



The First Sunday in Advent
The Collect.

ALmighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

¶ This Collect is to be repeated every day, after the other Collects in Advent, until Christmas Day.

Please read and meditate on the 4th Chapter of the Book of Job along with your study of this devotion.

Job 4

King James Version (KJV)

4 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

2 If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?

3 Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.

4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.

5 But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.

6 Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?

7 Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?

8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

9 By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.

10 The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken.

11 The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.

12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof.

13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men,

14 Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.

15 Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up:

16 It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying,

17 Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?

18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly:

19 How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?

20 They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it.

21 Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.

Every Commentary and every Devotion is the product of a man's mind hopefully informed of the Holy Ghost. Men are not infallible in their understanding, but God's Word is totally free of error. It is only our interpretation of the Word that may err. We are best advised to confirm all things uttered by a minister or fellow Christian by the Light of that Word.

As stated earlier, the three friends of Job allow him the privilege of speaking first after a seven-day attendance with him. Job speaks, and in the speaking, does that which

he has not done up to the previous time, he questions God and His Providence. He bemoans the life God has given him even though that life, for at least 98% of his existence, has been full of wealth and blessings. Now God has allowed His servant, Job, to be tested for the sake of a testimony to all of us of God's sure Providence; but Job has been spoiled by God's love and provision. He is unable to withstand even a short season of misery without questioning God. Now the senior member of the three, Eliphaz, will utter his 'opinion' of the matter.

A true friend will not omit telling you the whole truth as he sees it, even if that truth is painful to bear. Unfortunately, too often, that truth may be contrived by the imagination and not real. Eliphaz, the Temanite, prefaces his remarks with the rhetorical notice that Job may be grieved by his words, but his friend cannot forestay his advice and counsel which Eliphaz believes to be true and efficacious for the ears of Job. What a friend believes about God and what is true, may not always be in concord. Too often the gentle nudge of a friend is received as a dart of fire by its object. I detest compliments that begin well but are punctuated by a great 'BUT'. **3 Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. 4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. 5 BUT now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. 6 Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?** (Job 4:3-6) "Yes, Job", Eliphaz says, "though you serve well, you cannot take the same fare when you are served." His friend intimates that the hope, the confidence, and righteousness of Job have not been sufficient to see him through this testing. But the outward appearance is never the full revelation of the heart: **Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.** (John 7:24)

In the mind of the world, bad things come to pass as a result of bad behavior. That world cannot accept the simple grace, and testing of God. All is quite simple to the world. If we suffer, it is because we DESERVE to suffer. If we are wealthy, it is because we are deserving of that wealth. God would seem to have little to do with blessings and trials, all is based upon the accidents of birth and success. That is the great lesson of Job, that our hard times and adversities of life are not a measure of our security in God. Quite often, as with Job, it is just the opposite!

Eliphaz will now make a mixture of truth with presumption: **7 Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? 8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.** (Job 4:7-8) Whoever perished being innocent? Has Eliphaz gone through life with his eyes closed? Would he consider the murdered baby from its mother's womb to be guilty? His premise is wrong though a portion of his argument is correct *sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.*" (Hosea 8:7) This is an example that men can argue the same verse of the Bible and arrive at different conclusions due to a lack of deeper understanding of the Word.

Eliphaz further attempts to draw the conclusion that God is ANGRY at Job and, therefore, has sent this trouble upon him. But God is not angry with Job. God considers Job blameless! Eliphaz was not present at the Heavenly Council where Satan was granted his license to pain Job. A good rule for the theologian is to speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible remains silent.

The account of Eliphaz concerning a presumed vision: **12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. 13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, 14 Fear came upon me, and**

trembling, which made all my bones to shake. 15 Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: 16 It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, 17 Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? 18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: 19 How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? 20 They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it. 21 Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom. (Job 4:12-21) IT must be considered that either this vision, though remarkable for its truth, did not come from God; or the understanding of Eliphaz in its application to Job's circumstances is off a bit. The Lord does not deliver visions to every common observer and, when He does, He always identifies Himself or His Angel: *They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. 7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken?* (Ezek 13:6-7) Practically all of the vision of Eliphaz can be discovered at some point in Holy Scripture. We must bear in mind that there are too many today who may mix truth with some extra-biblical vision from God to suit their own interests or opinions. Eliphaz is perhaps an innocent example of the devious example of false prophets we see in our day, herein is a great truth: *19 How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?* We do dwell in houses of clay (bodies of clay) and these houses of clay in the Middle East are easily washed away by the over-flowing waters of the seasonal wadies. Our bodies are easily washed away by the waters of time and fortune; however, the conclusion Eliphaz draws in the 20th verse (*They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it*) stands in great error when compared with the death of God's saints. God regards not only the death of His saints, but also their tears. He regards, as well, the tears of Job. What Eliphaz does not recognize, and cannot accept, is that Job is a righteous man. His hurt and pain does not come from God but from Satan. To Eliphaz, any other conclusion would be unjust, but God dispenses His mercies, not in an instant of time, but over the whole scope of time; and then eternity itself. *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.* (Psalms 34:18-19) Please observe the double truth of this Psalm: 1) the righteous may suffer a broken heart and shall surely suffer afflictions. And 2) though the Lord may not shelter us from every affliction, He does surely deliver His people from all of them. Please rest your heart on that promise until the next time.