

Day 71 - SUNDAY: January 15th

Job 34 – 35

Job 34:1-37 NKJV

Elihu further answered and said: "Hear my words, you wise men; Give ear to me, you who have knowledge. For the ear tests words As the palate tastes food. Let us choose justice for ourselves; Let us know among ourselves what is good. "For Job has said, 'I am righteous, But God has taken away my justice; Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.' What man is like Job, Who drinks scorn like water, Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, And walks with wicked men? For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing That he should delight in God.' "Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to commit iniquity. For He repays man according to his work, And makes man to find a reward according to his way. Surely God will never do wickedly, Nor will the Almighty pervert justice. Who gave Him charge over the earth? Or who appointed Him over the whole world? If He should set His heart on it, If He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust. "If you have understanding, hear this; Listen to the sound of my words: Should one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn Him who is most just? Is it fitting to say to a king, 'You are worthless,' And to nobles, 'You are wicked'? Yet He is not partial to princes, Nor does He regard the rich more than the poor; For they are all the work of His hands. In a moment they die, in the middle

of the night; The people are shaken and pass away; The mighty are taken away without a hand. "For His eyes are on the ways of man, And He sees all his steps. There is no darkness nor shadow of death Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. For He need not further consider a man, That he should go before God in judgment. He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry, And sets others in their place. Therefore He knows their works; He overthrows them in the night, And they are crushed. He strikes them as wicked men In the open sight of others, Because they turned back from Him, And would not consider any of His ways, So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him; For He hears the cry of the afflicted. When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble? And when He hides His face, who then can see Him, Whether it is against a nation or a man alone?— That the hypocrite should not reign, Lest the people be ensnared. "For has anyone said to God, 'I have borne chastening; I will offend no more; Teach me what I do not see; If I have done iniquity, I will do no more'? Should He repay it according to your terms, Just because you disavow it? You must choose, and not I; Therefore speak what you know. "Men of understanding say to me, Wise men who listen to me: 'Job speaks without knowledge, His words are without wisdom.' Oh, that Job were tried to the utmost, Because his answers are like those of wicked men! For he adds rebellion to his sin; He claps his hands among us, And multiplies his words against God."

Job 35:1-16 NKJV

Moreover Elihu answered and said: "Do you think this is right? Do you say, 'My righteousness is more than

God's'? For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?' "I will answer you, And your companions with you. Look to the heavens and see; And behold the clouds—They are higher than you. If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? Or, if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand? Your wickedness affects a man such as you, And your righteousness a son of man. "Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty. But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night, Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, And makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?' There they cry out, but He does not answer, Because of the pride of evil men. Surely God will not listen to empty talk, Nor will the Almighty regard it. Although you say you do not see Him, Yet justice is before Him, and you must wait for Him. And now, because He has not punished in His anger, Nor taken much notice of folly, Therefore Job opens his mouth in vain; He multiplies words without knowledge."

Daily Deep Dive:

Chapter 34:

Here is an extensive writeup on this chapter by the UCG reading plan: "It appears that Elihu may have paused at the end of chapter 33 to see if Job had anything to say in response. Job remains silent, and Elihu proceeds with his own comments in chapter 34, addressing both Job and his friends—and perhaps other gathered witnesses.

Elihu now tackles Job's charge that God is wrongly afflicting him, an innocent man (verses 5-6). In verse 7, Elihu says that Job drinks scorn—

disrespect or contempt—like water. We can understand this remark by comparing it to Eliphaz's earlier comment that man drinks iniquity like water (Job 15:16), meaning that he takes it to himself, indulging in it. Elihu is saying that Job has sunk to coping with his situation by indulging in scorning God's justice. In Job 34:8, Elihu is not saying that Job literally keeps company with the wicked. Rather he is saying that Job's comments make him sound like he is part of the host of scornful, wicked men on earth who disdain God and his justice and see no benefit to serving Him (verse 9).

This seems a bit harsh in light of Job's condition and character. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* offers this appropriate caution in its introductory note on chapter 34: "As we examine this chapter, we should keep in mind that Elihu had picked out of Job's speeches those words and ideas that sounded particularly damaging. Job had had questions about the justice of God, and he had emphatically asserted his innocence. But none of this should be viewed independently of Job's total statement. His claim to innocence was always given in the context of his reason for suffering. And while he had questioned the mystery of theodicy [divine judgment], he had also made clear he believed in God's justice so much that he was willing to rest his entire case, all his hope, on that one issue (Job 13:13-19; Job 23:2-7)." Elihu may be too quick to take Job's remarks at face value, leaving no room for the sufferer to express his feelings as he tries to work through them. On the other hand, Elihu might realize that Job does not truly think the way described in Job 34:8-9 but be concerned that he would nevertheless give this impression to others.

Elihu may well have a lack of tact and appropriate consideration to Job's affliction stemming from youth and inexperience. Yet he has a sincere desire to defend God's justice and also to help Job. Indeed, considering that God Himself was about to intervene at this point, it probably was

important at this stage for someone to properly address Job's accusations against God—both for Job's own good and for the sake of other people who were listening to all this. We should also consider that Elihu was not like the friends who had by now given up on Job—for Elihu was confident that Job, desiring to maintain his relationship with God, would be convinced by Elihu's words to take necessary steps to do so.

The *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* notes that the substance of Elihu's quotation of Job in verse 5 "is accurate (cf. Job 12:4; Job 13:18; Job 27:6), and much of v. 6 represents Job fairly (see Job 21:34; Job 27:5; see also Job 6:4...)—though Job had never claimed to be completely guiltless. Verse 9 is not a direct quotation from Job, who had only imagined the wicked saying something similar (see Job 21:15). But perhaps Elihu derives it from Job's repeated statement that God treats the righteous and the wicked in the same way (cf. Job 9:22; Job 21:17; Job 24:1-12), leading to the conclusion that it does not pay to please God" (2002, note on Job 34:5, 9).

In verse 10 Elihu stresses that God does no wickedness. "Elihu's concern that Job was [implicitly] making God the author of evil is commendable. Job, in his frustration, has come perilously close to charging God with wrongdoing (Job 12:4-6; Job 24:1-12). He has suggested that this is the only conclusion he can reach on the basis of his knowledge and experience (Job 9:24)" (note on Job 34:10).

In verse 11, Elihu seems to be upholding the traditional belief about retribution that Job's friends have been reciting—that God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. Elihu will say more about this in chapter 36. As mentioned before, this is a proper doctrine but the friends were improperly applying it in Job's case.

In 34:13, Elihu rhetorically asks who put God in charge. God is accountable to no one and yet, as verses 14-15 demonstrate, exercises His rule for the good of all humanity. Elihu points out that if God

decided to, He could stop sustaining His creation through His Spirit and all would be destroyed—all people on earth would die. This parallels Hebrews 1:1-2, which describes God as "upholding all things by the word of His power." (It should be noted that Elihu here upends the view of Job's friends, as his statement means that all people, including the wicked, are blessed by God's grace.)

God, Elihu notes, is the pinnacle of justice (see verse 17). Indeed, the Almighty Creator is the very definer of justice. We get our concept of justice from God's just rule, not the other way around. Whether He is just or not is not up to human judgment. If God were unjust, Elihu seems to be saying, how could He rule the world with any sense of justice, rebuking kings and nobles for ruling *contrary* to justice? (compare verses 17-18, NIV). God's impartiality between rulers and commoners, between rich and poor, should further illustrate God's justice—here in the sense of fairness (see verses 19-20). Again, God is the One who has set these parameters of justice.

Moreover, the fact that God is omniscient ensures that He will make no mistakes in punishing the wicked for disobeying Him and afflicting others (see verses 21-28). And, Elihu attests, God does hear the cry of the afflicted (verse 28). This is evidently to respond to Job's complaint in chapter 24 that God allows the powerful to freely oppress the weak in this age. Elihu counters that God does often intervene. The beginning of Job 34:29, which follows, is more likely rendered, as in the NIV, "But if he remains silent, who can condemn him?" It follows from the question in verse 17: "Will you condemn Him who is most just?"

Comparing various translations, the difficult wording at the end of verse 29 and in verse 30 could perhaps be paraphrased as: "Even if God chooses to hide his face so that people can't see what He's doing, He still rules over nations and individuals to [generally speaking] keep the worst people from governing and thereby destroying everyone." Or the latter

clause might have to do with keeping wicked rulers in power in this age to prevent society from descending into anarchy and chaos.

Translators agree that the wording of verses 31-33 is difficult. But, comparing various translations and commentaries and considering the context, Elihu seems to be saying this to Job: "Suppose someone says to God, 'Okay, I've had enough (of affliction presumably). I will stop offending. Just tell me what I need to stop doing. If I have sinned, I'll stop.' Should God now make things right just because the person has recanted? What do you think? You know the answer." Clearly God is under no obligation to immediately bring people's suffering to an end even when they say they are ready to get right with Him. He is the determiner of when to make it cease. It is not ultimately up to the sufferer. Perhaps there are yet lessons to be learned, sincerity to be demonstrated or other reasons known only to God. Verse 34 sets up a quote in the NKJV. But it may well instead sum up verses 31-33 as in the earlier KJV: "Let men of understanding tell me [the answer to the question I just posed], and let a wise man hearken unto me."

In verse 35, the NKJV and some other versions have Elihu quoting others in this assessment of Job's remarks: "Job speaks without knowledge, his words are without wisdom." But this seems more likely to be Elihu's own assessment, as in the KJV. In 35:16, Elihu says that Job "multiplies words without knowledge." God later affirms this assessment by referring to Job as one who "darkens counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:1-2). This does not mean that all Job said was wrong, for we know that he said much that was right. But his accusations against God were unwise and not well thought out. Job will admit as much at the end of the book (Job 42:3).

The NKJV rendering of Job 34:36 makes it look like Elihu wishes the worst on Job—for him to be "tried to the utmost"—for what he has said about God. This would go far beyond Elihu's earlier stated desire to see

Job cleared. The King James wording is better: "that Job may be tried *unto the end*." That is, that Job would be brought all the way to the trial's conclusion or, better yet, to its intended end or goal. This fits with Elihu's question in verses 31-33. Consider also the wording of James 5:11: "You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord."

The charge of "rebellion" in verse 37 may seem rather extreme. Yet we should note that the common word for rebellion, from the Hebrew root *marah*, is not used here. Rather, the word here is *pesha*, meaning transgression (Strong's No. 6588; see "Transgress," *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 1985, p. 266). It can imply deviation from God's way in a specific area rather than a wholesale turning away from God. Elihu clearly limits the transgression to Job's excessive complaining against God and God's justice. Yet as before, considering Job's circumstances, Elihu appears to lack sensitivity in delivering his evaluation." [END]

Chapter 35:

The UCG reading states this: "In chapter 35, Elihu takes to task Job's statements about God's apparent indifference.

He begins by addressing what he deems a major inconsistency in Job's reasoning. In the NKJV translation of verse 2, Elihu asks if Job is saying that he is more righteous than God. Yet the New International Version rendering is probably more accurate here. Notice verse 2-3 in the NIV: "Do you think this is just? You say, 'I will be cleared by God.' Yet you ask him, 'What profit is it to me, and what do I gain by not sinning?'"

The *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* explains that the Hebrew for the word "cleared" here "is translated 'vindicated' in Job's statement in Job 13:18. Elihu thinks that it is unjust and inconsistent for Job to expect vindication from God and at the same time imply that God does not care whether we are righteous (see v. 3). But allowance must be made [as

Elihu does not seem to] for a person to express his feelings. The psalmist who thirsted for God (Psalms 42:1-2) also questioned why God had forgotten him (Psalm 42:9) and rejected him (Psalms 43:2)" (note on Job 35:2).

Expositor's notes on the chapter: "Elihu had missed Job's point, that he wanted to be vindicated because he did believe God was just. Of course Job, in his struggle to understand what God was doing, had sent out two signals, one of which Elihu, like the others, had not been able to hear." Elihu turns the concept of serving God for no benefit around by saying that it is God who gets no benefit if Job serves Him (verses 4-7).

People's wickedness or righteousness impacts only themselves and other people, not God (verse 8). Eliphaz had made a similar point (Job 22:2) yet further wrongly claimed that God did not even care one way or the other (verse 3). Elihu does not appear to go this far in what he is saying. His point, in drawing a contrast, is to say that in any relationship between God and man, it is man who stands to gain, not God. And man should appreciate this fact. But this is usually not the case, which is the basis on which Elihu addresses "Job's concern over God's apparent indifference to the cries of the oppressed (cf. Job 24:1-12). Elihu maintained that God is not indifferent to people, but people are indifferent to God. People want God to save them; but they are not interested in honoring him as their Creator, Deliverer, and Source of wisdom (vv. 9-11). Human arrogance keeps God from responding to the empty cry for help (vv. 12-13)" (same note).

In verse 14, Elihu seems to be saying that even if Job does not see God or what He is doing, he should accept that God really is just and that he will have to wait on Him. Job should be glad, Elihu implies in the next verse, that God does *not* immediately punish for people's foolishness. Otherwise Job himself would not be able to say the foolish things he has

been saying about God. As harsh as this may sound, Elihu's point seems to be that God's justice is tempered by patience and mercy.” [END]