

## The Works and Days of Hesiod

### Lines 42-105 – The Hidden Means of Life

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"Let him hear the advice of Hesiod. . . . The advice of Hesiod is good." —Aristotle

"Lampon . . . greatly honors the sayings of Hesiod, the one he declares and recommends to his sons."  
—Pindar

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## The Hidden Means of Life

### Lines 42-105

THE REASON IS this: the gods keep what it takes to live hidden from human beings. Otherwise you could easily work for a day and have enough for the year without any more work. You would suddenly be able to hang your rudder above the smoke of the hearth and the work of the oxen and the hard-working mules would quickly vanish.

But Zeus, angry at heart, hid what it takes to live because wily Prometheus (Foresight) had deceived him. Consequently, he thought up miserable troubles and cares for human beings [50] and hid away fire. But from Zeus the counselor, Prometheus, the noble son of Iapetos, stole it back for human beings in a hollow fennel stalk, unseen by Zeus, who delights in thunder.

Angry, cloud-gathering Zeus spoke to him. "Son of Iapetos, cleverest of all, you who have schemes for everything, you are glad that you have outwitted me and stolen fire. But it will be a great misery for you yourself and for men to come. To counterbalance fire's good, I will grant them an evil that all men may delight in following desire while they warmly embrace their own misfortune."

That's what Zeus said, and the father of men and gods laughed aloud. [60] And he ordered glorious Hephaestus to quickly mix earth with water, and to put in it the voice and strength of a human being, and to make it like the immortal goddesses in face, like the beautiful, lovely form of a maiden girl. Nevertheless, he had Athena teach her a woman's work, to weave skillfully upon the loom. And he had golden Aphrodite pour grace around her head as well as painful yearning and limb-gnawing cares. And he commanded the messenger Hermes, the slayer of Argos, to put in her a shameless, dog-like mind and a cunning, thievish character.

That's what he said. And they obeyed lord Zeus, the son of Kronos. [70] At once, then, the glorious god Hephaestus, the one with two disabled feet, formed out of earth the likeness of a highly regarded, demure young maiden by the designs of Kronos' son. And the goddess bright-eyed Athena dressed and adorned her. And the goddess Graces and queenly Persuasion (Peithō) put necklaces of gold upon her. And the beautiful-haired Seasons crowned her head with the

flowers of spring. And Pallas Athena adorned her body with every embellishment. And by the designs of loud-thundering Zeus, the messenger Hermes, the slayer of Argos, prepared within her heart lies and flattering words and gave her a cunning, thievish character. [80] And the herald of the gods put the sound of a human voice in her. A misery for toiling men, he named this woman Pandora because all those who have houses on Olympus gave her a gift.

But when Zeus had finished making this utterly irresistible deception, the father sent the glorious slayer of Argos, the swift messenger of the gods, to carry the gift to Epimetheus (Afterthought). Epimetheus didn't even think about it—how Prometheus had told him never to take a gift from Olympian Zeus; rather, Prometheus said he should send it back again in case something bad might happen to mortal men. Even so, Epimetheus took the gift and only noticed the misfortune once it was his.

[90] Before then, the tribes of men lived upon the

earth far away from evil misfortunes and without bone-wearying toil and painful diseases that deliver the fates of death to men. For in misfortune men quickly grow old. But then the woman took off the great lid of the large wine-jar with her hands and scattered all these evils. She intended miserable troubles and cares for human beings.

Only Hope (Elpis) remained there in its unbreakable home, under the rim of the jar, and didn't fly out. Before that could happen, the large wine-jar's lid seized and stopped her by the designs of aegis-bearing Zeus, the cloud-gatherer.

[100] But countless other miseries roam around among human beings. For the earth and the sea are full of evil misfortunes. By day and by night diseases spring upon human beings. They do so without apparent cause, spontaneously, going here and there bearing evil to mortals in silence since the counselor Zeus took the sound of their voices away from them.

So there is no way to avoid the mind of Zeus.

So ends Reading 3, "The Hidden Means of Life." **See you in Reading 4, "The Five Races of Humankind."**

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