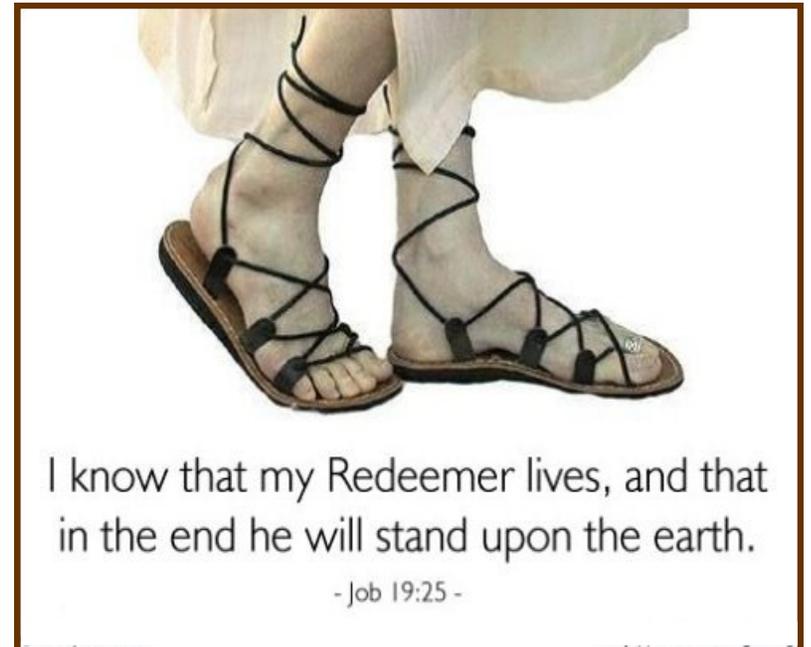


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# **Job**

## **Chapter Five:**



***The Discourse of Eliphaz  
Continues***

*The commentary on the Book of Job, is by Saint Thomas Aquinas and was translated by Brian Mulladay and edited by Rev. Joseph Kenny, O.P. The book shows how human affairs are ruled by divine providence using probable arguments.*

## **CHAPTER FIVE: THE DISCOURSE OF ELIPHAZ CONTINUES**

### **The First Lesson: Only the Blameworthy are Punished**

1 Call now if there be any that will answer you. 2 Wrath kills the fool, and jealousy slays the simple. 3 I have seen the fool taking root, I suddenly cursed his beauty. 4. His sons are far from health, they will be crushed at the city gate, and there will be no one to deliver them. 5 The hungry will his harvest, armed men will seize from him, and the thirsty will drink after his wealth. 6 Nothing on earth happens without cause; for affliction does not arise from the dust. 7 But man is born to toil and the bird to fly.

Because Eliphaz remembered in the revelation made to him, among other things that men “dwell in houses of clay whose foundation is in the dust and die eaten as by a moth,” (4:19), he wants now to demonstrate this in the different conditions of men. For there is no condition of man in which there is no tendency to sin. Now there are two conditions of man. Some are treat and haughty in spirit and are easily provoked to anger because anger is the desire for revenge originating from a previous injury. Thus the more haughty a man is in his soul, the more he thinks himself offended for a slight cause and is therefore more easily provoked to anger. Therefore he says, “Wrath kills the fool,” because a man especially exceeds the boundaries of reason through his pride, whereas humility prepares the way of wisdom. As Proverbs says, “Where there is humility, there is wisdom.” (11:2) The foolishness of anger also corresponds with this because the angry man, as Aristotle teaches, uses even reason in searching for revenge for an injury, but he uses it wrongly when he does not guard the moderation of reason in his revenge. The perversion of reason is foolishness. Other men are timid and these are prone to envy. So he continues, “and jealousy slays the simple.” He says this with good reason. For envy is nothing else but sadness about the prosperity of another in that the prosperity of the other is thought to impede one’s own prosperity. When someone does not think that he can prosper together with others who are also prospering, this happens from smallness of soul. So it is clear that man, in whatever condition he exists, is prone to some sin. For it would be easy to adduce things similar to these concerning other sins.

He lists the abundance of goods after the immunity from evil. First, as to the fertility of the earth, he says, “You shall be in league with the stones of the field,” i.e. the stony and sterile land will bear fruit for you. As Deuteronomy says, “Glean honey from the rock,” and so on. (32:13) Second, as to the brute animals he says, “and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you,” for they will not attack you. These two verses can also be explained in another way. The stones can mean hard and rude men; and the beasts, cruel men. Third, he speaks about the members of his household saying, “and you will know that your tent is at peace.” because the members of your household will be at peace with each other Fourth, he speaks about his wife in a special way saying, “Seeing your likeness you will not sin,” as if to say: You will have a virtuous and peaceful wife with whom you can dwell intimately without sin. Fifth, as to his children, “Your children will be like the grass of the earth,” i.e. you will have many children and grandchildren. Sixth, as to the peace and quiet of death he says, “You shall come to your grave in a ripe old age,” in prosperity, not despoiled of your property, “like the stock of grain is reaped in due season,” as though not anticipated by a sudden and untimely death.

Finally, he approves what he has said, “Lo, what we have investigated is true.” Since he thought Job was so prostrate with sadness that he would not think about these things much, he gets his attention back saying, “Once heard, study this with an attentive mind.

***END OF CHAPTER 5***

Since he had mentioned seven tribulations, he now enumerates them. Note that sometimes adversity is the result of a particular danger for an individual person, which is sometimes even against his corporeal life which is sometimes taken away by withdrawing the necessities of life. To describe this he says, "In famine, he will redeem you from death," as if to say: You will suffer famine in being reproved by God, but God will free you and you will not die from this. This is the first trial. Sometimes life is lost by the violence of someone actively inflicting harm. To describe this he says, "and in war from the stroke," i.e. the power, "of the sword," as it say: For war will come upon you but you will not be delivered into the power of the sword. This is the second trial. Corporeal life is also taken away by natural death, but this does not figure among the trials since the nature of man demands this. However, sometimes there is a personal danger which consists in the loss of the honor which he enjoys in civil life. About this he says, "You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue." The scourge of the tongue is the detraction of someone seriously trying to destroy another's reputation. A man is then hidden from the scourge when his deeds which form the basis of this defamation are hidden from the detractor. This is the third trial. Sometimes there is adversity from a more general danger, which threatens persons or property. This happens to persons, for example, when the army of the enemy from whom men commonly fear death or captivity unexpectedly overruns their country. Expressing this trial he says, "and you shall not fear damage when it comes," as it to say: You will not fear when damage to your country from an enemy threatens. A common danger threatens property either by the barrenness of the earth in time of famine, or by some devastation of the crops by the enemy. As to these trials he says, "And you shall laugh at destruction and famine." This means: you will have an abundance which will be a subject of joy for you. In this, then, he treats the fifth and the sixth trial. Sometimes there is adversity from the attack of brute animals either individually or in groups. About this he says, "and you shall not fear the beasts of the earth." This seems to be the seventh trial in which evil will not touch him.

By all he has said up to now, Eliphaz intends to prove that adversities in this world do not happen to anyone except as a punishment for sin. There seem to be two objections against this. One is the fact that many just men seem to be subject to adversities, but he seemed to have answered this objection by showing that men easily sin. The second objection is that some wicked men prosper in this world. He intends to answer this objection next by the manner in which their prosperity super abounds to their own evil. So he says, "I have seen the fool," who is the man who takes pride in his riches, "taking root," to appear firmly established in the prosperity of this world. But I did not approve of his prosperity. Rather, "I suddenly cursed his beauty." Consider here that he speaks about a man using the metaphor of a tree, whose roots produce beauty in the branches and the fruit when they are firmly in the ground. He therefore compares the prosperity of a man rooted in riches to the beauty of a tree, which he curses in pronouncing it to be evil and harmful. As Qoheleth says, "There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun, riches kept by their owner to his harm." (5:12) He adds, "suddenly," to show that he in no way doubts this opinion.

He demonstrates the evils which proceed from the prosperity of the fool first as to his sons. For it frequently happens that when some rich and powerful man raises his sons without discipline which is characteristic of the fool, his sons fall into many dangers. Sometimes, for example, they are destroyed without judgment because of hatreds which are stirred up against them. Or when they do not take care but use pleasures inordinately, they even lose their lives. Apropos to this he says, "His sons are far from health." Sometimes, when they inflict calumnies and injuries on others, they are brought to trial before judges and are condemned. As to this he says, "They will be crushed at the city gate," where judges give sentence for judges at one time used to sit at the city gates. Because foolish men do not hesitate to offend others when they prosper, they find no help in adversities, and so he continues, "and there will be no one to deliver them."

But someone could object, "I do not care what happens to my sons as long as I enjoy prosperity in the world." As a second consideration then, he treats bad things which befall the fool both in his property and in his person saying, "The hungry will eat his harvest." For frequently foolish men who have a lot of money oppress the poor, who usually are not strong enough to sustain very many physical burdens and so are almost compelled by need to steal the goods of the rich. Men like these live so extravagant a way of life that they usually lose their strength of soul through the delights of life and become unfit for work. So they are easily destroyed by the battle hardened poor. He therefore says, "Armed men will seize him," as though without any resistance. What he has said about the harvest can be understood universally and so he continues, "and the thirsty will pant after his wealth," i.e. men desirous of wealth.

After he answers these objections, he finally adduces an argument to prove his principal proposition, namely that adversities in this world do not happen to someone except as a punishment for sin. His argument is this. Whatever happens on earth, happens from proper and determined causes. If therefore adversities happen to someone in this world, this must have a determined cause, which can only be sin. So he says, "Nothing on earth happens without cause," for we observe that all effects happen from a determined cause. From this fact, he concludes, "For affliction does not arise from the dust." This is a metaphor. For some plants are produced without seed. These are said to be produced by spontaneous generation from the soil itself. Anything which does not appear to have a proper cause, like a plant reproducing without seed is by a kind of likeness metaphorically said to arise from the soil. Affliction, i.e. adversity, does not arise from the soil, i.e. without cause. From the fact that he said, "Nothing on earth happens without cause," it is really clear that everything has a natural disposition suited to its own proper operation, from which it is apparent that the natural dispositions of things are not without a cause, but happen for a determined end. So Eliphaz says, "but man is born to toil and the bird to fly." For just as the proper motion which the nature of a bird requires is that it fly, so the bird must have the instruments from its nature suitable for flying, namely wings and feathers. Man however because he had reason which enabled him to discover all the necessary aids to his life by his own effort, was naturally made without the aids which nature gives to the other animals, namely a covering, arms and other things of this kind which he can make for himself by the industry of his reason.

### **The Second Lesson: Providence Governs the World**

8 This is why I entreat the Lord and set my eloquence before God. 9 He does great things, which are unsearchable, wonderful and without number. 10 He brings rain on the face of the earth, and irrigates everything with water. 11 He sets those who are lowly on high and he lifts up the mournful with favor to safety. 12 He frustrates the desires of evildoers so that their hands achieve no success. 13 He surprises the wise in their own craftiness and dissipates the plan of evil men; 14 they come upon darkness in the daylight and grope at noonday as at night. 15 But he will make the poor safe from the sword of their mouth and the needy from the violent hand. 16 He will be the hope of the poor and injustice will shut her mouth.

He explains the reason when he says, "For he wounds," with greater adversity," and he binds up," by taking away evil and restoring good. "He smites," with lesser adversity," and his hands," i.e., his works, "will heal", i.e. liberate you. Eliphaz, then, did not maintain that he was blessed who is corrected by God because of the afterlife because he did not believe in it, but because of the present life during which man obtains immunity from evils and abundance of goods after the correction. Consequently, he next speaks about the immunity from evil, "He will deliver you from six troubles; in the seventh no evil shall touch you." Since all time is represented in seven days, a whole is commonly designated by the number seven. The sense would be that no adversity will harm the one corrected by God after correction. Since according to Eliphaz's opinion the more free one is from fault, the less he would suffer adversity in this world according to his opinion, he says, "in the seventh, no evil shall touch you." He means that before correction, man is not free from adversity; but when he begins to be free, he is touched by evil, but not crushed while God is freeing him. After perfect liberation he is not touched at all. This is true for the mind which is weighed down by worldly adversities as long as it places its end in worldly affairs. When it removes its love from them and begins to love God, it is sad in deed in adversities, but is not weighed down by them because it does not have its hope in this world. When it becomes completely contemptuous of the world, then worldly adversities scarcely touch it. But this opinion is not true for the body which is how Eliphaz understood it because the most perfect men sometimes suffer very grave adversities, as the Psalmist says, "Because of you, we suffered death all the day long," (43:22), which is said about the Apostles.

### The Third Lesson God will pardon Job if he recognizes his Sin

17 Behold, happy is the man the Lord reproveth. Therefore despise not the chastisements of the Almighty. 18 For he wounds, and he binds up; he smites, and his hands will heal. 19 He will deliver you from six troubles; in the seventh, no evil shall touch you. 20 In famine, he will redeem you from death; and in war from the stroke of the sword. 21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue; and you shall not fear damage when it comes. 22 You shall laugh at destruction and famine and you shall not fear the beasts of the earth. 23 You shall be in league with the stones of the field and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you. 24 You will know that your tent is at peace; seeing your likeness you will not sin. 25 Your children will be like the grass of the earth. 26 You shall come to your grave in a ripe old age as the stock of grain is reaped in due season. 27 Lo, what we have investigated is true. Once heard, study this with an attentive mind.

Eliphaz had accused Blessed Job in what he said already above both of impatience and presumption because he declared himself innocent. Now he tries to remove the despair he thought he perceived in the words which Job used to detest his life. Note then that concluding from what he already said in affirming divine providence as much in natural as in human affairs, he takes as true that all adversities happen to men by divine judgment. But they happen to those unable to be corrected as a final condemnation and to those who amend their lives because of these adversities as a correction. He maintains that these latter are blessed saying, "Behold, happy is the man the Lord reproveth." For if correction which comes from men who cannot yet know perfectly the measure and manner in which correction can be saving and who are not almighty in taking away all evil and establishing good is saving, much more ought the correction of the almighty and all-knowing God to be reputed saving and happy. From this idea he concludes to the proposition, "Therefore, despise not the chastisements of the Almighty," as if to say: Although you suffer this adversity from God because of your sins, yet you should think that this is a kind of rebuke, as it were, from God to correct you and so you should not despise this adversity to the point of hating your life because of it.

Because Eliphaz had proposed that all things which happen on earth have a determined cause and had proved this by the fact that natural things appear to be disposed to an end, because the very fact that natural things exist to attain an end is the most powerful argument for showing that the world is ruled by divine providence and that all things do not happen by chance, Eliphaz therefore immediately concludes from the premises about the government of divine providence. Note that if there is no divine providence, prayer would be without fruit, and God would not have knowledge of man's deeds. One who concedes the rule of divine providence, must still admit these things. Therefore, from the fact that all things which happen on earth are for an end, Eliphaz concludes that it is necessary to concede the rule of providence. "This is why I entreat the Lord," as if: Since God disposes human affairs, this prayer is fruitful. Further, "and I set my eloquence before God," since God knows human deeds, words and thoughts. To strengthen this conclusion, he adds those things which especially demonstrate divine providence.

Note that those who deny providence say that everything which appears in the world occurs from the necessity of natural causes, for example, the necessity of heat and cold, of gravity and lightness or something like this. Divine providence is most powerfully demonstrated by those things which cannot be explained by natural principles like these, one of which is the determined quantity of the bodies of this world. For no reason can be assigned from some natural principle why the sun or the moon or the earth should be a certain mass (quantity) and not a greater or lesser one. Thus it is necessary to say that this determination of masses is from the ordering of some intellect and he discusses this when he says, "He does great things," i.e. he puts order in a thing by determining mass. Further, if everything were to come about from the necessity of natural principles, since natural principles are known to us, we would have a way of investigating everything in this world. There are some things in this world however, the knowledge of which we cannot arrive at by any investigation, for example, spiritual substances, the distances of the stars, and other things like this. So everything clearly does not proceed from the necessity of natural principles, but is instituted by some superior intellect and so he says, "unsearchable." Likewise, there are also some things which we see whose nature we can in no way discuss, for example, that the stars have a certain configuration in this part of the heaven and another in another part of the heaven. Hence it is clear that this certainly does not arise from natural principles, but from some higher intellect, and he adds, "and wonderful things." For the unsearchable and the wonderful differ in that the unsearchable is hidden in itself and cannot be investigated, but the wonderful is indeed seen, though its cause cannot be investigated.

Note also that some held that the disposition of things proceeded from God according to a certain measured order. For instance, only one first effect which already had something of composition and plurality proceeds from one first simple thing. Thus from this (i.e. the One) two or three things proceed which are still less simple and so on so that the whole multiplicity of things proceeds in grades in this way. According to this position, the whole arrangement of the universe does not happen from the ordering of the divine intellect but from some necessity of nature. Hence to answer this argument, he says “without number” either because things have been produced in being without necessity of numerical order or because innumerable things have been produced immediately by God. This is especially apparent in the first heaven where there are very many stars. Thus Eliphaz shows that the production of things is from God and not from the necessity of nature.

Consequently he shows that the course of created things is governed by divine providence. First in natural things which seems to have been made for the use of man and the other animals, although the natural order of the elements seems to demand another thing. For if someone should consider heaviness and lightness in the elements, clearly earth naturally lies beneath water, water to air and air to fire. Some of the earth is uncovered from water is found to be immediately in contact with the air; otherwise animals which breathe could not live on land. Further, so that the earth uncovered by water might not be rendered unfruitful and uninhabitable with drought, it is watered in two ways by God: first, of course, by rain which falls from above upon the earth and to this he says, “he brings rain on the face of the earth.” In another way by springs, rivers and brooks, with which the earth is irrigated, whose source is found under the earth in the same way that the source of rain is found in the heavens. So he says, “and irrigates everything with water.”

Then he shows the activity of divine providence even in human affairs. If human affairs were to run their course as their arrangement seems to demand, there would appear to be little or no trace of divine providence in them. But when human affairs run their course in another way, foolish men who do not consider higher causes, attribute this to chance or fortune. Solomon personifies them when he says in Qoheleth, “Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the men of skill; but time and chance happen to all.” (9:11) Eliphaz however refers this to a higher cause, namely, to the providence of God. First, as to the oppressed who are raised up from the lowest station to a higher place, he says, “he sets those who are lowly,” i.e. those cast down, “on high;” and the sorrowful are born to joy, and regarding this he says, “and he lifts up the mournful to safety with his favor.” Second he speaks of those who oppress others. These are of two sorts. Some openly oppress others through force, and as to these he says, “He frustrates the designs of evildoers, so that their hands achieve no success,” because they are impeded in accomplishing their works by God so that they cannot bring their evil intention into effect. Some however deceive others by cunning. As for these he says, “He surprises the wise in their own craftiness.” because what the cunning plan go contrary to their design,” and dissipates the plan of evil men,” when what they seemed to wisely plan cannot be effected because of impediments put in their way from on high. Sometimes not only are their cunning plans impeded in deed, but even their minds are clouded so that they do not discover better things in taking counsel. So he says, “They come upon darkness in the daytime,” because in something which is clear, they are completely ignorant of what they are doing,” and grope at noonday like in the night,” in things which are in no way doubtful, they hesitate as though they were obscure.

To prove these things seem to happen from divine providence, he goes on to describe what useful purpose they serve. For when the cunning of evildoers is impeded, the poor are freed from their deceptions. This is why he adds, “But he will make the poor safe from the sword of their mouth.” For those who are cunning in evil often seduce others by flattering and deceptive language and these words are compared to a harmful sword. As the Psalm says, “Their tongue is a sharpened sword.” (56:5) But when the works of powerful evil men are impeded by God, the poor are clearly also saved and so he goes on to say, “the needy from the violent hand.” Two things follow from this. One is that men, who are powerless in their own right must confide in divine power because God has care over human affairs, and so he says, “he will be the hope of the poor.” The other is that powerful and evil men hold themselves back lest they be totally ruined and so the text continues, “and injustice will shut her mouth,” i.e. so that it does not completely waste itself in the harm of others.