

AUGUST 30

Job 34-36

As I read over this, it seems there are a couple of things to remember. First, in the final event, it is the Spirit who is writing this, so the message He is conveying is important for us. Second, Elihu, through the Spirit, puts his finger on some important points; but he is removed from Job's pain. In each chapter, we almost need to re-read chapter 1 to see what Job is grieving. Reading what Elihu says in correction to Job, you realize he didn't feel Job's agony. If this had happened to me, it would have been a miracle if I could have put two meaningful thoughts together. Job is speaking out of grief and incredible physical pain. Fourth, there is a reason this happened to Job, not only for his good, but for ours. Job was one of a kind, the most spiritual, righteous, God-loving man on earth. God knew He could hit him hard and take him to task even in his extreme suffering, because of who God had made him. Our job is to observe and learn what happened behind the scenes. Then we need to see where Job and his friends thought wrongly of God and learn to trust Him totally.

This reminds me of a question I've asked in teaching Acts, regarding why God didn't stop Paul before he was guilty of persecuting and killing so many believers. Why didn't God stop Paul? It was for His own purpose. God worked for the good of His plan of redemption. According to His wisdom, love, and purpose in the lives of Paul and all those battered believers He brought personal good (heaven is good) and ultimate good. And, Paul got the message - *But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost (of sinners), Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.* (1 Tim. 1:16) And like Job, Paul simply bowed to the sovereign might and wisdom of God. Here's the next verse of that quote. *To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.* (1 Tim. 1:17)

Job 34

Vs. 1-6 This looks like Elihu's introduction to his next point. Notice how he asks permission to speak, and then how he restates a part of what Job said.

Vs. 7-9 Unfortunately Job was pushed to express some stuff that made him sound like the ungodly. In v. 9 Elihu summarizes what Job said in 21:8-26. This was kind of silly of Job to say. We'd say it was excusable because of his pain, but because of his pain, his narrow view of God's actions and the pressure of his friends, Job showed what was in his heart. A statement like this is always wrong.

Vs. 10-11 Elihu justifies God. We may not understand God, but we know Him and should always justify Him. Notice too that Elihu doesn't try to prove Job is wrong. Instead, he proves God is right.

Vs. 12-33 Verse 12 is the cardinal statement here. All of their thinking had to give truth to this statement. God, the Creator, can never do wrong. Much of what follows here sounds like what Job's friends said, but it is meant differently coming from Elihu. He doesn't think this happened to Job because Job sinned. He is simply saying that if you don't understand what God is doing, don't charge Him with injustice. He can't do wrong. It seems to imply that we understand justice because of God's image. Surely the Maker and Sustainer of all, who gives us this sense of justice, can never be unjust.

Vs. 34-37 This is the charge against Job. Job had been prodded to accuse God of wrong. His friends insisted that Job's suffering was because of sin; and Job, therefore, assumed that punishment was the general meaning of things, only that Job wasn't guilty enough to deserve what happened to him. Note that this is not the same as cursing God. Satan never won his bet

with God. Job never stopped loving God or trusting what he knew to be true of God. And remember, Job was always in terrible grief and pain.

Job 35

Chapters 35-37 roll together as one argument with two parts and they will be Elihu's final words.

Vs. 2-3 It seems there are two things that Elihu thinks are wrong. First, Job demanded the right to have an answer. Second, Job took the statement in 34:9 further, by saying it was of no advantage to be righteous instead of rebellious.

V. 4 Here, here!

Vs. 5-8 This is an interesting statement, and even more interesting if you understand that it comes from God. We are not doing God a favor by being righteous, like cheering up the old boy. "Oh look, Dan obeyed. Now I feel better. Now I'm happy." God is complete in Himself.

Vs. 9-15 It seems Elihu is saying that it is only pain that makes us want an answer from God. We never ask for an answer when things are going well. Duh! This means that God's "silence" is really our perception, and evidence that we are focused on us and really don't know God and His working. Why don't we demand that God should tell us why things are going good? We don't mind His "silence" then, do we?

V. 16 The verdict: Job doesn't know God as well as he thought he did.

Job 36

In what follows, Elihu seems to finish showing that it is always better to be righteous, and then he moves to answer the question about our right to demand an answer.

Vs. 1-4 Unlike Job's friends who aimed at correcting Job, Elihu is focused on speaking *on God's behalf*.

Vs. 5-16 It seems Elihu is describing God's wisdom in dealing with people.

Vs. 17-23 The first two verses sound like Matthew 7:1-2, *Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.* The key verses here seem to be 22-23, where God is described as a teacher.

Vs. 24-33 Some people feel that as Elihu was speaking, a storm began forming on the horizon. Elihu seems to be saying to Job and the others that we should always extol God's works and trust His heart, power and wisdom. This is why Job has no right to demand an answer, because of God's wisdom and power. We behold His works from afar and really don't know Him well. Even with the Spirit, Paul confessed that we see as if looking into a clouded mirror. That face to face hasn't happened yet, so we always need to hold to the Word and what we know is true of God. He cannot do wrong.

This chapter flows into the next and then into God's description of His might and wisdom. We don't demand that God explain gravity to us, but we're sure thankful it works. We simply trust. And still, deep in Job, there was this sense of trust and understanding, that directing all of God's power and wisdom, there is a heart of love. This is why God will finally say that Job spoke what was true of God, unlike Job's friends who spoke what was wrong.

As disciples, abiding every day in Christ, following Him in the harvest, carrying our cross, we should expect God to bring the unexpected to us. We are living for Him and His work as His servants. Our problem is that we expect Him to work according to our likes and wishes. The great events of redemptive history all looked like disasters, and suddenly God used them to show His majesty and grace. To read about the greatest of these disasters, read the gospels or the short version in Isaiah 53. That's our Lord, and the servant isn't greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than He who sent him.

2 Corinthians 4:1-12

Paul is still describing the effects of how God brought him and his co-workers through the emotional turmoil they were in. As we see it here, God brought Paul through these troubles in this particular way to give him this heart and these words for the Corinthians.

Vs. 1-2 Bearing fruit in spite of their weakness, they see they have been given this ministry by God's mercy. Paul is justifying God. Again, you understand that Paul is also addressing criticism against him in Corinth. Paul didn't choose the ministry. God chose him for the ministry by His mercy.

Vs. 3-6 But what about Paul not being a good speaker? Just like us, Paul's clearest witness for Christ was Jesus' light shining in his heart. So, it's not about us and our abilities, it is all about Him being able to simply shine through us. You don't have to be a well-educated super-apostle for that to be possible. If the gospel is veiled, it is not because of our inferiority. It is because of the enemy. Remember, there is an enemy.

Vs. 7-12 And, in submission to Christ, what comes out of the cracked pot? It is what God brings out through taking us through experiences that make us realize the greatness of His love and power and wisdom. Suffering in us produces life in others as we share what He is doing. God gives the glory to the message, not the cracked vase. But the cracked vase does get to see the glory of God.

You understand then, that God is doing exactly what Paul is describing. God took Paul through great distress to prepare him to write these words to correct and bring life to this troubled church. Isn't it interesting that this is very much like what we're seeing in Job? And why not? It's the Lord, and the same author of both of these servants.

As disciples, we need to see this pruning by the Father as normal in the harvest. When we see how God led Job and Paul and so many others, should we expect something easier for ourselves? If we really desire God to use us to bear fruit following Christ on earth, we need to let Him shape us through suffering. It is easy to be fruitless, but fruitlessness and comfort is our choice, not what God has called us to. Knowing Christ and His blessing in the harvest will look more like what we're reading, than what most Christians in suburban America are living. *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,*³⁰ *engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.* (Philippians 1:29)

Psalm 44:1-8

Vs. 1-3 You did it then....

Vs. 4-8 And you do it now....

It is in God we trust. He is enough.

Proverbs 22:10-12

V. 10 This reads like Romans 16:17-20.

V. 11 Maybe we are too tolerant of the cranky. If we really love *purity of heart* and gracious speech, we also need to rebuke the scoffer.

V. 12 The Lord sees it all. Nothing is hidden or will remain hidden. We should be praying for the Lord to do this and fulfill His promise, especially where it is hindering the harvest and the making of disciples.