

Elihu's Reproof of Job

Job Chapter 33:4–33:14

Job 33:4 The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

By acknowledging his Creator, Elihu revealed he knew the Lord was the Source of his life. And though Elihu was purposed to carry forth truth to Job, he knew that he was but a man and a creature of God's creation, like Job. "As a man; so every man is made by God, and not by himself."¹ If men know themselves to be merely creatures of God's creation and not gods themselves, they will pity other sinners and not harshly judge them. Elihu therefore places himself on the same human level as Job in an attempt to help him realize that it was not human pride that would be the source of His words.² He would speak through being inspired by the Spirit, and his spiritual humility here proves that he would be worthy of the task. What Elihu speaks as true of himself is true of all mankind. *Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are*

his people, and the sheep of his pasture (Ps. 100:3).

Job 33:5 If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up.

It is necessary in all criminal proceedings that the defendant be given ample opportunity to mount a proper defense. Thus, Elihu assures Job that if there was a fault in his own reasoning and spiritual conclusions, then he was more than willing to listen if they could be proven false. Yet time would reveal that unlike the words of Job's other three friends, the truth of Elihu's message could not be refuted. Its Source was the Lord, and it would begin to accomplish the Lord's purposes in Job's life. Again, Elihu is the only human character in the book of Job whom God does not single out for divine reproof. He is also the only human reprover of Job whom Job listens to without refuting the charges labeled against him. Whereas previously Job had defended both his person and his motives, now he does neither. By

¹ Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Job 33:4

² Prov. 22:2 *The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.*

Isa. 42:5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

Isa. 43:7 Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

Isa. 45:5–8 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: ⁶That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. ⁷I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. ⁸Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.

Jer. 27:5 I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

Matt. 19:4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

Heb. 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

this fact alone we can reasonably assume that Elihu was indeed sent by the Lord to speak on His behalf.³

Job 33:6 Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay.

Job had prayed for a mediator and counselor, and Elihu reveals himself to be just this. *How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin* (Job 13:23).

(Benson Commentary, Job 33:6–7) *Behold, I am, &c., in God's stead—I will plead with thee in God's name and stead, and on his behalf, which thou hast often wished that some one would do.*

Job had wished for one capable of convincing him of sin, and if someone could be found, then his prayers would be answered. Whereas a righteous man will reject those who are unrighteous in convicting them of sin, they will not oppose those truly led by the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, it is only God through the Holy Spirit Who can convict men of sin,⁴ and only those actually led by It, who can assist in bringing sinners to repentance.⁵

Though God gives the Spirit, He divides and maintains strict control, not only to whom the Spirit is given but also the degree and power that may be manifested through It. Because of this, the only ones who will prove profitable in bringing sinners to their knees are those divinely equipped with the spiritual wisdom and divine insight necessary to prove that the Lord indeed is the Source of their ministry. This is also why Job's other three friends had failed to convince Job of sin, simply because the Lord was not inspiring either their words or their ministries. They had spoken without being led by God to do so, and their failure and spiritual inability to help Job confirmed this. *God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God* (Ps. 62:11).

The power and degree of spiritual gifts that a man possesses in his life are left solely to God's will and not man's. *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will* (I Cor. 12:11). The Lord knows the hearts of all men,⁶ and surely He will never give either spiritual power or spiritual authority to those not purposed to speak on His behalf. The Lord also imparts no heavenly gift merely for a man's personal glory or

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

4 John 16:7–8 *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. ⁸And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

5 II Sam. 12:7, 13 *And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man... ¹³And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. ...*

Jnh. 3:4–5, 10 *And 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. ¹⁰And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.*

6 I Chrn. 28:9 *And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.* I Sam. 16:7 *But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

Ps. 44:21 *Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*

Prov. 21:2 *Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.*

Jer. 17:10 *I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

Rev. 2:23 *And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.*

for his religious and worldly advancement since all wisdom and power given to men through the Spirit is purposed to assist in helping the needs of God's people and not merely exalting the individual who is imparted with spiritual gifts.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Cor. 12:11) But all these—All these various endowments.

Worketh—Produces. All these are to be traced to him.

That one and the self-same Spirit—The Holy Spirit, Acts 2. They were all, though so different in themselves, to be traced to the Holy Spirit, just as all the natural endowments of people—their strength, memory, judgment, etc.—though so various in themselves are to be traced to the same God.

Dividing to every man severally—Conferring on each one as he pleases. He confers on each one that which he sees to be best, and most wise, and proper.

As he will—As he chooses or as in his view seems best. Dr. Doddridge remarks, that this word does “not so much express arbitrary pleasure, as a determination founded on ‘wise’ counsel.” It implies, however, that he does it as a sovereign; as he sees to be right and best. He distributes these favors as to him seems best adapted to promote the welfare of the whole church and to advance his cause.

Job 33:7 Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.

Elihu well knew the terror that could overcome sinners when required to stand before the Lord; thus, he assures Job that his own words would not compound this fear. Truth also, when spoken to those seeking to depart from sin, will never be deemed burdensome or fearful.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 33:7) Behold my terror shall not make thee afraid—Job had earnestly desired to carry his cause directly before God, but he had expressed the apprehension that he would overawe him by his majesty, so that he would not be able to manage his plea with the calmness and self-possession which were desirable. He had, therefore, expressed it as his earnest wish, that if he were so permitted, God would not take advantage of his majesty and power to confound him; see the notes at Job 13:21. Elihu now says, that the wish of Job in this could be amply gratified. Though he spake in the name of God, and it might be considered that the case was fairly carried before him, yet he was also a man. He was the fellow, the equal with Job. He was made of the same clay, and he could not overawe him as the Almighty himself might do. There would be, therefore, in his case all the advantage of carrying the cause directly up to God, and yet none of the disadvantage which Job apprehended, and which must ensue when a mere man undertook to manage his own cause with the Almighty.

Until sinners come to realize God's true character and are cleansed of their sin, they will naturally fear being in His presence. The Israelites begged and pleaded with Moses to intercede on their behalf lest they should have direct communication with the Lord. *And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die* (Exod. 20:19). God's glory is so great and the light of His person is so radiant that Scripture reveals that the Lord surrounds Himself with darkness. *Then said Solomon, The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness* (II Chn. 6:1). So also, *Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne* (Ps. 97:2). The Lord surrounds Himself with darkness so that His presence will not destroy or overly discourage those who lack the holiness to be in the direct presence of God. Thus, God appeared on Mt. Sinai

in a thick cloud,⁷ shielding His true glory from Israel, and He also led the Israelites on their journey to Canaan, through His glory being hidden in a cloud.⁸ Practically speaking, it is impossible for any mortal creature to observe God's true celestial glory and live. The Lord's divine and holy presence is just too much for natural men to behold and survive. *And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live* (Exod. 33:20).

(Benson Commentary, Exod. 33:20) *Thou canst not see my face*—The full display of my glory, that *light inaccessible*, before which the angels stand, but which would be insufferable to mortal eyes; this *no man can see and live*.

Given the nature and power of God, it is not surprising that sinners often hesitate in desiring direct communication with Him. The sin in man no doubt cautions him to keep a great distance between himself and the Lord. And though men are surely not wise, they do possess enough practical sense to spiritually realize that if they are in sin, they remain unworthy to stand in the divine, holy, and fearful majesty of God.

Job 33:8–9 Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying,

9 I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.

Though Job did not use these exact words, Elihu summarizes Job's inward confession that he would hold fast to his own integrity and would never let go of it nor would he recant of believing himself righteous. *God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live* (Job 27:5–6). What men proclaim of themselves regarding their character is seldom either right or the truth. This is seen when Peter proclaimed that he would never deny the Lord Jesus but then actually did.⁹ Job also improperly presumed that he would be so well vindicated of being confirmed righteous that after his trial he would come forth as pure gold. *But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold* (Job 23:10). Yet what Job previously viewed as his own righteousness and personal integrity greatly changed once he came to realize the extent of his sin committed against the Lord. For then, after true spiritual enlightenment, he would no longer view himself as a righteous man but rather as a man stained and made vile by sin. *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth* (Job 40:4).

⁷ Exod. 19:9 *And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.*

⁸ Exod. 13:21 *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:*

⁹ Matt. 26:35 *Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.*

Luke 22:54–62 *Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.* ⁵⁵*And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.* ⁵⁶*But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.* ⁵⁷*And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.* ⁵⁸*And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.* ⁵⁹*And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.* ⁶⁰*And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.* ⁶¹*And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice.* ⁶²*And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*

One of the first purposes of the Holy Spirit is to convict men of sin.¹⁰ Just as light makes known darkness,¹¹ the Lord's Holy Spirit convinces men that darkness lives in them. He also who has not sincerely come to know himself to be a sinner proves that he knows neither the Lord nor his own unholy nature. Ultimately, it is only those whose eyes are spiritually blind who cannot see their own sinful condition.¹² Only those who do not have God's light in them will view themselves as without sin. *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness* (Prov. 30:12).

In the end, and in the Lord's eyes, all mankind without exception have gone astray, and there is not even one righteous, no, not one.¹³ In the Lord's spiritual estimation, all have abandoned the true path of piety, and none can rightfully claim that he is different from his fellows.

Job 33:10–11 *Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy, ¹¹He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths.*

Through Elihu's correction we begin to learn that Job's first notable sin was labeling God his enemy because of the calamities he had faced.¹⁴ *Wherefore hidest thou*

thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? (Job 13:24). Job repeats this claim when he stated, *Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks; and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet* (Job 13:27). In truth, it was not God who counted Job as His enemy or who had produced Job's captivity. This was Satan, though Job remained totally unaware of the real truth.

Job 33:12 *Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man.*

Practically, belief in human purity very soon results in rebelling against divine authority. Consequently, he who thinks himself pure will also be the first to believe that God is impure. Because then sinners view themselves as without sin, they will attribute sin to Him Who has none. The man also who is prone to find fault with God first foolishly believes that there is no true fault within himself. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD* (Prov. 19:3).

Time would prove that the thoughts, opinions, and false beliefs that Job had of God were greatly in error.¹⁵ No one also would dare to call God into question, let alone speak against His government,

10 John 16:8 *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*
11 Eph. 5:13 *But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*

12 II Cor. 4:4 *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

Eph. 4:17–19 *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: ¹⁹Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

13 Rom. 3:10–12 *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹²They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

14 Job 19:11 *He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies.*
15 Job 42:3 *Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.*

Job 42:6 *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

unless he internally believed, at least to a degree, himself equal with God.¹⁶

Job 33:13 *Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

It is because of vanity that men strive against the Lord and because of pride that they assume the Lord must give account to them. So twisted also is the sinner's heart that he thinks himself the Lord's judge—and not the other way around. No man also has ever striven against the Lord and won, and none have ever called Him into question and was powerful enough to force God to give an account as to why He has allowed something done or has not. In actuality, it is not God who will be forced to give account to man, but man, God. *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God* (Rom. 14:12).

Job 33:14 *For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.*

Job had complained about the Lord not responding to his pleas, but Elihu reveals that God does speak to men, though they perceive it not. Was it perhaps that God had spoken to Job, not once but twice, and yet Job's dullness of hearing had not perceived it? It is also not the Lord's fault that men cannot perceive His spiritual voice and are so dull in perception that

they fail to recognize the movements of His Holy Spirit in their lives.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Job 33:14) *For God speaketh once*—The object of what is here said is, to show the reason why God brings affliction upon people, or to explain the principles of his government which Elihu supposed had been sadly misunderstood by Job and his friends. The reason why he brings affliction, Elihu says, is because all other means of reclaiming and restraining people fail. He communicates his will to them; he speaks to them again and again in dreams and visions; he warns them of the error of their course Job 33:14–17,¹⁷ and when this is all ineffectual he brings upon them affliction. He lays them upon their bed where they must reflect, and where there is hope that they may be reclaimed and reformed, Job 33:18–28.¹⁸

Yea, twice—He does not merely admonish him once. He repeats the admonition when man refuses to hear him the first time, and takes all the methods which he can by admonition and warning to withdraw him from his wicked purpose, and to keep him from ruin.

Yet man perceiveth it not—Or, rather, “Although he does not perceive it or attend to it.” Though the sinner is regardless of the admonition, yet still God repeats it, and endeavors to save him from the commission of the crimes which would lead him to ruin. This is designed to show the patience and forbearance of God, and how many means he takes to save the sinner from ruin. Of the truth of what Elihu here says, there can be no difference of opinion. It is one of the great

¹⁶ Rev. 11:18 *And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth.*

¹⁷ Job 33:14–17 *For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.* ¹⁵*In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;* ¹⁶*Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction,* ¹⁷*That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.*

¹⁸ Job 33:18–28 *He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.* ¹⁹*He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain:* ²⁰*So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.* ²¹*His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out.* ²²*Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.* ²³*If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness:* ²⁴*Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.* ²⁵*His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth:* ²⁶*He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness.* ²⁷*He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not;* ²⁸*He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.*

principles of the divine administration that the sinner is often warned, though he heeds it not; and that God sends repeated admonitions even when people will not regard them, but are bent on their own ruin.

