

Elihu Silences Job's Critics: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar

Job Chapter 32:15–33:3

Job 32:15–16 They were amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking.¹⁶ When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more;)

THE great impact of Elihu's spiritual ministry begins to be seen here, being that once he begins to speak, those previously who pridefully felt their wisdom sufficient now *were amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking.*

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 32:15) They were amazed—There also are the words of Elihu, and are designed to express his astonishment that the three friends of Job did not answer him. He says that they were completely silenced, and he repeats this to call attention to the remarkable fact that men who began so confidently, and who still held on to their opinion, had not one word more to say. . . . They could say absolutely nothing. This fact, that they were wholly silent, furnished an ample apology for Elihu to take up the subject.

The effectiveness of Elihu's words to Job's friends is threefold, as they are (1) amazed, (2) ceased to speak, and (3) left off speaking. Hardly anything is more effective in shutting men's mouths than revelation given through those whom God has sent. Even the most imperceptive men then can realize that God has entered the room.

(Benson Commentary, Job 32:15) They were amazed—Job's three friends stood mute, like persons amazed, not knowing what to reply to his arguments, and wondering at his bold and confident assertions concerning his integrity, and his interest in the favour of God, under such terrible and manifest tokens, as they thought them, of God's just displeasure against him. They answered no more . . .

God's voice alone has the power to silence the sinner and stop him from defending his own self-righteousness. It is one thing to use God's name, but it is quite another thing to speak for Him. Elihu's ministry was purposed to clearly reveal the difference between the two. It is not uncommon for those who lack the Spirit and His related gifts¹ to be amazed when they are exposed to those who possess them. And this is exactly the response of not only Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, but also would prove to be the response of Job as well. When God's Holy Spirit truly enters a conversation, men will recognize His arrival. Ultimately it takes spiritual power to turn sinners from the evil of their ways. None also can bring those deceived by sin to repentance without first receiving the spiritual power from the Lord to do so. Jesus equipped His apostles with the power of the Holy Spirit,² and all who are chosen by Him will share to some degree in possessing similar, though

¹ I Cor. 12:7–10 *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.* ⁸*For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;* ⁹*To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;* ¹⁰*To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:*

² Acts 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

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perhaps not equal,³ spiritual power. *But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin* (Mic. 3:8).

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Micah 3:8) "I am full of (or filled with) power by the Spirit of the Lord and of judgment and might." The false prophets, walked after their own spirit, Ezekiel 13:3.⁴ Their only power or influence was from without, from favoring circumstances, from adapting themselves to the great or to the people, going along with the tide, and impelling persons whither they wished to go. The power of the true prophet was inherent, and that by gift of "the Spirit of the Lord"...

I am filled with power—So our Lord bade His Apostles, "Tarry ye, until ye be endued with power from on high" Luke 24:49: "ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" Acts 1:8; and "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" Acts 2:4. The three gifts, "power, judgment, might," are the fruits of the One Spirit of God, through whom the prophet was filled with them. Of these, "power" is always strength residing in the person, whether it be the "power" (Exodus 15:6; Exodus 32:11; Numbers 14:17, etc.)⁵ or "might of wisdom" Job 36:5⁶ of

Almighty God Himself, or "power" which He imparts Deuteronomy 8:18; Judges 16:5, Judges 16:9, Judges 16:19⁷ or implants. But it is always power lodged in the person, to be put forth by him. Here, as in John the Immerser Luke 1:17⁸ or the Apostles Luke 24:49,⁹ it is divine power, given through God the Holy Spirit, to accomplish that for which he was sent, as Paul was endued with might 2 Corinthians 10:5, "Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." It is just that, which is so wanting to human words, which is so characteristic of the word of God, "power." . . .

Lap.: "These gifts the prophets know are not their own, but are from the Spirit of God, and are by Him inspired into them. Such was the spirit of Elijah, unconquered, energetic, fiery, of whom it is said, 'Then stood up Elias as fire, and his word burned like a lamp' (Eccles. 48:1). Such was Isaiah, 'Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins' Isaiah 58:1. Such was Jeremiah; 'Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary of holding in. I have set thee for a trier among My people, a strong fort; and thou shalt know and try their ways' Jeremiah 6:11, Jeremiah 6:27. Such was John Baptist, who said, 'O generation of vipers,

3 1 Cor. 12:11 *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

4 Ezek. 13:3 *Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!*

5 Exod. 15:6 *Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.*

Exod. 32:11 *And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Num. 14:17 And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,*

6 Job 36:5 *Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom.*

7 Deut. 8:18 *But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.*

Jdgs. 16:5 *And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.*

Jdgs. 16:9 *Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.*

Jdgs. 16:19 *And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.*

8 Luke 1:17 *And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

9 Luke 24:49 *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' Matthew 3:7. Such was Paul, who, when he Acts 24:25¹⁰ reasoned of temperance, righteousness and judgment to come, made Felix tremble, though unbelieving and ungodly. Such were the Apostles, who, when they had received the Holy Spirit Psalm 48:8,¹¹ broke, with a mighty breath, ships and kings of Tarshish. Such will be Elias and Enoch at the end of the world, striving against anti-christ, of whom it is said Revelation 11:5, if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies."

The power to silence critics was evident not only in Jesus' earthly ministry¹² but also in those He ordained to continue its advancement.¹³ Though men have no power, ability, and strength in their own words, God has great power in His.¹⁴ Ultimately, where Christ's true ministers are, His own spiritual power will be manifest. *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (I*

Cor. 2:4–5). What the apostle leaned on was the demonstration of the Spirit and power of God associated with it. It is thus the demonstration and manifestation of God's spiritual power that leads people to greater faith in God. What words alone cannot accomplish, actual demonstration of the Holy Spirit often can.

Job 32:17–19 I said, I will answer also my part, I also will shew mine opinion. ¹⁸For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me.

¹⁹Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.

Elihu now reveals how God's Spirit is ready to break forth from within him, as wine [bottled] which hath no vent. Where the Spirit of God is, there will exist great internal spiritual compulsion to carry out God's will. His influence is so dramatic and strong that even if God's ministers do not want to obey the command given to them, the Spirit's presence will com-

10 Acts 24:25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

11 Ps. 48:8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

12 John 8:1–9 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. ²And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. ³And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, ⁴They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. ⁵Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? ⁶This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. ⁷So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. ⁸And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. ⁹And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

13 Acts 6:8–10 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. ⁹Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

14 Gen. 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Ps. 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

Ps. 107:20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

Isa. 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Heb. 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

pel them to do as commanded. Jeremiah briefly attempted not to speak in God's name, but the Spirit of God would not allow him to remain quiet. *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay* (Jer. 20:9). God's Spirit is so strong in His messengers' hearts that if the Lord wants His Word spoken, human will has no ability whatsoever to suppress it.

(*Matthew Poole's Commentary*, Jer. 20:9) *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name*: this daily scorn and reproach which the prophet saw himself exposed unto, for preaching against the sin and wickedness of the people, was a sore temptation upon him to lay down his employment as a prophet. He did not speak this openly, but he spoke it in his heart, he had (as he confesseth) many such thoughts in his breast. But he saith he was not able to do what he thought to do, he found in his heart a constraint to go on, that when a revelation came at any time from God unto him, it was like a fire in his bones, which he must quench by uttering what God had revealed to him.

Job 32:20 *I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer.*

Elihu properly understood that the only way he could be relieved from his spiritual burden and find refreshment in his soul was to speak what the Spirit of God had been revealing to him. God's Word was like a burning fire that could be quenched only through the carrying out of God's divine will.

(*Matthew Poole's Commentary*, Job 32:20) It is great refreshment to a good man, to speak for the glory of the Lord, and to edify others . . .

Job 32:21 *Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man.*

Those who are true ministers of the gospel of Christ neither can nor will be respecters of persons. *Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it* (Deut. 1:17). Impartiality in judgment is the very foundation for proper justice, simply because at the core of human partiality and favoritism is sin. This was evident in Isaac's affection for Esau, because of the meat Esau provided for him.¹⁵ This also teaches us that those who show favoritism for those who give them something actually only favor themselves. *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ* (Gal. 1:10).

(*Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*, Gal. 1:10–14) In preaching the gospel, the apostle sought to bring persons to the obedience, not of men, but of God. But Paul would not attempt to alter the doctrine of Christ, either to gain their favour, or to avoid their fury. In so important a matter we must not fear the frowns of men, nor seek their favour, by using words of men's wisdom. Concerning the manner wherein he received the gospel, he had it by revelation from Heaven. He was not led to Christianity, as many are, merely by education.

Job 32:22 *For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away.*

The fatal result of flattery will ultimately be blindness to the sin in self. *In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin* (Ps. 36:2 NIV).

15 Gen. 25:28 *And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.*

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Ps. 36:2) The word rendered "flattereth"—חָלַף *châlaq*—means to be smooth; then, to be smooth in the sense of being bland or flattering; Hosea 10:2; Psalm 5:9; Proverbs 28:23; Proverbs 2:16; Proverbs 7:5.¹⁶

Elihu knew the sin of flattery and its dangerous consequences.¹⁷ He knew that if he committed it, God would remove him from office. *The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things* (Ps. 12:3). Flatterers smooth over not only their own sins but also the sins of others; the Holy Spirit does quite the opposite of this.¹⁸ Whereas flattery minimizes sin, the Holy Spirit and God's holy Word expose it.¹⁹ Flattery also requires a very dexterous tongue so that what is said can be found pleasing to those it is purposed for.²⁰ Many a false prophet has gained his religious reputation through flattery and telling people what they want to hear and not what is actually needed to hear. Through also

false revelations, flatterers seduce people to believe untruths.²¹ The flatterer's main spiritual aim is to enlarge the egos of others so that he may enhance and greater improve his own personal standing. The devil also influences, deceives, and leads men to destruction as much with flattery as he does with persecution. This was true in Genesis with Adam and Eve,²² and the devil employs this same tactic today.²³ *And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err* (Jer. 23:13). Through flattery many have been led to trust in lies, which in the end ultimately destroyed them.

Job 33:1 Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words.

It is not wrong to implore, pray, or even demand that men listen to our words if what we are about to speak will lead them closer to God. Peter said to the lame

16 Hos. 10:2 *Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.*

Ps. 5:9 *For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.*

Prov. 28:23 *He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.*

Prov. 2:16 *To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words;*

Prov. 7:5 *That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.*

17 Prov. 26:28 *A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.*

18 John 16:8 *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

19 Heb. 4:12 *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

20 Ps. 55:21 *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.*

Prov. 7:21 *With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.*

21 Luke 6:26 *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

22 Gen. 3:5 *For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

23 II Sam. 15:2–6 *And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. ³And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. ⁴Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! ⁵And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. ⁶And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.*

Prov. 16:25 *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

Rom. 16:18 *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

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man, *Look on us*,²⁴ so his faith might be focused and the man could be cured of his infirmity.²⁵ Jonah cried to Nineveh so the people might hear the Lord's warnings and be spared His judgment for their sin.²⁶ Jeremiah, another minister, was instructed by the Lord to cry in the ears of Jerusalem so that they could find restoration with God.²⁷ Finally, the apostle Peter stood up with the eleven

and demanded Israel's attention to the great sin they had committed against Jesus. Peter's result was that about three thousand were saved.²⁸ Hence, when the Spirit of God is working in men to speak His Word, it is quite appropriate, and even essential, that people are alerted to the importance of what will be said since it will, in fact, lead to the saving of their souls.

24 Acts 3:3-5 *Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. ⁴And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. ⁵And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.*

25 Acts 3:6 *Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*

26 *Jnh. 3:1-5 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, ²rise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. ³So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. ⁴And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. ⁵So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.*

27 *Jer. 2:1-2 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.*

28 Acts 2:14-41 *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ¹⁵For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. ¹⁶But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: ¹⁹And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: ²⁰The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come: ²¹And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. ²²Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ²³Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: ²⁴Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. ²⁵For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: ²⁶Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: ²⁷Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. ²⁸Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. ²⁹Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. ³⁰Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; ³¹He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. ³²This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. ³³Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. ³⁴For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, ³⁵Until I make thy foes thy footstool. ³⁶Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. ³⁷Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? ³⁸Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call. ⁴⁰And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. ⁴¹Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

Job 33:2–3 Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth.

³ My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.

Seeking to distinguish himself from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, Elihu declares he will speak with an upright heart and a clear message. True wisdom possesses not only purity but also clarity. Those who might have previously rejected the weak and confusing arguments of sinners can be persuaded by the clarity and purity of divine revelation. *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy* (Jas. 3:17). While carnal and human reason will only further agitate those who are confused, the Lord's wisdom will promote peace.²⁹ The words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had done nothing but provoke Job and cause him internal unrest. Yet Elihu's message would accomplish just the opposite. Since it originated from above, it would prove *easy to be [received]* and beneficial to help remove Job's confusion. Ultimately, Elihu would provide a breath of fresh air, whereas previously debate and strife had prevailed. Job's friends had spoken through their own will, but now Elihu, one sent *on God's behalf*,³⁰ would speak through the direction of God's Holy Spirit.

If God has not commissioned men to speak for Him, they should claim they come in His name. *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied* (Jer. 23:21). It is easy to see why the words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar collectively failed: God had not spoken to them, nor had He sent them to speak on His behalf.

(Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Jer. 23:21) *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran . . .* They might be sent of men, and be encouraged by them; but they were not sent of God: it is not only necessary that men employed in religious affairs should have an external call, in an orderly way, from the church of God; but also an internal call from the Lord himself; he qualifying them with gifts, putting his word into their mouths, and inclining their hearts to publish it; see Hebrews 5:4;³¹ but these false prophets had no mission nor commission from the Lord, nor were they sent on any errand, or with any message from him; and yet they ran; showed great diligence and zeal, and made haste to tell the people what the Lord had never said to them, but what were the warm imaginations of their own heads and hearts; they ran a race or course of ministry, but it was not good . . .

I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied; wherefore what they prophesied was not the word of the Lord, but what they themselves devised; and so was what was false, as the Targum adds: it is a sad character of men when they speak in public neither by the will of God, nor according to the word of God.

True prophecy originates not from human imagination, but from divine revelation. *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* (II Pet. 1:21). To speak for God, one must first be called by Him for such a task. Hence, before we call others to God's name, first we must be called ourselves. The prophet Jeremiah is an example of this. *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations* (Jer. 1:5). Many have failed in ministry simply because they sought and attempted to operate a divine calling which God did not give them. Ultimately, no man can possess any legitimate spiritual ministry

29 Rom. 8:6 *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

30 Job 36:2 *Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf.*

31 Heb. 5:4 *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*

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without Jesus calling him to it.³² The Lord has set the members in His church as it has pleased Him,³³ and surely not how it pleases its members. Whenever also men speak for God through their own human will, they can do nothing but bring forth false prophecy, which is exactly what Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had done. (Matt. 24:11) *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Jer. 23:21) A call is required, not only external, on the part of men, but also internal from God, that one should undertake a pastor's office [Calvin].

All offices and ministries in the church require a call of God. If men presume to speak for the Lord, without first being directed to do so, then the punishment can be severe. *But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name*

of other gods, even that prophet shall die (Deut. 18:20).

(Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Deut. 18:20) *But the prophet which shall presume to speak in my name . . . Pretending a mission and commission from God, and yet was never sent by him, like the prophets in Jeremiah 23:21,³⁴*

which I have not commanded him to speak; which though true was not to be spoken in a public manner, by assuming a public office, without a divine authority or a commission from God, and much less what was false, and never commanded to be spoken at all by any:

or, that shall speak in the name of other gods; the idols of the people, as the Targum; as if any should affirm they were sent by Jove, or inspired by Apollo, as some are said to prophesy by Baal, as if they had received their orders and instructions from him, and were inspired by him, Jeremiah 2:8.³⁵

...even that prophet shall die...

32 Matt. 4:18–19 *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. ¹⁹And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*

Luke 6:13 *And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;*

Rom. 1:1 *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, I Cor. 1:1 Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*

33 I Cor. 12:18 *But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*

34 Jer. 23:21 *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.*

35 Jer. 2:8 *The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.*