

CHAPTER 22

Eliphaz here leads on a third attack upon poor Job, in which Bildad followed him, but Zophar drew back, and quitted the field. It was one of the unhappinesses of Job, as it is of many an honest man, to be misunderstood by his friends. He had spoken of the prosperity of wicked men in this world as a mystery of Providence, but they took it for a reflection upon Providence, as countenancing their wickedness; and they reproached him accordingly. In this chapter,

- I.** Eliphaz checks him for his complaints of God, and of his dealings with him, as if he thought God had done him wrong (v. 2-4).
- II.** He charges him with many high crimes and misdemeanours, for which he supposes God was now punishing him.
 - 1.** Oppression and injustice (v. 5-11).
 - 2.** Atheism and infidelity (v. 12-14).
- III.** He compares his case to that of the old world (v. 15-20).
- IV.** He gives him very good counsel, assuring him that, if he would take it, God would return in mercy to him and he should return to his former prosperity (v. 21-30).

⌘ JOB 22:1-4

THIRD ADDRESS OF ELIPHAZ

Eliphaz here insinuates that, because Job complained so much of his afflictions, he thought God was unjust in afflicting him; but it was a strained *innuendo*. Job was far from thinking so. What Eliphaz says here is therefore unjustly applied to Job, but in itself it is very true and good,

- I.** That when God does us good it is not because he is indebted to us; if he were, there might be some colour to say, when he afflicts us, “He does not deal fairly with us.” But whoever pretends that he has by any meritorious action made God his debtor, let him prove this debt, and he shall be sure not to lose it, [⌘]Romans 11:35. *Who has given to him, and it shall be*

recompensed to him again? But Eliphaz here shows that the righteousness and perfection of the best man in the world are no real benefit or advantage to God, and therefore cannot be thought to merit any thing from him.

1. Man's piety is no profit to God, no gain, v. 1, 2. If we could by any thing merit from God, it would be by our piety, our being righteous, and making our way perfect. If that will not merit, surely nothing else will. If a man cannot make God his debtor by his godliness, and honesty, and obedience to his laws, much less can he by his wit, and learning, and worldly policy. Now Eliphaz here asks whether any man can possibly be *profitable to God*. It is certain that he cannot. By no means. *He that is wise may be profitable to himself*. Note, Our wisdom and piety are that by which we ourselves are, and are likely to be, great gainers. *Wisdom is profitable to direct*, ^{<200>}Ecclesiastes 10:10. *Godliness is profitable to all things*, ^{<500>}1 Timothy 4:8. *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself*, ^{<300>}Proverbs 9:12. The gains of religion are infinitely greater than the losses of it, and so it will appear when they are balanced. But can a man be thus profitable to God? No, for such is the perfection of God that he cannot receive any benefit or advantage by men; what can be added to that which is infinite? And such is the weakness and imperfection of man that he cannot offer any benefit or advantage to God. Can the light of a candle be profitable to the sun or the drop of the bucket to the ocean? He that is wise is profitable to himself, for his own direction and defence, his own credit and comfort; he can with his wisdom entertain himself and enrich himself; but can he so be profitable to God? No; God needs not us nor our services. We are undone, for ever undone, without him; but he is happy, for ever happy, without us. *Is it any gain to him, any real addition to his glory or wealth, if we make our way perfect?* Suppose it were absolutely perfect, yet what is God the better? Much less when it is so far short of being perfect.

2. It is no pleasure to him. God has indeed expressed himself in his word well pleased with the righteous; his countenance beholds them and his delight is in them and their prayers; but all that adds nothing to the infinite satisfaction and complacency which the Eternal Mind has in itself. God can enjoy himself without us, though we could have but little enjoyment of ourselves without our friends. This magnifies his condescension, in that, though our services be no real profit or pleasure to him, yet he invites, encourages, and accepts them.

II. That when God restrains or rebukes us it is not because he is in danger from us or jealous of us (v. 4): “*Will he reprove thee for fear of thee, and take thee down from thy prosperity lest thou shouldst grow too great for him, as princes sometimes have thought it a piece of policy to curb the growing greatness of a subject, lest he should become formidable?*” Satan indeed suggested to our first parents that God forbade them the tree of knowledge for fear of them, lest they should be as gods, and so become rivals with him; but it was a base insinuation. God rebukes the good because he loves them, but he never rebukes the great because he fears them. He does not *enter into judgment* with men, that is, pick a quarrel with them and seek occasion against them, through fear lest they should eclipse his honour or endanger his interest. Magistrates punish offenders for fear of them. Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he feared them. It was for fear that Herod slew the children of Bethlehem and that the Jews persecuted Christ and his apostles. But God does not, as they did, pervert justice for fear of any. See ~~1875~~ Job 35:5-8.

~~1875~~ JOB 22:5-14

JOB CHARGED WITH VARIOUS CRIMES

Eliphaz and his companions had condemned Job, in general, as a wicked man and a hypocrite; but none of them had descended to particulars, nor drawn up any articles of impeachment against him, until Eliphaz did so here, where he positively and expressly charges him with many high crimes and misdemeanours, which, if he had really been guilty of them, might well have justified them in their harsh censures of him. “Come,” says Eliphaz, “we have been too long beating about the bush, too tender of Job and afraid of grieving him, which has but confirmed him in his self-justification. It is high time to deal plainly with him. We have condemned him by parables, but that does not answer the end; he is not prevailed with to condemn himself. We must therefore plainly tell him, *Thou art the man, the tyrant, the oppressor, the atheist, we have been speaking of all this while. Is not thy wickedness great?* Certainly it is, or else thy troubles would not be so great. I appeal to thyself, and thy own conscience; are not *thy iniquities infinite*, both in number and heinousness?” Strictly taken, nothing is infinite but God; but he means this, that his sins were more than could be counted and more heinous than could be conceived. Sin, being

committed against Infinite Majesty, has in it a kind of infinite malignity. But when Eliphaz charges Job thus highly, and ventures to descend to particulars too, laying to his charge that which he knew not, we may take occasion hence,

1. To be angry at those who unjustly censure and condemn their brethren. For aught I know, Eliphaz, in accusing Job falsely, as he does here, was guilty of as great a sin and as great a wrong to Job as the Sabeans and Chaldeans that robbed him; for a man's good name is more precious and valuable than his wealth. It is against all the laws of justice, charity, and friendship, either to raise or receive calumnies, jealousies, and evil surmises, concerning others; and it is the more base and disingenuous if we thus vex those that are in distress and add to their affliction. Eliphaz could produce no instances of Job's guilt in any of the particulars that follow here, but seems resolved to calumniate boldly, and throw all the reproach he could on Job, not doubting but that some would cleave to him.

2. To pity those who are thus censured and condemned. Innocency itself will be no security against a false and foul tongue. Job, whom God himself praised as the best man in the world, is here represented by one of his friends, and he a wise and good man too, as one of the greatest villains in nature. Let us not think it strange if at any time we be thus blackened, but learn how to pass by evil report as well as good, and commit our cause, as Job did his, to him that judgeth righteously.

Let us see the particular articles of this charge.

I. He charged him with oppression and injustice, that, when he was in prosperity, he not only did no good with his wealth and power, but did a great deal of hurt with them. This was utterly false, as appears by the account Job gives of himself (~~Job~~ Job 29:12, etc.) and the character God gave of him, Job 1. And yet,

1. Eliphaz branches out this charge into divers particulars, with as much assurance as if he could call witnesses to prove upon oath every article of it. He tells him,

(1.) That he had been cruel and unmerciful to the poor. As a magistrate he ought to have protected them and seen them provided for; but Eliphaz suspects that he never did them any kindness, but all the mischief his power enabled him to do, — that, for an inconsiderable debt, he

demanded, and carried away by violence, a pawn of great value, even from his brother, whose honesty and sufficiency he could not but know (v. 6), *Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought*, or, as the Septuagint reads it, *Thou hast taken thy brethren for pledges*, and that for nought, imprisoned them, enslaved them, because they had nothing to pay, — that he had taken the very clothes of his insolvent tenants and debtors, so that he had *stripped them naked*, and left them so (the law of Moses forbade this, ^{<0226>}Exodus 22:26, ^{<0243>}Deuteronomy 24:13), — he had not been charitable to the poor, no, not to poor travellers, and poor widows: “*Thou hast not given so much as a cup of cold water* (which would have cost thee nothing) *to the weary to drink*, when he begged for it (v. 7) and was ready to perish for want of it, nay, *thou hast withholden bread from the hungry* in their extremity, hast not only not given it, but hast forbidden the giving of it, which is *withholding good from those to whom it is really due*, ^{<0172>}Proverbs 3:27. Poor widows, who while their husbands were living troubled nobody, but now were forced to seek relief, thou hast sent away empty from thy doors with a sad heart, v. 9. Those who came to thee for justice, thou didst send away unheard, unhelped; nay, though they came to thee full, thou didst squeeze them, and send them away empty; and, worst of all, *the arms of the fatherless have been broken*; those that could help themselves but little thou hast quite disabled to help themselves.” This which is the blackest part of the charge, is but insinuated: *The arms of the fatherless have been broken*. He does not say, “Thou has broken them,” but he would have it understood so, and if they be broken, and those who have power do not relieve them, they are chargeable with it. “They have been broken by those under thee, and thou hast connived at it, which brings thee under the guilt.”

(2.) That he had been partial to the rich and great (v. 8): “*As for the mighty man*, if he was guilty of any crime, he was never questioned for it: *he had the earth*; he *dwelt in it*. If he brought an action ever so unjustly, or if an action were ever so justly brought against him, yet he was sure to carry his cause in thy courts. The poor were not fed at thy door, while the rich were feasted at thy table.” Contrary to this is Christ's rule for hospitality (^{<0142>}Luke 14:12-14); and Solomon says, *He that gives to the rich shall come to poverty*.

2. He attributes all his present troubles to these supposed sins (v. 10, 11): “Those that are guilty of such practices as these commonly bring

themselves into just such a condition as thou art now in; and therefore we conclude thou hast been thus guilty.”

(1.) “The providence of God usually crosses and embarrasses such; and *snares are*, accordingly, *round about thee*, so that, which way soever thou steppes or lookest, thou findest thyself in distress; and others are as hard upon thee as thou hast been upon the poor.”

(2.) “Their consciences may be expected to terrify and accuse them. No sin makes a louder cry there than unmercifulness; and, accordingly, *sudden fear troubles thee*; and, though thou wilt not own it, it is guilt of this kind that creates thee all this terror.” Zophar had insinuated this, ^{<18>}Job 20:19, 20.

(3.) “They are brought to their wits' end, so amazed and bewildered that they know not what to do, and that also is thy case; for thou art *in darkness that thou canst not see* wherefore God contends with thee nor what is the best course for thee to take, *for abundance of waters cover thee*,” that is, “thou art in a mist, in the midst of dark waters, in the thick clouds of the sky.” Note, Those that have not shown mercy may justly be denied the comfortable hope that they shall find mercy; and then what can they expect but snares, and darkness, and continual fear?

II. He charged him with atheism, infidelity, and gross impiety, and thought this was at the bottom of his injustice and oppressiveness: he that did not fear God did not regard man. He would have it thought that Job was an Epicurean, who did indeed own the being of God, but denied his providence, and fancied that he confined himself to the entertainments of the upper world and never concerned himself in the inhabitants and affairs of this.

1. Eliphaz referred to an important truth, which he thought, if Job had duly considered it, would have prevented him from being so passionate in his complaints and bold in justifying himself (v. 12): *Is not God in the height of heaven?* Yes, no doubt he is. No heaven so high but God is there; and in the highest heavens, the heavens of the blessed, the residence of his glory, he is present in a special manner. There he is pleased to manifest himself in a way peculiar to the upper world, and thence he is pleased to manifest himself in a way suited to this lower world. There is his throne; there is his court: he is called *the Heavens*, ^{<20>}Daniel 4:26. Thus Eliphaz proves that a man cannot be profitable to God (v. 2), that he ought not to contend with

God (it is his folly if he does), and that we ought always to address ourselves to God with very great reverence; for when we *behold the height of the stars, how high they are*, we should, at the same time, also consider the transcendent majesty of God, who is above the stars, and how high he is.

2. He charged it upon Job that he made a bad use of this doctrine, which he might have made so good a use of, v. 13. “This is *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, fighting against religion with its own weapons, and turning its own artillery upon itself: thou art willing to own that *God is in the height of heaven* but thence thou inferrest, *How doth God know?*” Bad men expel the fear of God out of their hearts by banishing the eye of God out of the world (^{388D}Ezekiel 8:12), and care not what they do if they can but persuade themselves that God does not know. Eliphaz suspected that Job had such a notion of God as this, that, because he is in the height of heaven,

(1.) It is therefore impossible for him to see and hear what is done at so great a distance as this earth, especially since there is a *dark cloud* (v. 13), many *thick clouds* (v. 14), that come between him and us, and *are a covering to him*, so that he cannot see, much less can he judge of, the affairs of this lower world; as if God had *eyes of flesh*, ^{389B}Job 10:4. The interposing firmament is to him as transparent crystal, ^{391D}Ezekiel 1:22. Distance of place creates no difficulty to him who fills immensity, any more than distance of time to him who is eternal. Or,

(2.) That it is therefore below him, and a diminution to his glory, to take cognizance of this inferior part of the creation: *He walks in the circuit of heaven*, and has enough to do to enjoy himself and his own perfections and glory in that bright and quiet world; why should he trouble himself about us? This is gross absurdity, as well as gross impiety, which Eliphaz here fathers upon Job; for it supposes that the administration of government is a burden and disparagement to the supreme governor and that the acts of justice and mercy are a toil to a mind infinitely wise, holy, and good. If the sun, a creature, and inanimate, can with his light and influence reach this earth, and every part of it (^{395B}Psalms 19:6), even from that vast height of the visible heavens in which he is, and in the circuit of which he walks, and that through many a thick and dark cloud, shall we question it concerning the Creator?

JUDGMENTS EXECUTED ON THE WICKED

Eliphaz, having endeavoured to convict Job, by setting his sins (as he thought) in order before him, here endeavours to awaken him to a sight and sense of his misery and danger by reason of sin; and this he does by comparing his case with that of the sinners of the old world; as if he had said, “Thy condition is bad now, but, unless thou repent, it will be worse, as theirs was — theirs *who were overflowed with a flood*, as the old world (v. 16), and theirs the *remnant of whom the fire consumed*” (v. 20), namely, the Sodomites, who, in comparison of the old world, were but a remnant. And these two instances of the wrath of God against sin and sinners are more than once put together, for warning to a careless world, as by our Saviour (⁴¹⁷⁵Luke 17:26, etc.) and the apostle, ⁴¹¹⁵2 Peter 2:5, 6. Eliphaz would have Job to *mark the old way which wicked men have trodden* (v. 15) and see what came of it, what the end of their way was. Note, There is an old way which wicked men have trodden. Religion had but newly entered when sin immediately followed it. But though it is an old way, a broad way, a tracked way, it is a dangerous way and it leads to destruction; and it is good for us to mark it, that we may not dare to walk in it. Eliphaz here puts Job in mind of it, perhaps in opposition to what he had said of the prosperity of the wicked; as if he had said, “Thou canst find out here and there a single instance, it may be, of a wicked man ending his days in peace; but what is that to those two great instances of the final perdition of ungodly men — the drowning of the whole world and the burning of Sodom?” destructions by wholesale, in which he thinks Job may, as in a glass, see his own face. Observe,

1. The ruin of those sinners (v. 16): *They were cut down out of time*; that is, they were cut off in the midst of their days, when, as man's time then went, many of them might, in the course of nature, have lived some hundreds of years longer, which made their immature extirpation the more grievous. They were *cut down out of time*, to be hurried into eternity. And their foundation, the earth on which they built themselves and all their hopes, was *overflowed with a flood*, the flood which was *brought in upon the world of the ungodly*, ⁴¹¹⁵2 Peter 2:5. Note, Those who build upon the sand choose a foundation which will be *overflowed* when *the rains descend and the floods come* (⁴¹⁷²Matthew 7:27), and then their building must

needs fall and they perish in the ruins of it, and repent of their folly when it is too late.

2. The sin of those sinners, which brought that ruin (v. 17): *They said unto God, Depart from us.* Job had spoken of some who said so and yet prospered, ^{<3214>}Job 21:14. “But these did not (says Eliphaz); they found to their cost what it was to set God at defiance. Those who were resolved to lay the reins on the neck of their appetites and passions began with this; they said unto God, *Depart*; they abandoned all religion, hated the thoughts of it, and desired to live *without God in the world*; they shunned his word, and silenced conscience, his deputy. *And what can the Almighty do for them?*” Some make this to denote the justness of their punishment. They said to God, *Depart from us*; and then *what could the Almighty do with them but cut them off?* Those who will not submit to God’s golden sceptre must expect to be broken to pieces with his iron rod. Others make it to denote the injustice of their sin: *But what hath the Almighty done against them?* What iniquity have they found in him, or wherein has he wearied them? ^{<3163>}Micah 6:3; ^{<2115>}Jeremiah 2:5. Others make it to denote the reason of their sin: They say unto God, *Depart*, asking *what the Almighty can do to them.* “What has he done to oblige us? What can he do in a way of wrath to make us miserable, or in a way of favour to make us happy?” As they argue, ^{<3112>}Zephaniah 1:12. *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.* Eliphaz shows the absurdity of this in one word, and that is, calling God *the Almighty*; for, if he be so, what cannot he do? But it is not strange if those cast off all religion who neither dread God’s wrath nor desire his favour.

3. The aggravation of this sin: *Yet he had filled their houses with good things*, v. 18. Both those of the old world and those of Sodom had great plenty of all the delights of sense; for *they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold*, etc. (^{<2177>}Luke 17:27), so that they had no reason to ask *what the Almighty could do for them*, for they lived upon his bounty, no reason to bid him depart from them who had been so kind to them. Many have their houses full of goods but their hearts empty of grace, and thereby are marked for ruin.

4. The protestation which Eliphaz makes against the principles and practices of those wicked people: *But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.* Job had said so (^{<3216>}Job 21:16) and Eliphaz will not be behind him. If they cannot agree in their own principles concerning God, yet they agree

in renouncing the principles of those that live without God in the world. Note, Those that differ from each other in some matters of religion, and are engaged in disputes about them, yet ought unanimously and vigorously to appear against atheism and irreligion, and to take care that their disputes do not hinder either their vigour or unanimity in that common cause of God, that righteous cause.

5. The pleasure and satisfaction which the righteous shall have in this.

(1.) In seeing the wicked destroyed, v. 19. They shall *see it*, that is, observe it, and take notice of it (^{<3449>}Hosea 14:9); and they shall be *glad*, not to see their fellow-creatures miserable, or any secular turn of their own served, or point gained, but to see God glorified, the word of God fulfilled, the power of oppressors broken, and thereby the oppressed relieved — to see sin shamed, atheists and infidels confounded, and fair warning given to all others to shun such wicked courses. Nay, they shall *laugh them to scorn*, that is, they justly might do it, they shall do it, as God does it, in a holy manner, ^{<4004>}Psalm 2:4; ^{<4005>}Proverbs 1:26. They shall take occasion thence to expose the folly of sinners and show how ridiculous their principles are, though they call themselves wits. *Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength*; and see what comes of it, ^{<4517>}Psalm 52:7. Some understand this of righteous Noah and his family, who beheld the destruction of the old world and rejoiced in it, as he had grieved for their impiety. Lot, who saw the ruin of Sodom, had the same reason to rejoice, ^{<4007>}2 Peter 2:7, 8.

(2.) In seeing themselves distinguished (v. 20): “*Whereas our substance is not cut down*, as theirs was, and as thine is; we continue to prosper, which is a sign that we are the favourites of Heaven, and in the right.” The same rule that served him to condemn Job by served him to magnify himself and his companions by. *His* substance is cut down; therefore he is a wicked man; *ours* is not; therefore we are righteous. But it is a deceitful rule to judge by; for none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. If others be consumed, and we be not, instead of censuring them and lifting up ourselves, as Eliphaz does here, we ought to be thankful to God and take it for a warning to ourselves to prepare for similar calamities.

THE GOOD COUNSEL OF ELIPHAZ

Methinks I can almost forgive Eliphaz his hard censures of Job, which we had in the beginning of the chapter, though they were very unjust and unkind, for this good counsel and encouragement which he gives him in these verses with which he closes his discourse, and than which nothing could be better said, nor more to the purpose. Though he thought him a bad man, yet he saw reason to have hopes concerning him, that, for all this, he would be both pious and prosperous. But it is strange that out of the same mouth, and almost in the same breath, both sweet waters and bitter should proceed. Good men, though they may perhaps be put into a heat, yet sometimes will talk themselves into a better temper, and, it may be, sooner than another could talk them into it. Eliphaz had laid before Job the miserable condition of a wicked man, that he might frighten him into repentance. Here, on the other hand, he shows him the happiness which those may be sure of that do repent, that he might allure and encourage him to it. Ministers must try both ways in dealing with people, must speak to them from Mount Sinai by the terrors of the law, and from Mount Sion by the comforts of the gospel, must set before them both life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Now here observe,

I. The good counsel which Eliphaz gives to Job; and good counsel it is to us all, though, as to Job, it was built upon a false supposition that he was a wicked man and now a stranger and enemy to God.

1. *Acquaint now thyself with God. Acquiesce in God;* so some. It is our duty at all times, especially when we are in affliction, to accommodate ourselves to, and quiet ourselves in, all the disposals of the divine Providence. *Join thyself to him* (so some); fall in with his interests, and act no longer in opposition to him. Our translators render it well, "*Acquaint thyself with him;* be not such a stranger to him as thou hast made thyself by casting off the fear of him and restraining prayer before him." It is the duty and interest of every one of us to acquaint himself with God. We must get the knowledge of him, fix our affections on him, join ourselves to him in a covenant of friendship, and then set up, and keep up, a constant correspondence with him in the ways he has appointed. It is our honour that we are made capable of this acquaintance, our misery that by sin we

have lost it, our privilege that through Christ we are invited to return to it; and it will be our unspeakable happiness to contract and cultivate this acquaintance.

2. *“Be at peace, at peace with thyself, not fretful, uneasy, and in confusion; let not thy heart be troubled, but be quiet and calm, and well composed. Be at peace with thy God; be reconciled to him. Do not carry on this unholy war. Thou complainest that God is thy enemy; be thou his friend.”* It is the great concern of every one of us to make our peace with God, and it is necessary in order to our comfortable acquaintance with him; for *how can two walk together except they be agreed?* ^{<400B>}Amos 3:3. This we must do quickly, now, before it be too late. *Agree with thy adversary while thou art in the way.* This we are earnestly urged to do. Some read it, *“Acquaint thyself, I pray thee, with him, and be at peace.”* God himself beseeches us; ministers, in Christ's stead, pray us to be reconciled. Can we gainsay such entreaties?

3. *Receive the law from his mouth, v. 22.* “Having made thy peace with God, submit to his government, and resolve to be ruled by him, that thou mayest keep thyself in his love.” We receive our being and maintenance from God. From him we hope to receive our bliss, and from him we must receive law. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* ^{<400B>}Acts 9:6. Which way soever we receive the intimations of his will we must have our eye to him; whether he speaks by scripture, ministers, conscience, or Providence, we must take the word as from his mouth and bow our souls to it. Though, in Job's time, we do not know that there was any written word, yet there was a revelation of God's will to be received. Eliphaz looked upon Job as a wicked man, and was pressing him to repent and reform. Herein consists the conversion of a sinner — his receiving the law from God's mouth and no longer from the world and the flesh. Eliphaz, being now in contest with Job, appeals to the word of God for the ending of the controversy. “Receive that, and be determined by it.” *To the law and to the testimony.*

4. *Lay up his word in thy heart.* It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it, ^{<400B>}Proverbs 3:18. We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe; and we must lay it up in our hearts, as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion and we may neither lose it wholly nor be at a loss for it in a time of need.

5. *Return to the Almighty, v. 23.* “Do not only turn from sin, but turn to God and thy duty. Do not only turn towards the Almighty in some good

inclinations and good beginnings, but *return to him*; return home to him, quite to him, so as to reach to the Almighty, by a universal reformation, an effectual thorough change of thy heart and life, and a firm resolution to cleave to him;” so Mr. Poole.

6. *Put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle.* This was the advice Zophar gave him, ^{<J114>}Job 11:14. “*Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle.* Put iniquity far off, the further the better, not only from thy heart and hand, but from thy house. Thou must not only not be wicked thyself, but must reprove and restrain sin in those that are under thy charge.” Note, Family reformation is needful reformation; we and our house must serve the Lord.

II. The good encouragement which Eliphaz gives Job, that he shall be very happy, if he will but take this good counsel. In general, “*Thereby good shall come unto thee* (v. 21); the good that has now departed from thee, all the good thy heart can desire, temporal, spiritual, eternal good, shall come to thee. God shall come to thee, into covenant and communion with thee; and he brings all good with him, all good in him. Thou art now ruined and brought down, but, if thou return to God, *thou shalt be built up* again, and thy present ruins shall be repaired. Thy family shall be built up in children, thy estate in wealth, and thy soul in holiness and comfort.” The promises which Eliphaz here encourages Job with are reducible to three heads: —

1. That his estate should prosper, and temporal blessings should be bestowed abundantly on him; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. It is promised,

(1.) That he shall be very rich (v. 24): “*Thou shalt lay up gold as dust*, in such great abundance, and *shalt have plenty of silver* (v. 25), whereas now thou art poor and stripped of all.” Job had been rich. Eliphaz suspected he got his riches by fraud and oppression, and therefore they were taken from him: but if he would return to God and his duty,

[1.] He should have more wealth than ever he had, not only thousands of sheep and oxen, the wealth of farmers, but thousands of gold and silver, the wealth of princes, ^{<J15>}Job 3:15. Abundantly more riches, true riches, are to be got by the service of God than by the service of the world.

[2.] He should have it more sure to him: “*Thou shalt lay it up* in good hands, and hold that which is got by thy piety by a surer tenure than that

which thou didst get by thy iniquity.” *Thou shalt have silver of strength* (for so the word is), which, being honestly got, will wear well — silver like steel.

[3.] He should, by the grace of God, be kept from setting his heart so much upon it as Eliphaz thought he had done; and then wealth is a blessing indeed when we are not ensnared with the love of it. Thou shalt *lay up gold*; but how? Not as thy treasure and portion, but *as dust*, and *as the stones of the brooks*. So little shalt thou value it or expect from it that thou shalt lay it at thy feet (⁴⁰⁶⁵Acts 4:35), not in thy bosom.

(2.) That yet he shall be very safe. Whereas men's riches usually expose them to danger, and he had owned that in his prosperity he *was not in safety* (⁴⁰⁸⁵Job 3:26), now he might be secure; for *the Almighty shall be thy defender*; nay, he shall be *thy defence*, v. 25. He *shall be thy gold*; so it is in the margin, and it is the same word that is used (v. 24) for gold, but it signifies also a strong-hold, because *money is a defence*, ²⁰⁷²Ecclesiastes 7:12. Worldlings make gold their god, saints make God their gold; and those that are enriched with his favour and grace may truly be said *to have abundance of the best gold*, and best laid up. We read it, “*He shall be thy defence* against the incursions of neighbouring spoilers: thy wealth shall not then lie exposed as it did to Sabeans and Chaldeans,” which, some think, is the meaning of that, *Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle*, taking it as a promise. “The iniquity or wrong designed against thee shall be put off and shall not reach thee.” Note, Those must needs be safe that have Omnipotence itself for their defence, ³⁹⁰¹Psalm 91:1-3.

2. That his soul should prosper, and he should be enriched with spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings.

(1.) That he should live a life of complacency in God (v. 26): “*For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty*; and thus the Almighty comes to be thy gold by thy delighting in him, as worldly people delight in their money. He shall be thy wealth, thy defence, thy dignity; for he shall be thy delight.” The way to have our heart's desire is to make God our heart's delight, ⁴⁸⁷⁰Psalm 37:4. If God give us himself to be our joy, he will deny us nothing that is good for us. “Now, God is a terror to thee; he is so by thy own confession (⁴⁸⁰⁴Job 6:4; 16:9; 19:11); but, if thou wilt return to him, then, and not till then, *he will be thy delight*; and it shall be as much a pleasure to thee to think of him as ever it was a pain.” No delight is comparable to the delight which gracious souls have in the Almighty; and

those that acquaint themselves with him, and submit themselves entirely to him, shall find his favour to be, not only their strength, but their song.

(2.) That he should have a humble holy confidence towards God, such as those are said to have *whose hearts condemn them not*, ~~GEN~~ 1 John 3:21. “Then shalt thou *lift up thy face to God* with boldness, and not be afraid, as thou now art, to draw near to him. Thy countenance is now fallen, and thou lookest dejected; but, when thou hast made thy peace with God, thou shalt blush no more, tremble no more, and hang thy head no more, as thou dost now, but shalt cheerfully, and with a gracious assurance, show thyself to him, pray before him, and expect blessings from him.”

(3.) That he should maintain a constant communion with God, “The correspondence, once settled, shall be kept up to thy unspeakable satisfaction. Letters shall be both statedly and occasionally interchanged between thee and heaven,” v. 27.

[1.] “Thou shalt by prayer send letters to God: *Thou shalt make thy prayer*” (the word is, *Thou shalt multiply* thy prayers) “unto him, and he will not think thy letters troublesome, though many and long. The oftener we come to the throne of grace the more welcome. Under all thy burdens, in all thy wants, cares, and fears, thou shalt send to heaven for guidance and strength, wisdom, and comfort, and good success.”

[2.] “He shall, by his providence and grace, answer those letters, and give thee what thou askest of him, either in kind or kindness: *He shall hear thee*, and make it to appear he does so by what he does for thee and in thee.”

[3.] “Then thou shalt by thy praises reply to the gracious answers which he sent thee: *Thou shalt pay thy vows*, and that shall be acceptable to him and fetch in further mercy.” Note, When God performs that which in our distress we prayed for we must make conscience of performing that which we then promised, else we do not deal honestly. If we promised nothing else we promised to be thankful, and that is enough, for it includes all, ~~GEN~~ Psalm 116:14.

(4.) That he should have inward satisfaction in the management of all his outward affairs (v. 28): “*Thou shalt decree a thing and it shall be established unto thee*,” that is, “Thou shalt frame all thy projects and purposes with so much wisdom, and grace, and resignation to the will of

God, that the issue of them shall be to thy heart's content, just as thou wouldst have it to be. Thou shalt *commit thy works unto the Lord* by faith and prayer, and then *thy thoughts shall be established*; thou shalt be easy and pleased, whatever occurs, ^{<1068>}Proverbs 16:3. This the grace of God shall work in thee; nay, sometimes the providence of God shall give thee the very thing thou didst desire and pray for, and give it thee in thy own way, and manner, and time. *Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*" When at any time an affair succeeds just according to the scheme we laid, and our measures are in nothing broken, nor are we put upon new counsels, then we must own the performance of this promise, *Thou shalt decree a thing and it shall be established unto thee.* "Whereas now thou complainest of darkness round about thee, then *the light shall shine on thy ways*;" that is, "God shall guide and direct thee, and then it will follow, of course, that he shall prosper and succeed thee in all thy undertakings. God's wisdom shall be thy guide, his favour thy comfort, and thy ways shall be so under both those lights that thou shalt have a comfortable enjoyment of what is present and a comfortable prospect of what is future," ^{<907>}Psalm 90:17.

(5.) That even in times of common calamity and danger he should have abundance of joy and hope (v. 29): "*When men are cast down round about thee, cast down in their affairs, cast down in their spirits, sinking, desponding, and ready to despair, then shalt thou say, There is lifting up.* Thou shalt find that in thyself which will not only bear thee up under thy troubles, and keep thee from fainting, but lift thee up above thy troubles and enable thee to rejoice evermore." When men's *hearts fail them for fear*, then shall Christ's disciples *lift up their heads for joy*, ^{<1216>}Luke 21:26-28. Thus are they made to *ride upon the high places of the earth* (^{<2584>}Isaiah 58:14), and that which will lift them up is the belief of this, that God will save the humble person. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted, not only in honour, but in comfort.

3. That he should be a blessing to his country and an instrument of good to many (v. 30): *God shall*, in answer to thy prayers, *deliver the island of the innocent*, and have a regard therein to *the pureness of thy hands*, which is necessary to the acceptableness of our prayers, ^{<5428>}1 Timothy 2:8. But, because we may suppose the innocent not to need deliverance (it was guilty Sodom that wanted the benefit of Abraham's intercession), I incline to the marginal reading, *The innocent shall deliver the island*, by their advice (^{<2094>}Ecclesiastes 9:14, 15) and by their prayers and their interest in heaven, ^{<4072>}Acts 27:24. Or, *He shall deliver those that are not innocent*,

and they are delivered by the pureness of thy hands; as it may be read, and most probably. Note, A good man is a public good. Sinners fare the better for saints, whether they are aware of it or no. If Eliphaz intended hereby (as some think he did) to insinuate that Job's prayers were not prevailing, nor his hands pure (for then he would have relieved others, much more himself), he was afterwards made to see his error, when it appeared that Job had a better interest in heaven than he had; for he and his three friends, who in this matter were not innocent, were delivered by *the pureness of Job's hands,* ~~Job~~ Job 42:8.