

Day 70 - SATURDAY: January 7th

Job 32 & 33

Job 32:1-22 NKJV

So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Now because they were years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was aroused. So Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said: "I am young in years, and you are very old; Therefore I was afraid, And dared not declare my opinion to you. I said, 'Age should speak, And multitude of years should teach wisdom.' But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding. Great men are not always wise, Nor do the aged always understand justice. "Therefore I say, 'Listen to me, I also will declare my opinion.' Indeed I waited for your words, I listened to your reasonings, while you searched out what to say. I paid close attention to you; And surely not one of you convinced Job, Or answered his words— Lest you say, 'We have found wisdom'; God will vanquish him, not man. Now he has not directed his words against me; So I will not answer him with your words. "They are dismayed and answer no more; Words escape them. And I have waited, because they did not speak, Because they stood still and answered no more. I also will answer my

part, I too will declare my opinion. For I am full of words; The spirit within me compels me. Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; It is ready to burst like new wineskins. I will speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer. Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone; Nor let me flatter any man. For I do not know how to flatter, Else my Maker would soon take me away.

Job 33:1-33 NKJV

"But please, Job, hear my speech, And listen to all my words. Now, I open my mouth; My tongue speaks in my mouth. My words come from my upright heart; My lips utter pure knowledge. The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life. If you can answer me, Set your words in order before me; Take your stand. Truly I am as your spokesman before God; I also have been formed out of clay. Surely no fear of me will terrify you, Nor will my hand be heavy on you.

"Surely you have spoken in my hearing, And I have heard the sound of your words, saying, 'I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent, and there is no iniquity in me. Yet He finds occasions against me, He counts me as His enemy; He puts my feet in the stocks, He watches all my paths.' "Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, For God is greater than man. Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words. For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, While slumbering on their beds, Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction. In order to turn man from his deed, And

conceal pride from man, He keeps back his soul from the Pit, And his life from perishing by the sword. "Man is also chastened with pain on his bed, And with strong pain in many of his bones, So that his life abhors bread, And his soul succulent food. His flesh wastes away from sight, And his bones stick out which once were not seen. Yes, his soul draws near the Pit, And his life to the executioners. "If there is a messenger for him, A mediator, one among a thousand, To show man His uprightness, Then He is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom'; His flesh shall be young like a child's, He shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray to God, and He will delight in him, He shall see His face with joy, For He restores to man His righteousness. Then he looks at men and says, 'I have sinned, and perverted what was right, And it did not profit me.' He will redeem his soul from going down to the Pit, And his life shall see the light. "Behold, God works all these things, Twice, in fact, three times with a man, To bring back his soul from the Pit, That he may be enlightened with the light of life. "Give ear, Job, listen to me; Hold your peace, and I will speak. If you have anything to say, answer me; Speak, for I desire to justify you. If not, listen to me; Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom."

Daily Deep Dive:

Chapter 32:

Hebrew “opinion”: 5 times in the bible a word is used that is most often translated “opinion”. This word is only ever used by Elihu in the Bible and never anywhere else or by anyone else (Job 32:6, 10, 17, Job 36:3, 37:16).

The UCG reading plan introduces to Elihu and his opening statement in chapter 32 in this way: “We are now introduced to a new character in the narrative—Elihu. His words occupy six chapters and thus constitute one of the major addresses in the book. Some today accuse him of simply rehashing the arguments of Job's three friends. Yet we should note up front that when God later rebukes Job's three friends for their words, He has nothing to say about Elihu (Job 42:7-9). This would seem to imply that Elihu's assessment was for the most part correct, as it does not seem likely that God would single out the three friends and ignore, if it were likewise wrong, the longest speech given just prior to His own address. It may even be that God, as Elihu believed, gave him his valuable insight to inject into the discussion before God arrived on the scene Himself. This would not necessarily mean that everything Elihu said was correct or that he exemplified a perfect approach and attitude—his own affirmations notwithstanding. For consider that at the end of the book, God commends Job for speaking of Him what is right—and yet we know that Job made some mistakes in his remarks about God and that his attitude was not always the best (as understandable as that may be given his circumstances). Consider also that we sometimes regard sermons in the Church of God today as inspired without believing every word in them to be inspired. In any event, it does appear that God wanted Job to hear what Elihu had to say as part of God's answer to Job. Elihu is introduced with details of his family background (Job 32:2). Recall that Job and his three friends were identified by only their respective lands. It is likely that they were all well-known figures. Conversely, it appears that Elihu needs more to identify him because he is, comparatively, a young nobody. The fact that he has listened to the entire conversation thus far illustrates that there were probably a number of bystanders during the exchanges between Job and his friends—though this is the first real indication of it in the book.

Given what he has heard, Elihu is angry with Job's three friends for baselessly condemning Job (verse 3). He is also angry with *Job* because he has been justifying himself rather than God (verse 2)—that is, Job's primary concern has become one of defending his innocence to the point of impugning God's justice. God Himself will later affirm Elihu's assessment in this regard (see Job 40:8). While Job's suffering certainly makes his remarks understandable, there is no doubt that he has gone too far in what he has said—though he probably didn't fully mean all of it. Elihu is so moved that he is about to burst at the seams with what he has to say (verses 18-20). He is insistent about being heard (verse 10; Job 33:1, 31, 33). Many in modern times have criticized Elihu for being insufferably verbose and pompous. For instance, he takes 24 verses to say he is going to speak (see Job 32:6-33:7). Yet loquaciousness was a prized attribute in the ancient world. Moreover, Elihu was, as mentioned, a virtual nobody compared to Job and his three friends—so he deems it important to establish why they should listen to him. He does seem somewhat overconfident in his ability to help Job "see the light," perhaps because of his belief that God has blessed his perception of matters. That combined with youthful brashness and zeal probably accounts for his coming on a bit strong in places.

Elihu begins by explaining why he has waited to speak—he is younger and he wanted to hear what older, wiser people had to say (verses 6-7). This should illustrate that he is perhaps not so arrogant as some believe him to be. Elihu's mention of the human spirit and breath of the Almighty in verse 8 in context would seem to imply not just God giving intellectual ability to mankind generally through the imparting of the human spirit (which He has certainly done)—but, in contrast to wisdom coming with age, that God can impart wisdom directly to a man's spirit through His own divine Spirit. So Elihu, it appears, believes God has inspired him. And this may well be the case. Yet, as already mentioned,

this would not necessarily mean that everything Elihu said was from God. He makes no claim to being a prophet.

The exact meaning of verse 13 is disputed. The NKJV has Elihu quoting the sentiment of the friends in the first part of the verse and giving his own opinion in the second part. The Good News Bible paraphrases this as: "How can you claim you have discovered wisdom? God must answer Job, for you have failed." Other versions have Elihu quoting the sentiment of the friends in both parts of the verse. For example the New International Version has: "Do not say, 'We have found wisdom; let God refute him, not man.'" That is, the friends are portrayed as saying that they have done all that can humanly be done and Elihu is here contradicting that.

Elihu then addresses Job. He is much more personal and direct than the three friends. Unlike them, Elihu repeatedly addresses Job by name. For a young man to address his elders so casually—especially someone like Job who, though presently removed from his position due to his condition, had served as a ruler over the people—would surely have seemed impertinent in the society of that day. However, this was evidently part of Elihu's commitment to show no partiality or flattery (verses 21-22). It is interesting to note that the Hebrew verb translated "flatter," *kanah*, means "to call someone by his honorific title" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, footnote on verses 21-22)."

Chapter 33:

The UCG reading comments on verse 33 this way: "Elihu's words to Job at the beginning of 33:6 are variously translated. The King James Version has: "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead." The New King James Version gives just the opposite: "Truly I am as your spokesman [or mouth, according to the margin] before God." Yet neither of these translations seems to fit with the latter part of the verse, "I also have been formed out of clay." J.P. Green's Literal Translation renders

the first part of the verse, "Behold, I am toward God as you." This seems more likely. Notice the NIV rendering of verses 6-7: "I am just like you before God; I too have been taken from clay. No fear of me should alarm you, nor should my hand be heavy upon you." Accepting this translation, *The Bible Reader's Companion* notes on verse 6: "How refreshing! At last Job hears from someone who does not think of himself as morally superior. Anyone engaged in a ministry of comfort must come with Elihu's attitude. We are all clay. We struggle together. Only the harmless person, who rejects the temptation to condemn or hold others in contempt, can be God's agent of healing." Indeed, Elihu appears to be taking a gentler approach with Job here than the three friends have.

Then, surprisingly, despite all his prior verbosity, Elihu cuts straight to the heart of Job's problem: Job is not right in his accusations against God's justice and in treating God as some sort of equal with whom he can contend in court (verses 8-13). Because of this and other statements to follow, some think that Elihu was accusatory in the same way Job's friends were. Yet it should be recognized that Elihu limits his direct criticism of Job to only the statements Job has made in the dialogue with his friends. He does not, as the friends, accuse Job of having lived an evil, hypocritical life to deserve the suffering he has been experiencing. Elihu further addresses Job's frequent plea for a hearing with God by saying that God communicates with people in various ways that they do not always recognize (verse 14). Job had complained of nightmares (Job 7:14), and Elihu suggests that God may have been trying to tell him something this way (Job 33:15). Moreover, Elihu says that God's objective in this would be to get a person's attention or teach him something to keep him from perishing: "He causes them to change their minds; he keeps them from pride. He keeps them from the grave" (verses 17-18, New Living Translation). Elihu further suggests that

illness is another measure God might use for the same disciplinary and ultimately redemptive purpose (verses 19-22).

Elihu is offering possibilities. He is not, like Job's friends, bound to the notion that all suffering is punitive and that the measure of suffering corresponds to the degree of a person's wickedness. He agrees that suffering *may* be punitive but also sees that its objective may be preventative. Perhaps he thinks that Job could be right in the description of his character but that he was headed for a prideful fall—and that God was intervening to keep that from happening. This may even be true. However, it would be surprising if Elihu simply assumed that Job had absolutely no aspects of his life prior to the trial of which to repent. We have no evidence that Elihu knew anything about the discussion between God and Satan at the outset of the book and, thus, of God's description of Job. It could be that while Elihu did not think Job some great sinner and hypocrite as the friends did, he may have felt that Job had some relatively minor sins that his generally righteous life was leaving him blind to—and that God could have been using suffering as a means to bring Job to more thoroughly examine himself. Even if such an assumption were wrong, it would not have been unreasonable. And again, Elihu makes no dogmatic pronouncements on why Job has been afflicted.

In verse 23 Elihu presents the idea that God may send a messenger or mediator to the afflicted person. It seems likely that he views himself here as God's messenger commissioned with showing Job God's righteousness and justice—with the implication that a person reached in this way would then trust in God's righteousness rather than his own, thus leading to deliverance. In verse 24, Elihu says God commands the deliverance on the basis of having found a ransom—a *kopher*, a covering or atonement. Perhaps what is meant here is simply that God has instituted sacrifices for the purpose of redemption. After all, the

offering of sacrifices for atonement is mentioned at the beginning and end of the book (Job 1:5; Job 42:8). Yet there may be a more specific foreshadowing here of what such sacrifices prefigured—the role of Jesus Christ as the ultimate ransom and atoning sacrifice for the sins of all humanity.

Elihu, we should observe, looks on God's goal in chastening in an entirely different light than Job's friends. They only saw God harshly meting out judgment until people died or straightened up—and that He was practically ambivalent about the outcome. Elihu sees God disciplining repeatedly just as a loving parent would with the intent of saving people from destruction (see verses 29-30). Elihu appears to have this same concern for Job. Despite seeming somewhat overbearing, Elihu says that his desire in speaking to Job is for Job to be justified (Job 33:32)—"cleared" (NIV)—again demonstrating a rather different attitude than Job's three friends. As we will see, Elihu will get more severe in his criticism of Job—yet not because he thinks, as the friends do, that Job is a hopeless hypocrite but because he thinks that Job is jeopardizing his relationship with God and spiritual future through now lashing out at God in outrageous accusations.” [END]

That’s where we end another week of reading. Next week we will finish the book of Job!