

JOB

Chapters 33 & 34

Introduction

Have you ever been told to “look to God” in your suffering?
Have you ever been told to “point people to God” in their suffering?

These phrases probably are very familiar to you. They are also very accurate: You **do** need to look to God in your suffering, and you **ought to** point people to God in their suffering.

The real question is: What specifically are you *looking for* and *pointing to*? You need to know - - otherwise these words are a glib cliché rather than godly counsel.

Elihu speaks to Job from the end of chapter thirty-two through chapter thirty-seven. He points Job to God, and he tells Job to look to God in his suffering. What he does specifically is this: He reminds Job of God’s *attributes*, and he recommends Job adopt a new *attitude*.

We’ll discover in these chapters four attributes of God that are the key to Elihu’s counsel: God *saves*, God is *sovereign*, God *suffers-long*, and God *sanctifies*. And we’ll discover the attitude Elihu recommends in light of these attributes: It is to *submit* to God in your suffering!

Today we’ll look at the first two attributes:

#1 Although You’re Suffering,
Remember That God Saves

#2 Although You’re Suffering,
Remember That God Is Sovereign

#1 Although You're Suffering,
Remember That God Saves
(33:8-33)

We're taking the approach that Elihu is depending upon the Holy Spirit to bring Job godly counsel. While Job was right in his standing before God, he had developed some wrong attitudes during his prolonged suffering. Elihu will quote Job's own words back to him, then show him the errors of his attitude by reminding Job of the attributes of God.

The key words in chapter thirty-three are "gracious," "deliver," and "ransom" in verse twenty-four; "restore" in verse twenty-six; "redeem" in verse twenty-eight; and verses twenty-nine and thirty, where you read,

Job 33:29 "Behold, God works all these things, Twice, in fact, three times with a man,
Job 33:30 To bring back his soul from the Pit, That he may be enlightened with the light of life."

God graciously delivers, ransoms, restores, redeems, and brings back from the Pit - - enlightening you with the light of life. In other words, God **saves** you! Although you might be suffering, remember God saves. He saved you and He will **not** abandon what He by grace delivered, ransomed, restored and redeemed.

Let's see how this unfolds, beginning with verse eight of chapter thirty-three.

Job 33:8 "Surely you have spoken in my hearing, And I have heard the sound of your words, saying,
Job 33:9 'I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent, and there is no iniquity in me.
Job 33:10 Yet He finds occasions against me, He counts me as His enemy;
Job 33:11 He puts my feet in the stocks, He watches all my paths.'

His suffering tempted Job to believe God was against him. In reality, we know from chapters one and two that God was for him.

Job 33:12 "Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, For God is greater than man.

Sometimes you need to tell people they are wrong. Whenever they focus on themselves rather than on God, they are wrong. You need to point them to God.

Job 33:13 Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words.

God doesn't owe anyone an explanation for their suffering. He expects you to walk by faith, trusting in Him to never leave you or forsake you. After all, He saved you. Since He saved you, He can and will keep you - - regardless your suffering.

Just because God doesn't explain your suffering to you doesn't mean He is unconcerned about you:

Job 33:14 For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it.
Job 33:15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, While slumbering on their beds,
Job 33:16 Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction.
Job 33:17 In order to turn man from his deed, And conceal pride from man,
Job 33:18 He keeps back his soul from the Pit, And his life from perishing by the sword.

God is always at work seeking to speak to you. Far from being your enemy, He is your greatest friend. In this case, Elihu mentions dreams or visions. Left alone, you would sometime or another wander from following God's will. God will warn you by one way or another - - by a dream, if necessary - - that you might "turn from your deed."

Even suffering can sometimes be a gift from God to keep you safe:

Job 33:19 "Man is also chastened with pain on his bed, And with strong pain in many of his bones,
Job 33:20 So that his life abhors bread, And his soul succulent food.
Job 33:21 His flesh wastes away from sight, And his bones stick out which once were not seen.
Job 33:22 Yes, his soul draws near the Pit, And his life to the executioners.

God can send suffering to keep you *from* sinning and going to the "Pit" - - meaning the Pit of Hell, death without salvation. Again the point is that, since God saved you, He will keep you safe - - regardless your suffering.

Elihu is telling us something that Job's three friends overlooked. For them, suffering was always punishment for sin. For Elihu, suffering was a loving preventive to keep you from sin. Suffering can have a the loving purpose of protecting you.

Verses twenty-three through twenty-eight express more fully Elihu's emphasis on God's saving you:

Job 33:23 "If there is a messenger for him, A mediator, one among a thousand, To show man His uprightness,

Job 33:24 Then He is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom';

Job 33:25 His flesh shall be young like a child's, He shall return to the days of his youth.

Job 33:26 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.

Job 33:27 Then he looks at men and says, 'I have sinned, and perverted what was right, And it did not profit me.'

Job 33:28 He will redeem his soul from going down to the Pit, And his life shall see the light.

Elihu speaks of the work of a messenger Who is a mediator. He is referring to Jesus, the mediator between God and man. Through Jesus Christ, God is "gracious"; you are "delivered," "ransomed," "restored to righteousness." You are spoken of as newly born; we would say "born-again." And God is said to "delight" in you.

The point is this: God saves men; *He saved you*. Since He did, He can be counted on to watch over you and keep you - - *regardless your suffering!*

Elihu concludes his discussion of this first attribute of God in verses thirty-one through thirty-three:

Job 33:31 "Give ear, Job, listen to me; Hold your peace, and I will speak.

Job 33:32 If you have anything to say, answer me; Speak, for I desire to justify you.

Job 33:33 If not, listen to me; Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom."

Although you're suffering, remember that God saves; that He saved you. You are the object of His concern and affection. Suffering may tempt you to believe the opposite, but you are wrong to think that God is become your enemy.

#2 Although You're Suffering, Remember That God Is Sovereign (Chapter 34)

The Book of Job magnifies the sovereignty of God. From the very first chapter it is obvious to you that God is in absolute control. Even Satan is told what he can and cannot do.

You must understand what sovereignty implies: It implies that God can do no wrong! You may feel wronged in your suffering; but God remains sovereign, and He remains right.

Elihu quotes Job accusing God of being wrong:

Job 34:1 Elihu further answered and said:

Job 34:2 "Hear my words, you wise men; Give ear to me, you who have knowledge.

Job 34:3 For the ear tests words As the palate tastes food.

Job 34:4 Let us choose justice for ourselves; Let us know among ourselves what is good.

Job 34:5 "For Job has said, 'I am righteous, But God has taken away my justice;

Job 34:6 Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.'

Look at verses seven through nine for another quote from Job:

Job 34:7 What man is like Job, Who drinks scorn like water,

Job 34:8 Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, And walks with wicked men?

Job 34:9 For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing That he should delight in God.'

"It's no good following God," Job said, "because He wrongs you rather than rewarding you."

Elihu will present three arguments to show that God is sovereign and remains right regardless your suffering.

First: If God is ever wrong then He is not God:

Job 34:10 "Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to commit iniquity.

Job 34:11 For He repays man according to his work, And makes man to find a reward according to his way.

Job 34:12 Surely God will never do wickedly, Nor will the Almighty pervert justice.

Job 34:13 Who gave Him charge over the earth? Or who appointed Him over the whole world?

Job 34:14 If He should set His heart on it, If He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath,

Job 34:15 All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust.

The argument is simply: God is always right because He is God! In other words, it is an attribute of God that He is right and cannot do wickedness. It's not that God can do anything, then declare it right; it's that He cannot, is incapable of doing, wrong.

To suggest that God is wrong or unjust is to deny His sovereignty. He controls our very breath. Your existence proves His sovereignty; and in His sovereignty, He is right and cannot do wrong.

Elihu's second argument is that if God is ever wrong then there could be no government on the earth:

Job 34:16 "If you have understanding, hear this; listen to the sound of my words:
Job 34:17 Should one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn Him who is most just?

Job 34:18 Is it fitting to say to a king, 'You are worthless,' And to nobles, 'You are wicked'?

Job 34:19 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.

Job 34:20 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.

Job had himself participated in local government. If mortal man can execute justice, certainly God can! And He shows no partiality; His government, by nature of Who He is, is always right.

Elihu's third argument was that if God were ever wrong then He must not see what is happening on the earth:

Job 34:21 "For His eyes are on the ways of man, And He sees all his steps.

Job 34:22 There is no darkness nor shadow of death Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

Job 34:23 For He need not further consider a man, That he should go before God in judgment.

Job 34:24 He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry, And sets others in their place.

Job 34:25 Therefore he knows their works; He overthrows them in the night, And they are crushed.

Job 34:26 He strikes them as wicked men In the open sight of others,

Job 34:27 Because they turned back from Him, And would not consider any of His ways,

Job 34:28 So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him; For He hears the cry of the afflicted.

Job 34:29 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?;

Job 34:30 That the hypocrite should not reign, Lest the people be ensnared.

A human judge hears a case and makes the best decision he can, but is sometimes wrong. But God sees every step we take - -

even in the future - - and therefore, by His nature, cannot make mistakes.¹

Since God is sovereign and right, you ought not to contend with Him if you disagree with your suffering. Yet that is what Job had been doing:

Job 34:31 "For has anyone said to God, 'I have borne chastening; I will offend no more;

Job 34:32 Teach me what I do not see; If I have done iniquity, I will do no more'?

Job 34:33 Should He repay it according to your terms, Just because you disavow it? You must choose, and not I; Therefore speak what you know.

From his limited viewpoint Job had challenged God to reveal His purposes in suffering, or else withhold the suffering. Job had been dictating terms to God. You don't dictate terms to the judge!

There is a rebuke in Elihu's closing comments:

Job 34:34 "Men of understanding say to me, Wise men who listen to me:

Job 34:35 'Job speaks without knowledge, His words are without wisdom.'

Job 34:36 Oh, that Job were tried to the utmost, Because his answers are like those of wicked men!

Job 34:37 For he adds rebellion to his sin; He claps his hands among us, And multiplies his words against God."

I say it again: There are times you must tell someone that they are wrong. Elihu goes beyond telling Job he is wrong, to the point of suggesting that God might allow his suffering to go on and intensify, since his attitude in his suffering is so wrong. Job was right in his standing before God; but he had developed wrong attitudes in his suffering before God. When it says Job "claps his hands," it's a gesture of mockery and contempt. Job didn't answer Elihu, but perhaps he "clapped his hands" in this way, mocking him. Elihu calls it rebellion because his counsel was led by the Spirit.

Suffering seems incompatible with God's sovereignty - - especially when it seems without purpose. But God is sovereign; He remains right. It's an important reminder.

¹ The point is this: God sees the future and acts accordingly to benefit you. Compare a person who knew the future, say, of the lottery. He would choose to benefit himself. Or if you knew someone was going to be hurt - - you would act to help them.

Conclusion

Elihu will continue by asking Job to recognize that God suffers-long and that God sanctifies. Then he will advise Job to have an attitude of submission.

In one sense, all Elihu is doing is calling upon Job to return to his original attitude! In chapter one, Job had said,

Job 1:21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

In chapter two, Job had said,

Job 2:10 "... Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"
In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Good advice from Job, *for* Job!

And good advice for **you** as you look to God in your suffering;
and as you point others to God in their suffering.