeds. Truly, sinful human beings cannot be pardoned, unless they have an interest in the perfect righteousness and gracious help of their promised Redeemer. It is sad that although our lives are short, many people willfully live without God in this world.



Through this vision, Eliphaz was made acquainted with the solemn distinction between the holiness and purity of God, and the lowliness and sinfulness of all created beings. And as far as these things might have been useful to impress upon Job's mind a sense of his naturally sinful and unclean state, Eliphaz's dream was striking and proper. But if he introduced it here in order to call in Divine authority to enforce what he had said before, in proof of Job's hypocrisy, then the vision was certainly misapplied.

But for the moment, let us turn away our eyes from Job and Eliphaz, and let us meditate on a sweet thought arising out of what this Temanite said. He said that in his vision, he heard a voice proclaiming that God puts no trust in His servants; and even His angels were charged with folly. But think how pure and holy Jesus was in His great undertaking for poor sinners; for although even some of the angels were charged with folly, a voice from heaven declared Jesus to be God's only-begotten Son, in whom He was well-pleased! It was the perfection and holiness of Jesus that enabled Him to work out our complete salvation.

Lord, we thank You for being our shield, our glory, and the lifter-up of our heads (Psalm 3:3) – despite the taunts of many people, who tell us that there is no help for us in our God! Amen.

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