

Job 32-33

You know, there are certain people that make everyone happy *wherever* they go, but then there are other people that make everyone happy *whenever* they go. And surely Job's 3 friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar would fit in the latter category; Job is no doubt glad just to see them go. Oh they're not going anywhere physically, but conversationally they're finally finished, they've got nothing more to say. It's been devastatingly brutal 3 round verbal assault on Job whereby they've sought to beat him down and cause him to confess his sin before God and man. But Job has maintained his integrity, has said there's nothing in me or about me that I'm trying to hide, nor is there any willful transgression that I'm aware of that would bring this type of repercussion upon me. And so it's been quite frustrating for all 4 of them, condemning and defending, condemning and defending, that's the been the general pattern of nearly the last 30 Ch's of this book. And so it's with a certain sigh of relief that we bid a final farewell to the words of these 3 men whom Job referred to as "miserable comforters," men who just didn't have a clue as to the heart of God concerning the issue at hand.

Now as we approach Ch 32 it's apparent (as I mentioned several weeks ago) that a crowd has gathered around and has been listening to this discussion, turned debate, turned dispute. And as we saw last week Job has formed his final appeal, he's delivered his final defense and has rested his case. Now another man appears, a young man (in comparison) by the name of Elihu. He's been listening to them bashing back and forth against one another, he's witnessed the sparks flying, and the tempers flaring and he's sat in silence through it all. And now that everything has seemingly come to a conclusion between them, he enters himself into the equation.

What are we to make of Elihu? Is he a brash young man whose words are to be rejected? Or is he a *blessed* young man whose words are to be received? Well, though he errs in more than one place throughout the duration of his discourse, it seems to me that overall he's a blessed young man whose words are to be received. Why do I say that? For a few reasons really. #1 Though he at times seems a bit cocky, and he'll miss quote Job occasionally, but his general demeanor seems to be one of *humility*, his heart towards Job and towards the situation comes from an altogether different place than that of Job's 3 friends. We also find him given a prominent role in the book, his discourse occupies 5 Ch's, he acknowledges a dependence upon the Spirit, we'll see that more than once. So that in his counsel and his concerning he's looking *to* and depending upon the Spirit to lead him, and to guide him. Again he's still human, still flawed, doesn't deal with everything perfectly just as you and I often make mistakes and don't deal with matters perfectly, but the dependence is there, the desire is there to be Spirit led. And probably most importantly, at the end of the book when God is rebuking all of Job's counselors Elihu isn't mentioned, nor does he have to ask Job to pray for him as do all the others. So though he doesn't deal with everything perfectly, he comes from a position of concern and a desire to be directed of the Spirit generally. So it appears to me that there are some things that we can gather and glean from this young man. We read in Vs 1

And that much is true, he spend the last 3 Ch's summing up the fact that he wasn't guilty of private or public sin, but that he's for (no reason at all as far as he's concerned) gone from enjoying the respect of the most respectable, to experiencing the contempt of the most contemptible.

Yet he's not committed adultery, lusted on another woman internally, he's been fair to his employees, he's taken care of the down trodden, he hasn't been prideful over his wealth, or been guilty of idolatry. And he's even treated his land respectably, hasn't trashed it or abused it in anyway. So if this is punishment for some sin, he's of the perspective that it's being doled out unfairly.

Vs2-3

One thing that's coming to the surface right away about this fella "Elihu" is that he's passionate about his position; his wrath was being aroused, for multiple reasons. And notice that he was just a "nobody" out there in the crowd. His entire pedigree is given so that people might be able to know who he was, with Job, Bildad, Eliphaz, and Zophar we just have mention of their 1st names and that was all that was needed for people to know them. With Elihu we're told his name, his dad's name, that he was a Buzite of the family of Ram, which if you go back to Gen 22 you'll find that he's a distant relative of Abraham, Abraham had a brother named Nahor and Huz and Buz were a couple of his kids. We see here that he was a Buzite, but suffice it to say, nobody knew this kids name. And I like that, because that makes him a prime candidate to be used by God. There are times that God will take incredibly prominent figures and use them in powerful and profound ways, but generally speaking that's not His style. He likes using people that nobody has ever heard of, the little people, the non-significant people; it confounds the ways of the world and increases His glory. And Elihu was in a perfect position to be used in just such a way; no body knew who this kid was.

And notice 1st of all why his wrath was aroused against Job, "Because he justified himself rather than God." So as far as wrath goes, his indignation seems to be righteous at least as far as its initial motivation is concerned. He's upset because Job is justifying himself before God, which leaves God only one option and that's to be in the wrong. Job is in essence saying, "I'm in the right and God is wrong for doing this to me." And so his anger is understandable because Job seems more worried about justifying himself than casting aspersions on the character of God. And it's a point worth noting because one thing we need to always remember is the goodness, and justness of God and it's critical that we perceive our experience from the eyes of truth rather than what we typically do which is to perceive truth through the eyes of our experience. Remember there in Ps 73 where Asaph nearly slipped, he almost stumbled when he considered the circumstantial evidence around him that seemed to point to the face that the wicked prosper while the righteous are always penalized and struggling. He thought, "...surely I've cleansed my heart in vain." But you remember how the very 1st Vs starts out? "*Truly God is good ...*" Ps 73:1

You see that's a fundamental, foundational truth that we can never give up, or not factor in to a given equation. So that I'm able to reason from that perspective, and look at my circumstances through the eyes of truth, rather than cause truth to become subjective through the eyes of my experience. Or else we'll do like Job, I can't find anything wrong with me (that's my experience) therefore God is unjust in what He's done (subjective truth, which really isn't truth at all). But when I reason from experience to truth it fluctuates all the time. That's why it's essential that I reason from truth to my experience. "God is just," "God is good," "God is love," "God is merciful, slow to anger, full of compassion, righteous and true." Now that I've established the truth, I've justified God because that's the fact; I'm able to reason towards my experience through those things in a balanced way. We need to be quick to justify God in a matter rather than ourselves.

"I'm not sure what's happening and why it's happening this way, but this much I know, God is good, He's loving, and has my eternal good and His eternal glory at the forefront of His heart at all times and come what may I trust in Him." God is always right, and He always acts righteously.

The 2nd reason he's so wound up is because even though Job's friends couldn't put their finger on any *wrong doing* of Job, they condemned him anyway. And condemning counsel is never godly counsel, I'm not saying we need to gloss over sin, but the world is already condemned, Jesus came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. And if when we were in the world it was God's heart to reconcile us, how much more being in Christ does He desire to forgive and restore and renew our lives? Job was a believer, he didn't need condemnation, conviction is always welcomed, it draws me towards the Lord. But the work and words of his friends weren't convicting, they weren't drawing Job *towards* the Lord, they were condemning words driving Job *from* the Lord, causing there to be wedge between him and the Lord. You see when you're speaking with someone about a problem, or a difficult dilemma that they're faced with, what's the net effect of your words? Do they *draw them towards* the Lord, or *drive them away from* the Lord because they feel beat down, choked out, condemned. Convicting counsel is one thing, condemning counsel is quite another. So he was mad at Job for justifying himself before the Lord, and he was mad at Job's friends for condemning Job with out a cause; so far he's solid.

Vs4-5

This is something else that we like about Elihu, he knew his place. Even though he knew these guys were handling the issue in an unhealthy way, he was respectful *towards* them and courteous *to* them. He was younger than them, so he was careful not to interrupt them, but waited until they were finished speaking.

And we do well to heed this example, we need to respect our elders, those who've been around a little longer, experienced a little more, we're so quick to interrupt and offer our 2 cents worth. Elihu didn't do that, the bible says, "*Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.'*" 1 Peter 5:5 So he waited until they were all finished and when he realized there had been no godly resolve he got upset.

Vs6-9

So Elihu says, "It's true, age *should* speak, and multitude of years *should* teach wisdom, but great men (or literally 'men of many years') aren't always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice." It's been said something to the effect, "You can have 30 yrs of experience, or you can have 1 year of experience 30 times." Experience *should* be a great teacher, but unfortunately we don't always learn its lessons. Elihu readily admits, "I'm a young man, I don't have a lot of experience in the *ways* of God." But in reality what he had was of infinitely greater value which was insight from the *Spirit* of God. He said, "But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding." Which is to say that in reality age has little to nothing to do with wisdom when it comes to the things of God, because it's not age that grants us spiritual wisdom, it's God Himself. The proverbs tell us, "*For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;*" Prov 2:6 James said, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*" James 1:5. And the fact is that it's not just the older and more mature adults that God delights to use, God loves using young people, even small children in the accomplishing of His heart's desire. And so it's not at all uncommon for God to take a young person and fill him/her with His Spirit and begin to use their lives in radical way. You come into a ministry like this and you may very likely see a relatively young man serving in a position of leadership.

And we sometimes kick against that sort of thing because it goes against the flow of the natural order, which stands to reason because there's nothing "natural" about it, it's supernatural. But praise God that He delights to use the lives of young people. I think of Samuel who was just a boy when God called him, began to speak to him and placed his Spirit upon him. I think of David who was just a shepherd boy out there tending sheep, killing bears and lions, next thing he knew he was leading the army of Israel, coming against Goliath in the name of the Most High God, he was just a boy. Or Daniel in Babylon, along with Shadrach Meshach and Abed-Nego, or Jeremiah, all of which were incredibly young when God began to use them in powerful and profound ways. They didn't have much experience in the *ways* of God, but they'd been given insight by the *Spirit* of God. That was Elihu, he said he didn't have the age, but he had the insight, the understanding as by the breath of the Almighty, or the Spirit of God.

Vs10-12

Job out gunned his opponents; none of them could with stand his logic, his rationale, his reasoning from his perspective. And Elihu is here saying, "I was careful to listen to everything everyone had to say before I was prepared to chime in." The bible says, "*He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.*" Prov 18:13

How many of us have discovered the truth in that little nugget? You don't let your spouse, or perhaps someone else finish the sentence they'd started, you just rudely interrupt them only to regret it because you answered a question that they weren't even posing and in so doing you just opened up a whole new can of worms. Elihu says, "I wanted to full well rounded insight, the total picture before I was prepared to comment, I paid close attention, but you guys failed miserably in your objective and so now I have something to say." What a good reminder for us, that we'd learn patience and not answer a matter before we hear it but that we'd pay close attention to the person speaking to us.

Vs13-14

The essence of Vs 13 is, "Don't be trying to excuse your failure by saying something like, 'only God can convince a sinner of his sin,'" or "We've done all we can do, it's up to God to talk sense into him." He's telling them that they've failed and that they shouldn't try to justify their failure. And in Vs 14 he's basically saying, "You can rest assured that I'm not going to be taking your approach in reasoning with Job." He's saying, "Job hasn't been arguing with me, but you better believe that if he was I wouldn't have been using your logic." He's just rebuking these guys for their heartless condemnation, and failure to turn Job *towards* the Lord and instead setting him in opposition *against* the Lord. They've counseled him in such a way as to lead Job to think that he's right and God's wrong. And Elihu is basically saying, "Good job guys, you should be proud of yourselves..."

Vs15-20

So he says, "I've been sitting here patiently but I can't hold back any longer, the spirit with in me compels me, my belly is like wine that has no vent; it's ready to burst like new wineskins." As wine is fermenting it bubbles up, kind of like carbonated water and if it can't vent, than whatever is containing it will burst. Elihu is saying, "That's how I feel, if I don't let my lips give way to the words with in me I'm going to burst!" The psalmist said it like this, "*I said, 'I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me.' I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good; And my sorrow was stirred up. My heart was hot within me; While I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue.*" Ps 39:1-3 Jeremiah said it like this, "*I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name.' But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not.*" Jer 20:9

Peter said it like this, "*For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*" Acts 4:20. And Paul said it like this, "*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*" 1 Cor 9:16 And every one of these men are in essence saying the same thing, "I can't not speak what God has placed upon my heart. I'm going to burst if I don't break forth and share it." And there are times when the Spirit will move upon your life in the same way, God has called you to a particular ministry, or has placed a word on your heart for a given situation specifically, and its nerve racking to speak up, but it's like murder if you don't. That's where this guy is at.

Vs 21-22

Respecting a particular office is one thing, but flattery is another, the bible teaches that flattery is sinful. Because invariably there's selfish motive behind it, there's something I want as the result of it, be it something as simple as attention, or influence in a persons life. Perhaps they can promote me, or grant position *to me*, whatever the case may be at its core is a self-centered motive.

And he's careful to get out there the fact that he's got nothing to lose or gain either way, has no desire to show partiality in his assessment of the situation. "I don't want to be partial to anyone, or flatter any man." Those are some good principles to live by; we're not to be respecters of persons. The bible says, "*It is not good to show partiality in judgment.*" Prov 24:23. And that goes for both the positive and the negative, it might cost you greatly at times to be impartial in judgment. Because you may lose a good friend over the deal, but I've always told people that you've got to be willing to love someone more than you like them. In other words sometimes we have to love someone enough to risk them not liking us anymore if they don't receive our words in a way that brings about a positive result. Sometimes we're so fearful of losing a friend that we won't confront a volatile situation. But in reality which is more important, someone's spiritual health and well being, or having someone as a friend even though spiritually they're falling apart? The proverbs tell us, "*He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward Than he who flatters with the tongue.*" Prov 28:23 Which is to say that should you tell someone what they want to hear and then later they discover their error, they're going to want to know why you didn't say anything and your character will suffer in their sight. But should you tell them the truth and they disdain you initially because of it, but repent ultimately in light of it, they'll love you all the more. We're not to be respecters of persons, whether they are our friend or not, whether they're wealthy or not, that's all irrelevant.

Remember James said, "*My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, 'You sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or, 'Sit here at my footstool,' have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?"* James 2:1-4 He went on to say, "*If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*" James 2:8-9. And it's not that we're to show favor, or be nicer to poor people than we are rich people, it's simply that we're to treat all men equally, we were all formed in the womb the same way, from dust we came and to dust we shall return, that's the bottom line. (So far he's batting 1,000)

Ch 33

Vs1-7

In other words, “Don’t worry Job, I’m not here to *roast* you, I’m not going to be heavy handed *with* you, I’m for you and not *against* you.” Now there are those who think he got a bit carried away in Vs 6 where he’s saying that he’ll be the go between, between him and God.

Remember earlier Job had cried out for someone who could take hold of him and take hold of God and bring them together, which ultimately would be fulfilled in Christ. But Elihu is saying that he’s willing to be that guy for Job, but we’ll give him the benefit of the doubt. It seems that he’s just wanting to be there for him, not really saying he’s the answer to all Job’s prayers.

Vs8-11

Now this is where he begins to get off a little, even though it’s unintentional because in one respect he’s got the right information, but there’s wrong implications. Some of these things Job said, but Vs 9 he never said, *Zophar accused* Job of saying it, but Job never said it. Job never claimed to be *sinless*, but he did claim to be *blameless* and there’s a huge difference. God desires that *we* be blameless, but until we see Him face to face we’ll *never* be sinless. So in certain respects he’s bearing false witness here, this is how rumors get started. Job never said this, someone else *accused* Job of saying it, be very careful regarding how you handle received information. We’re not be gossips and busybodies anyway, but we can do incredible damage even with proper information if we inflect the wrong implications by it. Some of this is accurate, some of it is not...but he says.

Vs12-13

Which is to say that God is not accountable to me, or to you, He can do whatever He wants, *whenever* He wants and He owes me no explanation. The Lord said in Isaiah, “*I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’*” Isa 46:9-10 There’s no contending *with* Him or requiring an account *of* Him.

Vs 14-18

Sometimes God is subtle in how He speaks to man, therefore man doesn’t perceive it, isn’t tuned *into* it. There are all kinds of voices and images in this room as I speak, but until you’re tuned in to a particular VHF or FM frequency or whatever you’ll never hear it or see it. And sometimes we’re not hearing from God because we’re not dialed in. Can God still speak in dreams, or visions? You bet, but understand that He’ll never direct you in a way that goes against the grain of His revealed/written Word. So if in a dream or a vision you believe God tells you to leave your spouse and run off with that other person, that’s not the Lord, it goes against His Word. (That’s kind of an extreme example but it communicates the point.

Vs19-22

C.S. Lewis said that God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pains. And here Elihu is entering a new angle to consider into the equation, that there is a purpose for pain that goes beyond punishment. And ultimately what he's driving at is that pain may not be punitive, it may be preventative, it may not always be for *punishing* sin, but it might be used for *preventing* sin. The ounce of prevention that's worth the pound of cure. The Psalmist said, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.*" Ps 119:67. And we don't know but that at times God may be keeping us (in His mercy) from a sinful situation through suffering. And it's not that all suffering comes from God, nor is all suffering punishment for sin, but this is an observation that Elihu makes, and it's a valid one.

Vs 23-28

Most scholars (and I tend to agree) see the "messenger" in Vs 23 as a reference ultimately to Christ. He's the One among 1,000 (we'd say 1 in a million), He's shown man His uprightness, has been gracious to him, is the one who delivers and has found/provided ransom or atonement. It's through Him that his flesh shall be young like a child's (the born again experience, fresh start in life). He's the intercessor of Vs 26. And of course in Vs 27-28 is the gospel, man confessing his sin, being forgiven, redeemed from going down into the pit, his life seeing the light.

Vs29-33

Ultimately though I may not understand it presently God is working for me, and not against me, that's the message.

Prayer Points:

God as always we thank You for Your Word. And we thank You that You are willing to work time and time again on our behalf to keep us from wondering down a path that's detrimental and destructive to our souls. We so easily get caught up in the here and now, but You see the big picture, and we thank You God that You're willing to chasten us when necessary to keep us focused *on* turned *towards* and tuned *in* to You. Help us to tune in to You, that we might hear Your voice, and be governed by Your Word, walking in Your Spirit. Give us wisdom and experience in Your ways, and insight by Your Spirit.