

JOB

CHAPTER 32:1 – 33:7

Introduction

What are we to make of Elihu?

Bible commentators differ on what to make of him:

▶ Some regard him as a rather brash young man. They point out that neither Job nor his three friends ever acknowledge him. This, to them, is proof that his words are to be *rejected*.

▶ Some regard him as a rather blessed young man. They, too, point out that neither Job nor his three friends ever acknowledge him - - but this, to them, is proof that his words could not be refuted and, therefore, must be *received*.

I think Elihu's words are to be received rather than rejected. Here are three reasons why:

- 1) In the rebuke God gives to the three friends of Job at the end of the book, Elihu is not included. He is not rebuked for what he said, nor does he have to ask Job to pray for him.
- 2) Elihu is given an obviously prominent role in the book. His message is one of the major sections of the book, occupying five chapters.
- 3) Although confrontive, Elihu always speaks to Job and his three friends with courtesy and concern.

We're going to take Elihu seriously; we're going to receive his words. Here, finally, is a counselor who is *not* a "miserable comforter."

There is a key to Elihu's counsel. It is his dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Several times he refers to his dependence upon the Holy Spirit:

▶▶ In 32:8 he says,

Job 32:8 But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.

▶▶ In 32:18-20 he says,

Job 32:18 For I am full of words; The spirit within me compels me.
Job 32:19 Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; It is ready to burst like new wineskins.
Job 32:20 I will speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer.

▶▶ In 33:4 he says,

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

The difference between Elihu and Job's other counselors is his dependence upon the Spirit to lead him in his counsel.

Your dependence upon the Spirit will make the difference as you counsel. We'll see two things in our study:

#1 When You Depend On God's Spirit You Won't
Condemn Christians Away From The Lord

#2 When You Depend On God's Spirit You Will
Compel Christians Toward The Lord
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#1 When You Depend On God's Spirit You Won't
Condemn Christians Away From The Lord
(Chapter 32:1-14)

As chapter thirty-two opens, you realize that other people have gathered and were listening to Job and his three friends during this long day of dialogue. Among them was Elihu.

Job 32:1 So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

Job 32:2 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.

It is interesting that we are given Elihu's genealogy. Here is one reason: I've heard it suggested that Elihu is really an Old Testament appearance of Jesus - - a theophany. But he isn't; he's a man, just like you, only one depending upon God's Spirit in his ministry.

We'll take a look at Elihu's complaint against Job in chapter thirty-three. His complaint with Job's three friends is expressed in verse three of chapter thirty-two:

Job 32:3 Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had offered no answer, yet had condemned Job. The word for "condemn" means *to declare wrong*, and to cause to *depart*.¹ The counsel of these men declared Job wrong and had the effect of driving him *away from*, rather than *towards*, the Lord.

It's all too easy to condemn - - especially those who are in distress or difficulty. Be aware that condemnation drives men *away* from God. We think that it will lead them *to* God; but it doesn't. It's the goodness of God that leads men to repentance.²

Job 32:4 Now because they were years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job.

Job 32:5 When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was aroused.

It's become a rare thing for a young person to show respect for his elders! Even though Elihu seemed to possess a wisdom beyond that of these three older men, he waited for them to speak.

Show respect for others - - even when you know you are right! Your courtesy will help win them to the truth.

It did upset Elihu, and rightfully so, that these men had condemned Job. You should be sensitive to protect those that are distressed and at a disadvantage from those who would seek to spiritually abuse them.

¹ Strong's

² Romans 2:4

Job 32:6 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.

Job 32:7 I said, 'Age should speak, And multitude of years should teach wisdom.'

Job 32:8 But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.

Job 32:9 Great men are not always wise, Nor do the aged always understand justice.

It's been said that you can have twenty-five years of experience, or you can have one year of experience twenty-five times! Experience should be a great teacher, but it is no substitute for the leading of God's Spirit. The two together - - experience accompanied by the Spirit of God - - are necessary to offer godly counsel.

It's the same with education. It must be accompanied by the Spirit of God to have true spiritual value. I put myself gladly into the company of the uneducated and untrained early disciples of whom it was said that "they had been with Jesus."³

Job 32:10 "Therefore I say, 'Listen to me, I also will declare my opinion.'

Job 32:11 Indeed I waited for your words, I listened to your reasonings, while you searched out what to say.

Job 32:12 I paid close attention to you; And surely not one of you convinced Job, Or answered his words;

Job 32:13 Lest you say, 'We have found wisdom'; God will vanquish him, not man."

They could not answer Job, yet they concluded that God would "vanquish" him. They left him condemned by God.

Elihu finishes speaking to the three friends in verse fourteen:

Job 32:14 Now he has not directed his words against me; So I will not answer him with your words.

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

Job 32:14 If Job had been arguing with me, I would not answer with that kind of logic!

Elihu would *never* answer that way because he would *never* condemn anyone away from the Lord!

³ Acts 4:13

I'm not saying you can't confront someone; I'm not saying the Holy Spirit won't convict them. I'm saying that you should not condemn them away from the Lord. You should not declare them wrong in a way that drives them away from, rather than towards, the Lord.

The woman caught in adultery in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John was condemned by her accusers. What did Jesus say to her? He said that He did not condemn her and told her to go and sin no more. Jesus didn't come into the world to condemn it; it was, and is, already condemned. He was sent into the world that it - - that **you** - - might be saved.

You don't have to condemn people; *they already are!* You need to show them the way to escape their condemnation by the grace and mercy of God.

Condemnation is such a strong word; let me put this in perspective for you. There is a problem among Christians with what can be called spiritual abuse. It's when you take advantage of others because of their lack of spiritual insight or discernment or training. It happens whenever you use means and methods that coerce and manipulate others. That is what I mean today by condemnation.

The counsel you give ought to draw men towards Jesus. Therefore:

▶▶ It must be free from rules, rituals, and religion. Instead, it should be full of relationship.

▶▶ It must be free from the bondage of legalism. Instead, it should be full of the liberty of love.

And that brings us to our second point:

#2 God's Spirit Will Lead You To
Compel Christians Towards The Lord
(32:15-33:7)

Elihu had a complaint against Job. Look again at verse two of chapter thirty-two:

Job 32:2 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.

We have pointed out all along in our studies that Job was **right** before God. He hadn't sinned; his adversities and afflictions were not the result of his sin. Elihu is not denying that Job was right, only that Job's emphasis and focus were wrong. As we often do in times of suffering, Job was focusing on himself and his problems rather than focusing on God. Job had become the center of his universe. He was looking at God from the perspective of his suffering. He ought to have been looking at his suffering from God's perspective!

Elihu begins to address Job in verse fifteen of chapter thirty-two:

Job 32:15 "They are dismayed and answer no more; Words escape them.

Job 32:16 And I have waited, because they did not speak, Because they stood still and answered no more.

Job 32:17 I also will answer my part, I too will declare my opinion.

Job 32:18 For I am full of words; The spirit within me compels me.

Job 32:19 Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; It is ready to burst like new wineskins.

Job 32:20 I will speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer."

Elihu was filled with God's Spirit; the Spirit was compelling him to speak.

Do you ever feel like this? Like you're ready to explode with compassion towards those in distress, wanting to compel them toward the Lord? You see their marriage failing ... And you know that Jesus can save it. You see their parenting failing... And you know that Jesus can save it.

Before Elihu reveals his method of counsel, he establishes a certain means of dealing with Job. He is *impartial*, he is *impeccable*, he is *inspired*, and he is *inoffensive*.

►► He is impartial:

Job 32:21 Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone; Nor let me flatter any man.

Job 32:22 For I do not know how to flatter, Else my Maker would soon take me away.

If you are going to offer godly counsel, you cannot show partiality to anyone. You must be willing to tell the truth no matter how much you like or dislike the person, no matter what it might cost you.

▶▶ He is impeccable:

Job 33:1 "But please, Job, hear my speech, And listen to all my words.

Job 33:2 Now, I open my mouth; My tongue speaks in my mouth.

Job 33:3 My words come from my upright heart; My lips utter pure knowledge."

"Impeccable" in our context means *above reproach*. You must have "an upright heart." Your own life must reflect the wisdom of following the counsel you give others.

▶▶ He is inspired:

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Whatever you tell others ought to be inspired by God's indwelling Spirit. He is their counselor; you are only an intermediary. You're the mouth, the larynx, the lips, the tongue; He is the breath.

▶▶ He is inoffensive:

Job 33:7 Surely no fear of me will terrify you, Nor will my hand be heavy on you.

Jesus had a gentleness in dealing with people. He was the Lamb of God. Are you afraid of a lamb? Too often we treat people as if we are the sheep dogs - - we bark, we bite.

These are your means; what is your method?

Job 33:5 If you can answer me, Set your words in order before me; Take your stand.

Job 33:6 Truly I am as your spokesman before God; I also have been formed out of clay.

Elihu will set Job's words before him - - he will repeat Job's words. Then, as a spokesman before God, he will show Job how his words compare to the revealed character, nature, and attributes of God.

Job had an earthly perspective; he was looking up toward heaven from his sufferings on the earth. While that is understandable, **it is wrong!** He must instead look down upon his earthly sufferings from the vantage point of heaven.

Elihu will compel Job to consider the glory of God, the goodness of God, the justice of God, the righteousness of God, and other revealed attributes of the character and nature of God.

When something bad happens, God is still good. When something wrong happens, God is still right. In your suffering, God remains sovereign. When there is injustice, God remains just. When there is unrighteousness, God remains righteous.

This is Elihu's method of counsel - - to remind you that there is a God, and that you're not Him! But, more than that, it's to remind you that God is above you, still good, still right, still sovereign, still just, still righteous - - despite your circumstances that lead you to any contrary opinion.

Conclusion

The New Testament tells you that you are seated in heavenly places with Jesus Christ.⁴ You must take your seat with Jesus in heaven - - *spiritually speaking* - - in order to make sense of events on the earth.

And you must compel others, as you counsel them, to consider the nature and attributes of God as their certain and abiding hope through times of trial, trouble, and tragedy.

⁴ Ephesians 2:6