

Elihu's Reproof of Job

Job 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 as the true source of his life. “As a man; so every man is made by God, and not by himself.”¹ If men know themselves as made by God, and not being gods themselves,² they will pity the transgressor and not harshly judge him. Elihu rightfully places himself on the same natural and human level as Job in an attempt to help him realize that it was not human pride that was leading his correction. Elihu did distinguish himself from Job by his possessing and obeying the Spirit of God within him.³ Elihu would speak through being inspired by the Spirit of God, and his spiritual humility here proves that he is 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. Elihu assures Job that if there was a fault in his own spiritual reasoning and conclusions, then Job would be given the opportunity to voice an objection.⁴ 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 accomplishing His divine purpose in Job's life. Let us also remember that 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 admonisher of Job whom Job listens to without either rebutting or denying the charges brought against him. Whereas previously Job had defended both his faith and his person, now he does neither. By this fact alone we can rightfully assume that Elihu was indeed who he claimed to

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

² 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.

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

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.

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.

³ Job 32:8 But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.

Job 32:18 For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me.

⁴ Job 33:32–33 If thou hast anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee. ³³If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

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be, one sent by God, similar to John the Baptist,⁵ to prepare Job for the arrival of the Lord Himself.⁶

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 intercessor to make known to him his sin; Elihu would become just this. *How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin* (Job 13:23).

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 13:23) *How many are mine iniquities and sins?*—Job takes the place of the plaintiff or accuser. He opens the cause. He appeals to God to state the catalogue of his crimes, or to bring forward his charges of guilt against him. The meaning, according to Schultens, is, "That catalogue ought to be great which has called down so many and so great calamities upon my head from heaven, when I am conscious to myself of being guilty of no offence." God sorely afflicted him. Job appeals to him to show why it was done, and to make a statement of the number and the magnitude of his offences.

Make me to know—I would know on what account and why I am thus held to be guilty, and; why I am thus punished.

Job had wished for one capable of convincing him of sin, and if someone could be found, then his prayer would be answered. Ultimately it is only the Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit Who can convict men of sin,⁷ and only those actually led by Him Who can assist in bringing other sinners to true repentance.⁸ This is why Job's other three friends had failed to convince Job of sin, simply because the Lord was inspiring neither their words nor their ministries. They had spoken without being led by the Spirit of the Lord, and their failure and spiritual inability to help Job confirmed this.

The Lord knows the hearts of all men,⁹ and surely He will never give either spiritual power or spiritual authority to those not purposed to speak on His behalf. God also imparts no heavenly gift or divine revelation merely for a man's personal glory and/or religious advancement, since the gifts, powers, and endowments of the Spirit are given not for the personal ad-

5 Matt. 3:1–3 *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, ²And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ³For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

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

7 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:*

8 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.*

9 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.*

vancement of the recipient but rather for the edification, healing, and/or illumination of those to whom they are sent.¹⁰

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 in judgment; thus, he assures Job that his words would not compound Job's potential fear. Whereas carnal judgment is heavy upon those to whom it is directed, Christ's words are light,¹¹ even when given in the form of reproof and correction.

*(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 the thought of entering His presence. The Israelites begged and pleaded with Moses to intercede on their behalf because of fear, in order that they might not need to 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 so radiant that, as Scripture reveals, the Lord surrounds Himself in a cloud of thick darkness. *Then said Solomon, The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness* (II Chrn. 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 in darkness so that His presence will not destroy those too unholy to endure it. Hence, the Lord appeared on Mt. Sinai in a thick cloud¹² and shielded His true celestial glory from Israel, even as He led the Israelites on their journey to Canaan through His glory being hidden

¹⁰ I Cor. 12:7 *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

¹¹ I Cor. 14:3-5 *But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. ⁴He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. ⁵I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*

¹² Matt. 11:29-30 *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Ps. 19:7-8 *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

Ps. 119:143 *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.*

Ps. 119:165 *Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*

12 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.*

in a cloud.¹³ Practically it is impossible for any mortal creature to observe God's true light and celestial glory and not be consumed by it. *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 powerful and intimidating nature of God, it is not surprising that sinners will hesitate to desire direct communication with Him. The sin in man no doubt highly cautions him to keep a great distance between himself and the Lord unless approaching Him with full and complete repentance for sin. And though men are surely not wise, they do possess enough spiritual sense to realize that if they are in sin, they remain unworthy to stand in the divine, holy, and fearful majesty of God. It is also worth noting that Jesus our Lord will need to transform our own bodies in order that we may both safely and with joy eventually see Him as He is.¹⁴

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 his inward confession of claiming innocence and lacking any provable iniquity. Job's insistence to maintain personal integrity and righteousness is seen in his memorable though demonstrably wrong declaration of *My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live* (Job 27:6). No doubt what Job uttered in chapter 27 was greatly revised in chapter 42. *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes* (Job 42:6). What men proclaim of themselves regarding their character is seldom right or the truth. This was evidenced when Peter proclaimed that he would never deny the Lord Jesus but then undoubtedly did.¹⁵ Job also improperly presumed that he would be so well vindicated and confirmed righteous before God 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). What Job previously viewed as his own personal righteousness and strong religious integrity greatly changed, once he came to realize the extent of his sin committed against the Lord. For then, after true spiritual illumination, he would no longer view himself

13 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:*

14 1 John 3:2 *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

Phil. 3:21 *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

15 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. ⁵⁵And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. ⁵⁶But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. ⁵⁷And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. ⁵⁸And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. ⁵⁹And 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. ⁶⁰And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. ⁶¹And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. ⁶²And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*

as a righteous man, one who was as pure as gold, but rather as a sinner 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).

One of the great initial purposes of the Holy Spirit is to convict men of sin.¹⁶ Just as light makes known darkness,¹⁷ the Lord's Holy Spirit will with great force convince men that darkness lives within themselves. Any who have not sincerely come to know themselves to be sinners prove that they know neither the Lord nor their own unholy natures—since it is only those whose eyes are spiritually blind¹⁸ who cannot see their naturally born sinful condition. *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 sight, all mankind has gone astray, and there is not even one righteous—no, not one.¹⁹ Though Job was not aware of this spiritual truth at the beginning or middle of his trial, at the end he surely would be.

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.*

16 John 16:8 *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 17 Eph. 5:13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*

18 I 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.*

19 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.*

20 Job 19:11 *He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies. Job 13:24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?*

21 Deut. 32:4 *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

I John 1:5 *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

22 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.*

Through Elihu's correction we begin observing Job's first accusative and observable sin, which was not only labeling God his enemy, as he had previously done in error,²⁰ but now there is actual public blame for the Lord sinning against him. The repetition of *he* in these verses reveals the great emphasis that Job has openly put upon God for placing him in captivity.

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

Belief in human purity will very quickly transform into rebelling against divine authority. He therefore who thinks himself pure in his own eyes will be the first to believe that God is unjust toward him. Because sinners view themselves as without sin, they will attribute sin to Him Who has none.²¹ Also, the man who is prone to dangerously find fault with the Lord innately 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 held of the Lord contained great error.²² No one would dare to call the Lord into question,

let alone speak against His government, unless he internally believed, at least to a degree, himself equal to Him. At the core of all spiritual rebellion remains the devilish and perverted belief that sinful and fallen man is on the same level as the Lord and thus has a legitimate spiritual right to judge Him. For none also will bring accusation against any unless they believe themselves either superior or equal to them.

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 that the Lord must give account to them. So twisted is the sinner's heart that he thinks himself the Lord's judge. In actuality, it will never be God Who will be forced to give account to man but man, who must one day stand before the holy tribunal of God. *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God* (Rom. 14:12). The apostle Paul spoke of that day when the Lord will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He has appointed. Jesus' resurrection from the dead proved that He would be this Man. *Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead* (Acts 17:31).

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 the Lord had spoken to Job not only once but possibly twice, and yet Job could not perceive it? It is also not the fault of God that men cannot perceive His voice, and are so dulled in spiritual perception that they cannot recognize the Holy Spirit's presence.

(*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 33:14–17,²³ 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 33:18–28.²⁴

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.

²³ 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.*

²⁴ 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.*

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 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.

In truth, and according to Elihu’s words, the Lord had spoken to Job, and more than once, but because of spiritual dullness, Job either had not truly heard or had refused to hear God’s internal promptings in his heart.²⁵ Yea, the Lord does speak not once but twice, but it is men who perceive Him not. Though Job was initially unaware of this, both affliction and then correction would be necessary for him to truly learn God’s involvement in his life. Hence, by the end of the book, just as with the psalmist, Job would with both joy and certainty view as a *good* thing all that he had gone through in coming to more properly know God. *It is good for me that*

I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes (Ps. 119:71). Once on the other side of spiritual trials and afflictions, true believers will thank God for them.

(*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*, Ps. 119:71) *It is good for me that I have been afflicted*—See the notes at Psalm 119:67.²⁶ Whatever may have been the form of the affliction, it was good for me. The design was benevolent; the result has been my own benefit. This will be the experience sooner or later resulting from all the afflictions of the righteous.

That I might learn thy statutes—That I might be brought more fully to understand what they require; and that I might be led to conform to them. It is implied here

- (a) that this is the tendency of affliction; and
- (b) that this is an advantage—a good.

Anything that will lead a man to obey God is a blessing and a favor. Whatever leads a sinner to secure the salvation of his soul is a gain to him. No matter what it may cost; no matter what he may be required to give up; no matter to what persecutions and troubles it may expose him; no matter what he may suffer, or how long he may suffer; no matter though poverty, contempt, toil—even the rack or the stake—may be the consequence of his religion—yet it is again to him; and he will be thankful for it in the end.

²⁵ *Matt. 13:15* For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

²⁶ *Ps. 119:67* Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

