

## AUGUST 29

### Job 31-33

Today we have Job's final argument of innocence to God. His friends will finally be silenced, but unknown to us, they brought along a young disciple who really has been listening. Elihu has seen the error of both Job and his friends. Elihu is a little off track too, but he will show Job some things he had not considered. Because of this, Job remains silenced and is ready to hear and be humbled when God speaks.

#### Job 31

IF you are having a hard time keeping up with Job, or IF you are falling asleep, highlight the word *If*. In looking at the things Job avoided and the things Job did, you have to look deeper than the *if*. He lists these actions along with other words also. So, you'll see a lot of "If....and" combinations. And then there is *let*.

What is interesting in reading this is that Job lived after the flood and before the great civilizations of that time were organized. The list of things that Job said were violations of moral law are very up-to-date. Not only that, compare Job's list to what Jesus says will be the "list" at the close of the age. (Matt. 25:34-46)

Vs. 1-4 This was Job's resolve not to be immoral. A man of Job's standing would have had power and access. Look at kings like Solomon and Xerxes and their huge harems. Look at Hollywood, Wall Street and Capitol Hill. Look at the internet, or rather, don't. Job saw this as a very dangerous thing and listed it first.

Vs. 5-8 Lying, cheating, stealing or abusing power to get ahead was next on Job's list.

Vs. 9-12 Notice the severity of what Job says here. Remember how much Solomon said at the beginning of Proverbs warning his son against adultery? Remember how David nearly destroyed his heart, his family and Israel through his adultery? We glorify adultery and romanticize it on TV and in our stories, but everyone who is wise calls it deadly. The immorality of vs. 1-4 may affect a few, but adultery affects many. Look again at the life of David after he did this with Bathsheba. God has shown us David's life for a reason. If one of the greatest men in the Bible couldn't escape the consequences, neither can we.

Vs. 13-15 This is tolerating injustice. Job says that a godly man will, must, act. Notice v. 15. That sounds like the preamble of the US Declaration of Independence. All men are created equal.

Vs. 16-23 This was Job's attitude toward the poor, needy, naked, widows and orphans. It wasn't just an attitude; it was a call to action.

V. 23 Deeply ingrained in Job's thinking toward God was fear. We could use more fear in our thinking about God. We still have it in our thinking that God is just a good old boy who chuckles at our sin and looks the other way, and even more now because of grace. Job's fear of God was at the root of what both he and his friends didn't understand about God. They were focused on blessing and punishment having a one-to-one relationship to God's justice. God's sovereignty, wisdom and eternal plan weren't part of their thinking. The fact that God could do things, in love and wisdom, didn't make sense; and that He could bring pain without judgment and allow the wicked to grow and prosper wasn't yet in their thinking. Trusting God's wisdom, love and sovereignty brings health to our fear of God, and it brings maturity to our view of God and our place on the planet during this time. And the fear of God is still the beginning of wisdom.

Vs. 24-28 Although Job was rich, his treasure was not on earth. And look at v. 27, he didn't "kiss his hand," thinking he was blessed by his own hand. He knew God had blessed him.

Vs. 29-34 Job blessed and helped his enemies; he welcomed strangers; he openly confessed his sins to God, and lived in the fear of God. What a guy.

Vs. 35-37 This is Job's last appeal for help and justice before God. Job will gain his audience with God in a few chapters.

Vs. 38-40 If Job had sinned, he himself wanted justice.

Job 32

Enter Elihu.

V. 1 The friends stopped because Job proved he was righteous and all they had were blind, brutal accusations.

V. 2 Notice that Elihu caught that Job never justified or defended God. It never entered Job's thinking that what God was doing could be right, not because of justice, but because of his eternal wisdom. It is one of those things where even if you don't understand God, you not only say, "blessed be your name," but you also go out of your way to justify the Lord. Job would learn this.

V. 3 He was mad at the friends because of their groundless accusations.

Vs. 4-5 This is interesting. We think of a young man as...well, young. But in those days, a man of 50 could have been a youngster. Imagine some guys sitting around the fire. One of them is 735 years old, another is 521 years old and one is 384 years old. They are joined by someone who is 101 years old, a mere child. Of course, Elihu could have been in his 20's. Also, notice that Elihu *burned with anger*. Do you remember what happened to Samson when the Spirit came upon him? It looked like anger. I think this was the Spirit.

Vs. 6-10 The rest of this chapter is Elihu, in some convoluted near eastern way asking permission to join in the discussion.

Vs. 11-14 Notice that Elihu had been carefully listening. This was directed at Job's friends.

Vs. 15-22 Still speaking to Job's friends, Elihu says he noticed they ran out of gas. On the other hand, Elihu is ready to burst. At that time the belly, not the heart, was the seat of emotions. Interesting imagery.

Vs. 21-22 This is basically saying that he has no agenda. What he'll say is simple and sincere. This sounds like what Paul has been saying in 2 Corinthians.

Job 33

Vs. 1-7 Elihu is the only one who uses Job's name. He is asking Job to *listen*, and telling Job he will not blindly hammer him like his friends did.

Vs. 8-11 He has been listening. He repeats the kernel of Job's argument back to Job.

Vs. 12-33 This is the key to Elihu's entire message to Job and he doesn't beat around the bush. God does what He does sometimes to prevent sin and to bring men to a place of closeness and humility before God. God does speak, just not the way we might think, or the way we might like. Can you see the ways that Elihu suggests that God speaks?

Vs. 12-18 Elihu suggests that God speaks to warn us and to keep us from doing stupid stuff before we fall into sin. This was something that no one had thought of.

Vs. 19-28 Elihu is saying that God uses pain to get our attention before something happens, not as a judgment, but as a help, a warning. In this section there is a sense of learning humility and crying out to God. He also suggests that there is a sense of self-awareness that comes through suffering that makes a person look into their life, activities and heart. This leads to perception

into one's motives, and a person catches their attitudes and actions before they develop into full-blown sin. What this person confesses as sin is the sin they perceive was growing in them.

Vs. 29-33 Elihu suggests that God does this repeatedly in our lives. Job's silence is evidence that Elihu was speaking in the Spirit and was speaking truth. In the coming chapters, God's actions will be described as going even deeper than just working with us. Yet, isn't it cool that Elihu got right to the matter and gave Job something to think about immediately?

So here we are as disciples, working in the harvest, and something "bad" happens. Here is the real question: How long does it take you to understand emotionally that it was God and not others who blocked you? I say "emotionally" because it is easy to "think" the right answer and still get incredibly depressed and bitter. How long does it take us to redirect our following in the harvest once we grasp this, or do we mourn for the door of opportunity or season of life that just closed? Even as I write this, I know how important and hard it is to learn these lessons. I've gotten better, more mature, but I still bear some scars from not having grasped this truth, years ago. But then, the Lord knew I needed those scars to learn. So even in failure there is victory if we learn to love Him, if we grow to know Him better and learn to trust Him as we keep on following in the harvest. I had a little motto above my desk in Germany: "The only way to fail in Christ is to quit." Boy, did I learn the truth of that the hard way. And happily, I'm still learning and trusting and following. Christ is enough, and that's enough.

## **2 Corinthians 3**

V. 1 After describing how the Lord worked in his heart, Paul realized that talking about himself like this was going to cause some of his critics to voice this complaint against him again. Apparently, some of these critics were very Jewish and demanded that visitors who came to the church should bring a letter of recommendation stating that they were "kosher."

Vs. 2-3 This is very simple and powerful. The work of God was done by God through Paul & Co. God was their recommendation and the Corinthians were proof, like a letter. The work of the Holy Spirit cannot be faked. What happened to the Corinthians was proof that Paul was genuine. I'm wondering if the critics had fruit. I wonder if they could show that God had used them to save the lost and to make disciples, who made disciples, or were they "teachers" and not "evangelists." Jesus said, *you will recognize them by their fruits*. There are a lot of Christians who are all argument and opinion, but no fruit.

Notice here that Paul uses the *tablets of stone* vs. *human hearts*. That suggests that these super-apostles were very Jewish, trying to bring the church back to a more Jewish look. God promised in the OT He would give the Jews hearts of flesh. That would be the work of the Spirit. The message of the gospel was that forgiveness was found in Christ and life was lived following/worshiping God in the Spirit. That didn't mean that the Word wasn't necessary, but it did mean that the law hadn't worked righteousness and the law was not to be followed as a way to be in communion with God.

Vs. 4-6 Notice how Paul refers again to his weakness and that God brings about the blessing almost involuntarily. The message of Paul and his coworkers was the message of loving Christ and following Him in the harvest through the Spirit. The "letter," living by adherence to the principles of the law, would kill grace. Following God in the Spirit of Christ is what brings freshness and life.

Vs. 7-11 Notice the contrasts here. The *ministry of death* is contrasted to the *ministry of the Spirit*. The law could only lead to death and judgment; because, like a mirror, it showed sin without being able to clean it. The Spirit, on the other hand, leads to understanding the Word and the love of Christ; and He, Himself, helps us to obey and follow God. The law couldn't do that. Even though the law had glory, it was totally dwarfed by the glory of the new covenant in Christ.

Vs. 12-18 The law brought a veil of misunderstanding. The sin within us rebels against God and His authority in the law. But in the Spirit, the heart opens when confronted by the grace of God and the love of Christ. The letter and ritual of the law focused the stubborn on compliance. There is not a lot of ritual and strain involved in standing before the Lord with an unveiled face, grateful for salvation and forgiveness. This is the freedom of knowing Christ. It was the Spirit that gave Paul the power for bearing fruit in ministry, not Paul himself. Salvation and living for Christ doesn't come from works, but from the Spirit. Now, following the Spirit we prove the love of Christ over and over and grow closer to Him as we follow in the harvest. That is the increasing glory of knowing Christ.

### **Psalm 43**

Vs. 1-2 The trial of waiting on God was intensified because of others. We've seen this in Job.

Vs. 3-4 The prayer for God's guidance and light. This yearning for God is tied to the altar (cleansing and worship) and the presence of God.

V. 5 As we read yesterday in Psalm 42, the head might understand; but the soul, the emotions of this body of death, can still be in turmoil. As Job learned, we have to have total trust in God. He is our hope and our salvation.

The very fact that we have psalms like this, inspired by the Spirit, means that God knows we will always struggle with our emotions and with waiting on Him. This struggle brings us closer to the Lord. I guess that is a part of what Elihu was telling Job.

### **Proverbs 22:8-9**

Amen.