

Job

Lesson 18

Chapter 33 cont'd

- I. Vv. 8-12. Elihu challenges Job's claim that he suffers because God considers him an enemy (v. 8). Elihu says that he has heard Job's words and then attempts to quote Job. To an extent Elihu's attribution to Job is fair, but Elihu omits the fact that Job had also admitted that he was a sinner. (vv. 9-11). Assuming that it was the truth, it was certainly not the whole truth. Having quoted Job's words to the extent that they served his purpose, Elihu proclaims that Job was not right because God was greater than man. God is above the arbitrary acts charged by Job. That is an obvious fact admitted by all. Neither Job nor his friends have denied that God is greater than man. To the contrary they have affirmed it and no one has done so more eloquently than Job.
- II. Vv. 13-22.
 - a. Vv. 13-18. Job says God is silent; Elihu says that Job isn't listening. God speaks in two ways but no one takes notice. He speaks in dreams and visions (Abraham, Gen. 15:12-15; Jacob, Gen. 28:10-17; Joseph, Gen. 37:5-12; Daniel, Dan. 10:4-11), opens their ears and seals their instruction. God's purpose is beneficent – to save man from a worse fate.
 - b. Vv. 19-22. Through affliction man is brought to repentance (v. 30). Anyone who has been seriously ill can relate to this. Elihu does not say that Job suffers because of his sin. Suffering can

be a wholesome learning experience (Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-6). The problem is that God is not judging Job at all. When a believer has lost 10 children and is on the brink of physical and emotional collapse, it is not time to say, “God punishes.” C.S. Lewis wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our consciences, but shouts to us in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

- III. Vv. 23-28. Vv. 23-30 are the high point of Elihu’s four speeches. Job has accused God of being cruel to him. Elihu replies that God is loving, that he redeems and restores people from the clutches of suffering and sin.
 - a. Vv. 23-26. A messenger (angel) may interpret to man what is right in order that he may be led to pray and to confess his guilt and thereby be saved from the pit, a concept that is mentioned in vv. 22, 24, 28, and 30.
 - b. Vv. 27-28. If Job would pray to God and repent of bitterness, he would have a dynamic testimony to sing before his peers.
- IV. Vv. 29-33. All of this God does to save man from destruction. Elihu calls on Job to listen and not speak until Elihu has finished. If Job listens, he will learn wisdom. Clearly, as many have heard as children, “I am doing this for your good.”

Chapter 34

4.b. iii – Elihu’s Second speech – 34:1-37.

Elihu attempts to convince Job that God is not unjust or unfair. Elihu is no longer reasoning with Job, but attacking him to make a point. By affirming that God's ways cannot be questioned, he is forced to denounce Job's opinions as impious. Elihu's position (vv. 10-30) flanked by two attacks on Job for impiety (vv. 2-9 – 31-37).

I. Vv. 1-9.

- a. Vv. 1-3. "Elihu continues." Haven't we all known people like that. He calls on those who are wise and who know to listen to him. What he has to say is to the ear what food is to the palate. No lack of humility!
- b. Vv. 4-9. This is Elihu's strongest attack upon Job. He may think he is a mediator, but he is acting more like a prosecuting attorney. He switches to the first person, includes himself with all wise men, and declares himself as capable of working out what is right and good (v.4). He exaggerates Job's position. Job never accused God of branding him a liar. His complaint was that God had not lodged any formal complaint at all (vv. 5-6). He repeats Eliphaz' insult and enlarges with groundless accusations that Job is a companion of evil doers. Vv. 7-9 are especially sharp and unkind, and they contradict Elihu's claim to be an impartial judge. What Elihu attributes to Job in v. 9 is not found in Job's speeches. He has said that expected judgment does not often fall on the wicked (21:7-34), and that trouble comes to good and bad alike (9:22).

II. Vv. 10-15. Elihu repeats self-evident truth that God can do no wrong (v. 10). V. 11 is a repeat of the three friends position. God

will punish the wicked no matter how long it takes. Payday someday (v. 12). God is beyond accountability to anyone (v. 13). Everything depends on God who may indiscriminately withdraw this gift of existence and do nothing wrong. Might makes right. Elihu wiggles out of difficulty by falling back on the doctrine that God metes out based on behavior (vv. 14-15).

- III. Vv. 16-20. God is the impartial ruler of the universe. He judges kings and wealthy without partiality, but men flatter them to make them happy (vv. 16-17). Even the highest and mightiest are not great in the sight of God. He has neither need nor desire to cater to them. They also are the work of his hands. If the government of human monarchs cannot be questioned or opposed, it is inconceivable that the universe should be governed by one who hates justice (v. 17). Elihu argues that God's knowledge is complete and infallible (vv. 21, 22, 25a, 28b), so his actions are beyond human comprehension and prohibits human inquiry.
- IV. Vv. 21-30. Elihu further explains only God is all wise and all just in his governance of the world. He sees and knows all.
 - a. Vv. 21-28. God's eyes are on man who sees all his steps.

There is no place where the wicked can hide (vv. 21-22). God can render judgment without a hearing (v. 23). Job's call for a hearing is worthless. God has no obligation to provide one (v. 24). The fact that God has not yet judged the wicked that he is blind to their sin. He sees it all. Punishment falls on them because God hears the cry of the oppressed (v. 28).
 - b. Vv. 29-30. No explanation is necessary. Therefore, Job has no grounds for complaint, because God has been silent to him.

God is not beholden to any man for explanations, which in any event man may not grasp. God sometimes appears to withdraw his influence from the course of events on earth, yet he is firmly in control. His slowness to act does not deny his sovereignty or power.

- V. Vv. 31-33. Job may ask God why he is suffering, but he may not ask God to act as he thinks. How many of us want God on our terms.
- VI. Vv. 34-37. Asking God to explain is stepping over the line. God is not accountable to Job. Job should be prosecuted to the fullest for speaking like a wicked man. V. 37 is a very blunt accusation. Others attributed Job's problem to stupidity rather than wickedness. One can be cured by instruction. The other is more difficult, especially when it is willful.

Chapter 35

4.b.iv – Elihu's Third Speech – 35:1-16.

The beginning of chapter 35 implies a pause at the close of the second speech to see if listeners respond to what had been said. There were none, so he continued. As in previous chapters, his words are sharp and direct. He intends to convince his hearers that Job has no case in his dispute with God. This speech has two parts: 1) Elihu seeks to refute Job's claim that the pious person is not rewarded by prosperity (vv. 2-8); and 2) when the cry of the

afflicted is not heard by God, they have not responded to the lesson intended by the discipline of suffering (vv. 9-16).

- I. Vv. 2-3. Elihu proceeds to respond to Job's assertion that piety in no way affects God, but that both sin and piety affect only man. He begins by quoting Job's claim that he is in the right or righteous. But Job has never claimed that he is more righteous than God; rather he has consistently asserted that he is innocent in the presents of God (4:17; 13:18; 19:6-7; 27:2-6). The questions imply a negative answer.
- II. Vv. 4-8. Elihu corrects Job and Job's comforters. As clouds are out of your reach, so is God. Whether man sins or is righteous, God is not affected. God exists above our lives. Our actions affect us and our fellow man, but won't change God. How does this impact his argument that God is not unjust?
- III. Vv. 9-11. God is an insurance policy, convenient to have around when crisis occurred. The main point of the third speech – God is not distant when we suffer. He is with us. God gives songs in the night – the joy a believer can have in the deepest affliction. Acts 16:25-26.
- IV. Vv. 12-13. Addresses whose prayer God does and does not answer. No faith, wrong motive, unconfessed sin. It is cruel perfectionist advice, but it saves his theory. In his world, answers to prayer are just as automatic as judgments on the wicked.
- V. Vv. 14-16. Elihu accuses Job of pride. He refers to Job's wanting to present his case before God. The case is before Him even if Job cannot see Him, but can't compel Him to take a given course by

whining. Elihu say that Job waits on God. He hears and is reaching out. He will give you songs in the night. Wait on the perfect timing. Job's prayers are abundant, but ignorant.

4.b.v. – Elihu's fourth speech. 36:1-37:24 God is not powerless.

Chapter 36

- I. There were two sections to the last speech. Here there are more.
 - a. 36:1-21.
 - i. God is wise, powerful, and loving. In his dealings with man he is kind.
 - ii. These verses are a more matured statement of orthodox theology.
 - b. 36:22-37:24.
 - i. He is the same in his control over the world of nature.
 - ii. Contains Elihu's best and most distinctive ideas.
- II. Vv. 1-4. Contains a renewed plea for patience, but his vanity spoils it. The truth he reveals is not available to ordinary man. He is so confident that he can claim to be perfect in knowledge. Elihu is convinced that his wisdom is God's wisdom.
- III. Vv. 5-15. God sends troubles to test and train people. Emphasis is on God's irresistible might, backed up by strength of understanding.
 - a. V. 5. God is all-wise so he is just and fair. God is all

powerful as both Job and Elihu have asserted. The word *any* is not in the text and so must be supplied.

- b. Vv. 6-7. God give the wicked their due; he give the righteous their rights. This is a flat contradiction of what Job had observed in 21:17. Job and Elihu cannot agree on the facts of life.
- c. Vv. 8-10. Affliction is wholesome discipline for the righteous.
- d. Vv. 11-12. Effectively contrasts the fortunes of those who listen to God and those who do not. Those who listen prosper; those who fail to listen perish.
- e. Vv. 13-14. The negative side of affliction is deserved punishment for the ungodly.
- f. V. 15. Elihu returns to the righteous. God delivers them in their suffering and speaks to them in their affliction.
- g. Vv. 16-21. Much of the work of faith is to remember the good times in the bad, and the bad times in the good, and to remember God in both. To congratulate self in the good robs glory from God. To complain in the bad gives glory to the Devil.
 - i. V. 16. Elihu directly addresses Job. His language is sharper and less temperate than the rest of his final speech. Is Elihu hinting at Job's future restoration??
 - ii. V. 17. Harshly and unjustly Elihu classified Job with the wicked.
 - iii. V. 18. Don't let the heat of affliction turn you to presumptuous mocking.

- iv. V. 19. Your wealth will not sustain you. It will not affect judgment of the divine judge.
- v. V. 20. Job desired to die. Elihu holds that such desire is wrong. It lacks complete submission to God's will.
- vi. V. 21. Job is mistaken in complaining to God and insisting on bringing his case before him. He has preferred evil (rebellion) to affliction.
- h. Vv. 22-25. God is wise and powerful in his control over the world of nature. God reveals his love, power and greatness. God does not need any human advice or help. God is Job's teacher. Job should stop complaining.
 - i. V. 24. Elihu urges Job to praise God rather than blame him. (It is easy to complain when things go wrong.)
 - ii. V. 25. All other men have seen it; perspective is required to see it.
- IV. Vv. 26-33. More detail about the wonders of God's creation. This and the next chapter prepare us for God's speeches.
 - a. V. 26. God is eternal. We can conceive it, but we cannot comprehend it. It has no beginning and no end.
 - b. Vv. 27-30. These verses give a word picture of the wonders of a thunderstorm with striking visual effects.
 - c. V. 31. At its worst it frightens, but by it he gives good in abundance.
 - d. Vv. 32-33. It is sent by God and serves his purpose. Thunder announces a coming storm; the cattle make known its approach.

Chapter 37

- I. Vv. 1-5. In his final speech, Elihu describes his won feelings. Job is not addressed until v. 14. There is no break between the chapters, except for a sudden exclamation by Elihu who is startled at the awesome spectacle of God's power in the thunderstorm (v. 1).
 - a. Vv. 2-5. The request to "listen" is plural, addressed to Job and his friends, if not to the bystanders as well. While thunder and lightning are both mentioned, prominence is given to the deafening sounds, identified as God's *voice*.
 - b. There is a great deal of repetition in the verses. Some rare words are used to refer to thunder. Even though god speaks in the thunder and lightning, He does not restrain everything in the universe merely because He speaks. Elihu believes that Job needs to learn this fact. Elihu's words echo both Job and Eliphaz – 5:9; 9:10.
- II. Vv. 6-13. The boundaries of this strophe
 - a. V. 6. Elihu makes transition to another dimension of God's wonderful creation – snow and frost. God is the God of the winter, as he is lord of the spring and summer in previous verses.
 - b. V. 7. The snow and the cold keep man inside.
 - c. V. 8. Animals go into their lairs and remain in their dens.

Elihu draws two conclusions as men watch helplessly.

- d. Vv. 10-13. God is in complete control of all these events (v. 12). Elihu asserts in conclusion to this section that God's control of nature sometimes results in judgment, sometimes in blessing. The same also applies to history. God's universe is balanced between His correction or discipline and His covenant love.

III. Vv. 14-20. Man should realize his insignificant position and fear God.

- a. Elihu now addresses Job more directly by name. He launches into a string of questions, somewhat in the mod that the Lord Himself will use when He eventually speaks. Reviewing once more the marvels of the sky, he asks Job if he know how God does such things as how God balances the clouds (16), and spreading out the heavens (18). Since the sky seems firm and solid to a viewer on earth, the poetic comparison with a cast iron mirror should not be spoiled by quarrels about its scientific accuracy.
- b. V. 17 seems to be contrasting the sultry summer weather with the conditions described in vv. 6-13, but why should he highlight Job's personal discomfort is not clear, unless it is to drive home the point that man has absolutely no control over the weather, unlike God, who changes it at his will.
- c. Vv. 19ff. though far from clear, seem to chide Job for wanting to teach to God, even in such an easy and everyday matter as the weather, let alone in the moral ordering of human affairs.

IV. Vv. 20-23. Elihu's speeches end on a note of tranquility.

- a. The storm has abated and sunlight streams through the breaking clouds. A final acknowledgement of God's *awesome majesty* (22) prepares to the final affirmations of His greatness.

V. 24. This is the finishing touch, the application to men, especially to Job. Even the wisest of men cannot see God. Men stand in awe before God because of His greatness and goodness. But all men are beneath God's notice, even the wisest. This conclusion seems to be at variance with Elihu's claim throughout his speeches. If God does not notice anyone, great or small, what does He have to do with punishment of the wicked, or the prosperity of the pious. With these words, Elihu disappears from the drama as abruptly as he first appeared.