

Job 33: 1-18; “God is Greater Than Man”, Sermon # 39 in the series – “Remember to Magnify His Work”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 4th, 2024, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

Elihu is now going to take up his inspired discourse and speak to Job and his three friends, and all who were gathered there that day. He says to Job in verse 6 – “Truly I am as your spokesman before God.” He wanted to faithfully represent Job to everyone present. And he even wanted to represent Job to God. He too wanted to find a righteous answer as to why these awful things had happened to Job. He believed that Job was a righteous man. In order to be faithful in his speech he rightly understood that he must first and foremost defend God Himself before all these people.

This he was very eager to do. And so, what I want to do in this message is 1st of all – Relate to you, Elihu’s defense of himself as becoming Job’s spokesman. (verses 1-7) 2nd – I want to relate to you Elihu’s defense of God for His not answering Job thus far. (verses 8-13) And 3rd – I want to relate to you Elihu’s defense of some of God’s purposes in His permitting a trial like this to come upon Job. (verses 14-18) By means of relating Elihu’s defense of God, we will come to better understand God’s reason for sending Christ into the world to save sinners.

1st of all – I want to relate to you Elihu’s defense of God’s reasons for not answering Job thus far.

Elihu says – “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 your spokesman before God; I also have been formed out of the clay.” “Surely no fear of me will terrify you, nor will my hand be heavy on you.” Having heard Job’s three friend’s speeches to Job, Elihu comes forth with some very amazing words here. He says – I going to open my mouth, and the words which will come out, will come from my upright heart.

He says – My lips will utter pure knowledge. We might well question – How can Elihu say such a thing? How can he ensure that all of his words would come from an upright heart? I believe that he could say this because he knew himself to be standing and speaking in the presence of the Almighty. He had the fear of the Lord which would govern his tongue. He would be sincere, loving, and gentle to Job with his speech. The things that he would say would be taught to him by God Himself. Even as a prophet would speak the very words of God, inspired directly by the Holy Spirit, even so, this man Elihu knew himself to be in that role, and filled even by that same spirit.

“The Spirit of God has made me,” he says, “and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” He says – I too, like you Job, have been formed out of the clay. I am just a man, like you. You don’t need to be afraid of me. My hand will not be heavy on you. We are on the same level, man-to-man. We will stand toe-to-toe. You have taken your stand for establishing your own righteousness. But I am here to help you, Job, not condemn you. Now, I want you to see how Christ-like this approach was, following all of these severe discourses of Job’s friends against him. Elihu is assuring Job, I will not come after you with my suspicions. I will let you answer me in all that I will say to you.

Elihu is telling Job that he has not come into this conversation to condemn Job, but in order that through his words to him, he might be saved from himself and have better views of God. My brethren, this is how you and I should think in regard to speaking to others. Jesus Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The object of our speaking with someone who is going through a great trial should not be to condemn them, but to be of help to them if we can. How can we do this? By helping them on to a better view of themselves, and a better view of God.

I fear that too often, a person going through a great trial does not see himself rightly. And it is because he does not see himself rightly, that he does not see God rightly either. What do I mean? I mean that whenever we go through a great trial, we think to ourselves: What did I do to deserve this?

Especially if we have thought and acted as a righteous person, walking in the fear of God and in the love of people around us. We can't think that we have done anything to deserve what we are going through. And then, sometimes, it may just be, that if the trial does not go away, we steadfastly defend ourselves before others, but we question God, and we think that what He has ordained in our case is not right. This was exactly what happened to Job. And this was why it was so necessary that Elihu would come to his rescue at this point.

This is something that is so important for us to see. Elihu was full of the Holy Spirit, and so he could have great confidence that his words would be right and true and faithful to God. But he would also be gentle, even though he would speak most definitely and assertively. I found the words of the commentator in the Old Scofield Reference Bible to be quite disturbing and disconcerting, when he spoke about Elihu's ministry to Job. He said – "Elihu's account of God is noble and true, and it is noteworthy that at the last Jehovah does not class him with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; but he is still a dogmatist, and his eloquent discourse is marred by self-assertiveness."

"Jehovah's judgment of Elihu is that he darkened counsel by words (38: 2); the very charge that Elihu had brought against Job (34: 35, 35: 16)." "Furthermore, the discourse of Jehovah is wholly free from the accusations of Job with which even Elihu's lofty discourse abounds." I could not believe that this man who was given the opportunity to be a commentator in the Schofield Bible could make these statements. I wrote in ink at the bottom of the page – These statements are not true. God never reproves Elihu. His discourse is not marred by self-assertiveness, but he is speaking faithfully on God's behalf. In chapter 38, verse 2, God says that it was Job who darkened counsel by words without knowledge. Not Elihu.

No, there is something that we need to learn here. Not everyone who speaks confidently is speaking self-assertively. Indeed, when a person is speaking by the Spirit of God, as Elihu was, the Spirit was guiding him skillfully, with His eye upon him. He was not like a horse or a mule who needed bit and bridle to hold him in check. (Psalm 32: 9) No, when God is with your spirit, He will be instructing you and teaching you in the way that you should go. And He will be leading you in the way that you should speak. His spirit will be with your spirit. And then those who need to hear what you will say, will want to come near to you.

Now, you will notice that Job did not once interrupt Elihu in his speech to him. Even though Elihu will strongly reprove him several times in this discourse, yet Job will receive it. Why? Because the words were being brought to him in the right way. They were brought to him out of a real love for Job, and out of a real concern to see him delivered from his own wrong conclusions about God. And even his wrong conclusions about himself. God had reasons for not answering Job to this point, in his trial. But God's way is often to wait, and to watch, and to think upon what we do in the various difficult situations of our life, before He gives us an answer.

He wants to prove our righteousness as real. He wants to prove our faith and trust in Him is real; that is firmly fixed upon Him, especially when things are not going well for us. Doesn't He know all about our faith already? Yes, but He is waiting to answer, so that His instruction to us is established, so that we know that He is wise, and holy, and faithful, and true. This thought would be introduced by Elihu to everyone there.

2nd – I want to relate to you Elihu's defense of God for His not answering Job thus far.

Elihu says in verses 8-17 – "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." So, we see here, for the first time in this book, a righteous reproof is given to Job. Elihu correctly relates that Job had spoken of himself as pure and without transgression. He had spoken of himself as innocent and as having no iniquity. He then says that Job went on to contend with God because God had not given him an answer as to why all of these awful things had taken place in his

life. And beyond all of this, he had accused God unjustly, of seeking occasion against him, counting him as his enemy, and putting his feet into the stocks, spiritually speaking. God was supposedly watching all of his paths, not to do him good, but to do him evil. Elihu rightly says that in this Job was not righteous.

Let us understand, my brethren, that when trials come, that it is true that God ordains them. But He ordains them for our good. He does not ordain them for our destruction, or for the overthrowing of our faith. Rather, His purpose is to establish our faith, and to establish us in righteousness. His purpose is to establish us in His righteousness in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. His purpose is to establish our righteousness, as much as each of us is personally righteous, in Christ's perfect righteousness, so that we will truly glorify him. He does indeed cause all things to work together for good, for those who love Him, for those who are called according to His purpose.

In this holy way, even our trials are brought to us for our good. Job did not know this. He knew that God was wise and holy in all of his ways. He started out well in receiving "evil" from the Lord, as well as good. But as time went on, and God did not answer to explain to him what was going on, Job believed that God was not being righteous in His not giving him an explanation, and in not rewarding him according to his works, which had been righteous. He objected to God's being silent towards him. And since God was silent to him, He therefore wrongly concluded that God had become His enemy.

This was a terrible failure on Job's part, even though I believe that we can sympathize with Job in his reactions. We cannot justify them in him or in ourselves. It was unrighteous for Job to have said the things that he did about God. What we need to learn, as Job needed to learn here, is that God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. He withholds the explanation for why bad things happen to us, who are good people, until He is sure that our faith is firmly fixed upon Him, and it will not waver. No matter what happens. This is always the hardest part of the trial. A silent God. But while He is silent, we should be justifying Him, and declaring His faithfulness in ordaining and permitting all the difficult and evil things which come to us. For in them we will learn Christ.

I want you to see, at this point in this message, how our Lord Jesus Christ undertook to justify His God and Father on Job's behalf and our behalf, when He went to the cross. Turn with me to Psalm 22. I want us to look at verses 1-5. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" "Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?" "O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season and am not silent." "But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel." "Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them." "They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed."

These are the very words of our Lord Jesus Christ which He spoke in His own holy heart and mind, prophetically recorded by king David, a thousand years before our Lord Jesus fulfilled His earthly ministry by going to the cross on our behalf: My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? These same words spoken here by Christ, could have been the very words of Job at this time during his trial. But Job's words had not been perfect. He had not been justifying God during this trial. He had been trying too hard to justify Himself. God knew this. Elihu knew this. And even Job's three friends knew this.

The reason that God had been silent thus far in this trial, in regard to His speaking to Job about why he would put him through such a trial, was that God knew that He had to deal with the accusations of Satan concerning Job. He knew that He must prove to both Satan and to all men who were looking on, that Job was a righteous man, one who feared Him and was turning away from evil. This He was most certainly going to do in Job's case. And this is what He most certainly is going to do with each one of us who believes in Him for salvation.

Sometimes we believers do not know just how much we need to be saved, and how very much we need to justify God in our trials. The Lord Jesus who was perfect pure and holy knew the reality of God's having forsaken Him at the cross. He knew the reality of crying out to His God and Father in

prayer to deliver Him, but it appeared in his experience that God was not hearing and was silent. But verse 3 tells us that in all that time on the cross He was justifying God. Verse 3 – But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. And verse 6 – But I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people.” Again, Job could have said these very words in His trial. And he did speak similar words. But the difference between our Lord and Job was that Job tried too hard to justify himself instead of God in his trial. And my brethren, this is the very reason that he was failing, and even sinning against God. He needed God to answer him and to defend him and to deliver him from this trial. But he also needed to learn more about his Savior-Redeemer and Friend in the process.

And this is why God had him go through this trial, so that he would better understand his need of Christ. That he would better understand his need of Christ to be his Redeemer someday in the future, according to God’s promise. To go to the cross on his behalf, even though he was a righteous man who was fearing God and turning away from evil. Only Christ could save Job from his sins. Only Christ could deliver Job from the snare of the trapper. Only God, through Christ, could justify Job and declare him righteous in His sight, and vindicate his reputation in the sight of men. This is what we all need to learn.

3rd – I want to relate to you Elihu’s defense of some of God’s purposes in His permitting a trial like this to come upon Job.

Verses 14-18 say – “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.” I want you to remember, with me, as we partake of the Lord’s Supper, that there are many ways that God ministers to us when we are unaware of it. He can speak to our hearts and our minds in our sleep if He desires to. He can open our spiritual ears to hear and seal His instruction to us. And what is it that He desires to say?

He wants us to know that it is He who turns us back from sinful thoughts, words, and deeds, if He is our Savior and our Lord. It is He who works in such a way in our lives that He conceals pride from us. Pride, or thinking too highly of ourselves, and our own abilities, and even our own righteousness, is a terrible sin in God’s sight. God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. He is the One, who through Jesus Christ our Lord, watches over our life, and protects us from perishing by the sword. He is One who keeps back our soul from the Pit of hell. We know that it is true that a true Christian can never perish. But we also need to know and to remember that it is only by God’s saving power, and by His saving strength, that we are kept from eternal destruction.

This is all because of what Jesus Christ our Lord accomplished at the cross for us. Let us now rejoice in all that our He has done for us, in His dying for our sins, and His rising from the dead, and His giving us eternal life. Let us remember that it is by His blood and righteousness that He is continually taking away our reproach in His sight, our falling short is so many ways, of His glory. Let us remember that He is our Faithful Covenant Keeping God who says in Psalm 32: 8 – “I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with My eye upon you.”

He says in verse 10 – “He who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him.” “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!” That is the appropriate response of the Christian, even when you are going through trials. You should see God as your hiding place, and know that He shall preserve you from trouble. He shall surround you with songs of deliverance. Not right away in trials, but in His good time, and His good way, teaching you good things as you go. Let us remember Jesus now, crucified, dead and buried. And His being risen on the 3rd day. Jesus who is teaching us and transforming us to be more like Him. He will bring us through and out of all of our trials. And we shall see Him face to face!