

**Job 15**  
**June 7, 2026**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Here we go again. Eliphaz is getting ready to open his mouth again with words that are not helpful.

**Transition:** In his first speech (Job 4–5), Eliphaz had displayed some kindness toward Job; but you will not find patience or kindness in this second address. Nor will you find any new ideas: Eliphaz merely repeats his former thesis that man is a sinner and God must punish sinners (5:17–19). Let’s read the text and see what we can learn.

**BOOK:**

**Eliphaz**

**15** Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:  
<sup>2</sup> “Would a wise man answer with empty notions  
or fill his belly with the hot east wind?  
<sup>3</sup> Would he argue with useless words,  
with speeches that have no value?  
<sup>4</sup> But you even undermine piety  
and hinder devotion to God.  
<sup>5</sup> Your sin prompts your mouth;  
you adopt the tongue of the crafty.  
<sup>6</sup> Your own mouth condemns you, not mine;  
your own lips testify against you.  
<sup>7</sup> “Are you the first man ever born?  
Were you brought forth before the hills?  
<sup>8</sup> Do you listen in on God’s council?  
Do you limit wisdom to yourself?  
<sup>9</sup> What do you know that we do not know?  
What insights do you have that we do not have?  
<sup>10</sup> The gray-haired and the aged are on our side,  
men even older than your father.  
<sup>11</sup> Are God’s consolations not enough for you,  
words spoken gently to you?  
<sup>12</sup> Why has your heart carried you away,  
and why do your eyes flash,  
<sup>13</sup> so that you vent your rage against God  
and pour out such words from your mouth?  
<sup>14</sup> “What is man, that he could be pure,  
or one born of woman, that he could be righteous?  
<sup>15</sup> If God places no trust in his holy ones,  
if even the heavens are not pure in his eyes,

16 how much less man, who is vile and corrupt,  
who drinks up evil like water!  
17 “Listen to me and I will explain to you;  
let me tell you what I have seen,  
18 what wise men have declared,  
hiding nothing received from their fathers  
19 (to whom alone the land was given  
when no alien passed among them):  
20 All his days the wicked man suffers torment,  
the ruthless through all the years stored up for him.  
21 Terrifying sounds fill his ears;  
when all seems well, marauders attack him.  
22 He despairs of escaping the darkness;  
he is marked for the sword.  
23 He wanders about—food for vultures (or looking for food);  
he knows the day of darkness is at hand.  
24 Distress and anguish fill him with terror;  
they overwhelm him, like a king poised to attack,  
25 because he shakes his fist at God  
and vaunts himself against the Almighty,  
26 defiantly charging against him  
with a thick, strong shield.  
27 “Though his face is covered with fat  
and his waist bulges with flesh,  
28 he will inhabit ruined towns  
and houses where no one lives,  
houses crumbling to rubble.  
29 He will no longer be rich and his wealth will not endure,  
nor will his possessions spread over the land.  
30 He will not escape the darkness;  
a flame will wither his shoots,  
and the breath of God’s mouth will carry him away.  
31 Let him not deceive himself by trusting what is worthless,  
for he will get nothing in return.  
32 Before his time he will be paid in full,  
and his branches will not flourish.  
33 He will be like a vine stripped of its unripe grapes,  
like an olive tree shedding its blossoms.  
34 For the company of the godless will be barren,  
and fire will consume the tents of those who love bribes.  
35 They conceive trouble and give birth to evil;  
their womb fashions deceit.”

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

**LOOK:**

**Be careful about judging someone's situation without knowing all the facts.** Eliphaz assumed Job's suffering must have been caused by serious sin. He was convinced he was right, but he lacked the full picture. Let's avoid making assumptions. Show humility and compassion rather than rushing to explain their circumstances.

Q: Do I tend to diagnose people's problems before I truly understand them?

**Recognize the limits of human wisdom.** Eliphaz speaks as though his understanding is unquestionable (Job 15:7-10), yet he is mistaken about Job. We should hold our convictions with humility. God's perspective is always greater than ours, and we should remain teachable.

Q: Am I willing to admit that I may not have the whole story?

**Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W.W. (1996). *Be Patient*. (pp. 57-60) Victor Books**

**1. Eliphaz: two warnings (Job 15)**

In his first speech (Job 4–5), Eliphaz had displayed some kindness toward Job; but you find neither patience nor kindness in this second address. Nor do you find any new ideas: Eliphaz merely repeats his former thesis that man is a sinner and God must punish sinners (5:17–19). He issued two warnings to Job.

*Job lacks wisdom (Job 15:1–16).* How did Eliphaz know this? For one thing, he had listened to *Job's words* (vv. 1–6) and found them to be nothing but wind. Job's ideas were only “empty notions” and “useless words” (vv. 2–3, NIV). Job's words came from a belly filled with the hot desert wind (Jonah 4:8) and not from a heart filled with true wisdom. Eliphaz was using one of the oldest tactics in debate—if you can't refute your opponent's arguments, attack his words and make them sound like a lot of “hot air.”

Samuel Johnson was the “literary czar” of eighteenth-century England, a man who loved to sit by the hour with his friends and discuss any and all topics. But Johnson always had to win the argument, whether he was right or not. The poet and playwright Oliver Goldsmith said, “There is no arguing with Johnson; for if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it!” Eliphaz was like that.

Eliphaz not only heard Job's words, but he *saw where those words led* (Job 15:4). “But you even undermine piety and hinder devotion to God” (v. 4, NIV). If everybody believed as Job believed—that God does not always punish the wicked and reward the godly—then what motive would people have for obeying God? Religion would not be worth it! *But this is the devil's theology, the very thing that God was using Job to refute!* If people serve God only for what they get out of it, then they are not serving God at all, they are only serving themselves by making God their servant. Their “religion” is only a pious system for promoting selfishness and not for glorifying God.

When God called Israel and established His covenant with her, the people's motive for obedience was fear of punishment. If they obeyed the law, God would bless them; if they disobeyed, He would punish them. But this was during the infancy of the nation, when God dealt with them as with children. Children understand rewards and punishments far better than they do ethics and morality. But when the new generation was about to enter Canaan, Moses gave them a higher motive for obedience: their love for God (Deut. 6:4–5; 7:7; 10:12–16; 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9). They were no longer children, and God didn't need to frighten them (or “bribe” them) into obeying Him. Love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:8–10) and the highest motive for obedience (John 14:15).

Job's words told Eliphaz that Job had a *wicked heart* (Job 15:5–6). “Your sins are telling your mouth what to say!” (v. 5, TLB; see Matt. 12:34–37) Job was affirming his innocence, but Eliphaz interpreted his words as proving Job's guilt! What hope was there for Job when his friends would not even believe what he was saying?

Job lacked wisdom because *he lacked experience* (Job 15:7–10). At this point, Eliphaz turned on the sarcasm, another proof that he has run out of something intelligent to say. This is another debater's trick: when you can't refute the speech, ridicule the speaker. Job never claimed that he was the first man God created, that he was God's confidant, or that God had given him a monopoly on wisdom. Job knew that his friends were older than he was, but age is no guarantee of wisdom (32:9; Ps. 119:97–104).

According to Eliphaz, Job's attitude was wrong because he refused God's help (Job 15:11–16). Eliphaz saw himself and his friends as God's messengers, sent to bring Job the consolation he

needed. Their words were “spoken gently” (v. 11, NIV), but Job’s words were spoken in anger. The three friends were serving God, but Job was resisting God.

Then Eliphaz repeated the message he had given in his first speech (vv. 14–16; 4:17–19). Job had refused to accept it the first time, but perhaps he would accept it now that he had suffered more. If heaven is not pure before God, nor the angels that inhabit heaven, how can a mere man claim to be innocent? Man is born with a sinful nature and has a thirst for sin, and Job was no exception. All of this prepared the way for Eliphaz’s second warning.

*God judges the wicked (Job 15:17–35).* In his first speech, Eliphaz had described the blessings of the godly man (5:17–26); but now he describes the sufferings of the ungodly man. Eliphaz was careful to remind Job that these were not his ideas alone, but that the ancients all agreed with him. If Job rejected what Eliphaz said, he was turning his back on the wisdom of their fathers. Eliphaz was a man who found great strength in tradition, forgetting that “tradition is a guide and not a jailer” (W. Somerset Maugham).

When you read this description of a wicked man, you realize that Eliphaz is talking about Job. Job was in pain, darkness, trouble, anguish, and fear. He was defying God and challenging God to meet him and prove him guilty. The fire had destroyed Job’s sheep (1:16; 15:30, 34); invaders had stolen his camels (1:17; 15:21); he had lost all his wealth (v. 29); and his eldest son’s house had been destroyed by wind and all Job’s children with it (1:19; 15:28). Eliphaz was not at all subtle in his approach; everybody knew he was talking about Job.

But in his closing words (vv. 34–35), Eliphaz gave the hardest blow of all: He called Job a hypocrite and a godless man, and he blamed him for the tragedies that had befallen him and his family. Job had secretly “conceived” sin, and now sin had given birth to suffering and death (James 1:14–15; Isa. 59:4; Ps. 7:14). “Their womb fashions deceit” is the NIV rendering of Job 15:35, and the word translated “womb” is the same as “belly” in verse 1. According to Eliphaz, if you x-rayed Job, all you would find would be hot air and sin! “Hypocrite” is a key word in the vocabulary of Job’s three friends. Bildad suggested that Job was a hypocrite (8:13), and both Zophar and Elihu will take up the theme (20:5; 34:30; 36:13). Of course, Job denied the accusation (13:16; 17:8; 27:8) and argued that neither God nor his friends could prove it true.

The problem with Eliphaz’s statement about the judgment of the wicked is that *it is not always true in this life*. Many wicked people go through life apparently happy and successful, while many godly people experience suffering and seeming failure. It is true that *ultimately* the wicked suffer and the godly are blessed; but, meanwhile, it often looks like the situation is reversed (Ps. 73; Jer. 12:1–4). Furthermore, God gives sunshine to the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). He is long-suffering toward sinners (2 Peter 3:9) and waits for His goodness to lead them to repentance (Rom. 2:4; Luke 15:17–19).

The greatest judgment God could send to the wicked in this life would be to *let them have their own way*. “They have their reward” (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16). The only heaven the godless will know is the enjoyment they have on earth in this life, and God is willing for them to have it. The only suffering the godly will experience is in this life, for in heaven there will be no pain or tears. Furthermore, the suffering that God’s people experience now is working *for* them and will one

day lead to glory (1 Peter 1:6–8; 5:10; 2 Cor. 4:16–18; Rom. 8:18). Eliphaz and his friends had the situation all confused.

**Zuck, R. B. (1985). *Job*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 736-738) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

### **1. Eliphaz's second speech (chap. 15)**

In his first speech Eliphaz approached Job with a degree of decorum and courtesy, but not so this time. Now he lambasted the bereaved, dejected sufferer with the notion that he was a hardened sinner, disrespectful of his elders and defiant toward God.

#### **a. A reprimand of Job's perverse attitude (15:1–16)**

15:1–3. Perturbed by Job's irreverent talk (vv. 1–6) and assumed wisdom (vv. 7–16), **Eliphaz** accused the protagonist of **empty notions**. Like **the hot east wind**, the dreaded desert sirocco, Job's **words** blew hard but were useless (cf. 8:2). "Useless" translates *sākan* ("to benefit or serve," plus the negative particle *lō'*; cf. 22:2). Job later returned the accusation by calling Eliphaz's spiels windy (16:3).

15:4–6. According to Eliphaz, Job (**you** is emphatic in Heb.) hindered the cause of reverence (cf. 6:14) before **God**. Job's words stemmed from **sin** within, and therefore were the basis of his being condemned. Job's present attempt at self-defense (apart from his past sins Eliphaz said Job was guilty of) was sufficient cause for God's prosecuting him. **Your own mouth condemns you** is a response to Job's words in 9:20 ("my mouth would condemn me") and 10:2 ("Do not condemn me"; cf. comments on 40:8).

15:7–10. Eliphaz became Job's prosecutor, not his consoler. He lambasted Job for claiming to be the wisest person alive, as if he were the oldest and had some kind of inside track to **God's council** chambers. But Job had only claimed his knowledge was equal, not superior, to theirs (cf. 12:3; 13:2). Eliphaz lashed out that Job knew nothing they did **not know** (cf. 13:2). *They were older*—and therefore, they implied, wiser—than Job. To contest their theology was to show disrespect for the elderly, an unthinkable insult in those days.

15:11–13. Job ought to be content, Eliphaz felt, with the assurance that God was actually consoling him through Eliphaz. His **consolations** were **spoken** of **gently** by Eliphaz (5:17–27). He said that Job, in his emotional eruptions, became irrational, venting his **rage against God**. Such an attitude, resulting in venomous **words** against man and God, could hardly go unpunished. Eliphaz probably had in mind Job's audacious words in such verses as 6:4; 7:15–20; 10:2–3, 16–17; 13:20–27.

15:14–16. No **man** (*'ēnōš*, "weak, mortal man"; cf. comments on 4:17), **born of woman** (a pickup of Job's phrase in 14:1; cf. 25:4), can **be pure** or **righteous** before **God**. So how could Job claim innocence (9:21; 12:4) when not even angels (**holy ones**) and **the heavens** are **pure**? This repeats what Eliphaz argued earlier (4:17). Surely *Job is vile* (i.e., repulsive) **and corrupt** (sour like milk; cf. Pss. 14:3; 53:3) and guzzles sin as if it were **water**.

**b. A reminder of the fate of the wicked (15:17–35)**

15:17–20. To his own observations (**what I have seen**; cf. 4:8) Eliphaz added the authority of the ancients (as Bildad had done; 8:8). The sages of the ages, **wise men** from times before their **land** had become infested with **alien** philosophies (perhaps suggesting that Job’s thinking had been thereby corrupted), could inform Job that **the wicked man suffers torment**. “Suffers torment” translates the Hebrew word *hōl*, which means “to writhe or whirl.” Here in its intensive form it speaks of writhing or tossing about in pain or anxiety (cf. “swirling” in Jer. 23:19 and “in great distress” in Es. 4:4). **Ruthless** means “terror-striking,” giving the idea that Job was a tyrant who struck fear into other people.

15:21–26. Eliphaz enumerated (in vv. 21–35) 17 terrible troubles that befall a sinner. This friend-turned-enemy hoped to force Job to repent of his terrible ways. (1) **Terrifying sounds** are heard by a tyrant who terrifies others (cf. “ruthless,” v. 20). Job had certainly heard some terrifying news (1:14–19). (2) **Marauders attack him**, which is exactly what the Sabeans and Chaldeans had done to Job’s livestock and servants (1:15, 17; cf. Job’s words about marauders in 12:6). (3) **Darkness** (*hōšek*, also used by Eliphaz in 15:23, 30; cf. 3:4; 10:21) haunts him, possibly a reference to the darkness of death. (4) **He is marked for the sword**, that is, destined to be a victim of violence, possibly because he himself was violent against others. (5) Without food and desperate, **he wanders** aimlessly, trying to escape his attackers, sensing that any day he might be killed (he would enter **the day of darkness**; cf. vv. 22, 30). (6) **Distress and anguish** hound him **like a king ready to attack** (cf. Job’s words about **terror** in 9:34; 13:21; also cf. 18:11; 20:25). Job had said God overpowers man (14:20), but Eliphaz pointed out that a person’s own anguish, not God, destroys him.

Why such misfortunes? The reason, this verbal pugilist said, is that a sinner is defiant (**shakes his fist**) and arrogant against **God (vaunts himself)**, attacking God head-on. This contradicted Job’s words that God was attacking *him* (7:20; 13:24; cf. 19:11; 33:10).

15:27–35. The first six calamities befalling the wicked (vv. 21–24) are followed by an explanation of the reasons for such punishment (vv. 25–26). Now the order is reversed; Eliphaz first gave a reason (v. 27) for the disasters he then mentioned (vv. 28–35). Self-indulgence (a fattened **face** and bulging midline) was the reason. A chubby person represented self-absorbed luxury and spiritual insensitivity (cf. Ps. 73:7, NIV Jer. 5:28).

Eliphaz proceeded with his list: (7) The wealthy wicked will come to ruin, forced to live in ghost **towns**, abandoned **houses**, and **crumbling** residences. (8) The transgressor will lose his **wealth**, a cruel recall of Job’s privation (Job 1:13–17; cf. 20:12–26). (9) **Darkness** (cf. 15:22–23) overtakes him. (10) Fire will blight his crops. (11) He will vanish, being blown **away** by the hot anger of God’s **breath**. (12) A wicked person who trusts in **worthless** possessions will actually gain **nothing**. This supported Eliphaz’s contention that Job was trusting in his opulence, an accusation Job later firmly denied (31:24–25). (13) Though gaining nothing materially (15:31), the rebel **will be paid** (i.e., he will receive from God the deserved punishment for his sin). (14) Like a **vine** without **grapes**, and a dying **olive tree**, a reprobate dies prematurely, thus losing his hoped-for affluence and security. (15) Nor, said Eliphaz, will **the godless** (cf. 8:12–13) have

children. (16) And an unjust person who accepts **bribes**, thereby favoring some and mistreating others, will have his **tents** burned (cf. the burning of Job’s possessions by “the fire of God,” 1:16; also cf. the trio’s references to tents, 4:21; 8:22; 18:15; 20:26). (17) Using the figure of conception and childbirth, he said that wicked people are characterized by **trouble** (*’āmāl*; cf. comments on 3:10; 16:2), **evil** (*’āwen*, used before by Eliphaz in 4:8 and 5:6, “hardship”; and later in 22:15), and **deceit**.

By affirming that all these mishaps come to wicked people in this life, Eliphaz did not have all the facts. His attempt to jolt Job into repentance failed.

**Garrett, D. A. (1998). *The Poetic and Wisdom Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 207). Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

**Eliphaz’s Second Response (15:1–35).** Eliphaz now directly accused Job of sin and threw Job’s own words back into his face (see 9:20). He was alarmed that Job’s attitude might undermine piety and once again claimed that Job needed to recognize his limitations and return to traditional wisdom.

He repeated the argument that since all people are sinful God is justified in punishing whenever He chooses. Another poem on the fate of the wicked was no doubt meant to convict Job and persuade him to repent of whatever sin he had committed.

Does the Book of Job deny the universal sinfulness of humanity? Texts like 15:14–16 give an orthodox if somewhat harsh statement of universal depravity. On the other hand, this text is put in the mouth of Eliphaz, who would be shown to be in the wrong. The characterization of Job as “blameless” (1:1) also seems to contradict universal depravity.

Nevertheless, the book does not claim that some people are sinless. The prologue does not say Job had never committed any sin. It only stresses that he was righteous and that his suffering had nothing to do with any past or potential guilt on his part. Job confessed to having sinned in life (14:16–17) although he was certain he had not deserved what had befallen him.

The book does not imply that everything the three friends said was wrong. Most of what they asserted fully agrees with the rest of the Bible (see Prov. 6:12–15). But they misapplied the biblical teachings. The doctrine of universal sin made them cynical about people (and even about God, although they did not realize it). And the doctrine of retribution made them judgmental. The book does not deny that all have sinned, but it forces the reader to think in terms other than a simple equation of guilt and punishment.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Job 15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**