

Session 10

The Introduction of Elihu

Job 32:1–14

Scriptures

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| <i>Job 32:1–2</i> | <i>Matthew 18:3–4</i> | <i>Job 32:9</i> |
| <i>Job 36:2</i> | <i>Job 32:7</i> | <i>Job 32:10</i> |
| <i>I Corinthians 14:24–25</i> | <i>Proverbs 2:6</i> | <i>Job 32:11–12</i> |
| <i>Job 42:1–6</i> | <i>I Corinthians 12:98</i> | <i>Psalms 51:17</i> |
| <i>Job 32:2–3</i> | <i>I Kings 4:29</i> | <i>Job 32:13</i> |
| <i>Job 32:4–5</i> | <i>Matthew 13:11</i> | <i>Job 32:14</i> |
| <i>Ecclesiastes 3:7</i> | <i>Ecclesiastes 8:17</i> | |
| <i>Job 32:6</i> | <i>Job 32:8</i> | |

Job 32:1–2 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

² *Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.*

The structure of the Book of Job reveals the great importance of Elihu's ministry in preparing Job to hear directly from the Lord.

The Book of JOB as a Whole by Dr. E.W. Bullinger.

- A | i. 1–5. Introduction. Historical.
- B | i. 6—ii. 10. Satan's assault. Job stripped of all.
- C | ii. 11–13. The Three Friends. Their arrival.
- D | iii. 1—xxxi. 40. Job and his friends.
- E | xxxii.—xxxvii. Elihu.
- D | xxxviii. 1.—xlii. 6. Jehovah and Job.
- C | xlii. 7–9. The Three Friends. Their departure.
- B | xlii. 9, 10. Satan's defeat. Job blessed with double.
- A | xlii. 11–17. Conclusion. Historical.

Elihu is the only one whose message Job does not refute, the only one who could silence Job's critics, and also the only human character in the book whom God Himself does not reprove and correct.

These facts alone should draw our attention to this relatively obscure biblical figure.

The facts therefore indicate that Elihu was exactly who he claimed to be—one sent to speak on God's behalf.

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

Job could not be persuaded of his guilt, nor did his conscience convict him of sin, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

When men are righteous in their own sight and claim innocence before God, He will often send a minister.

Throughout human history the ignorance of men has required physical messengers led by the Holy Spirit to open their ears.

Only then can they hear the great lessons critical for deliverance, such as personal righteousness is never greater than God's and that it is always a sin against heaven to justify self over God.

The Lord chose Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, to introduce these deep and profound spiritual lessons to Job, thus preparing his heart for the entrance of the Lord's own correction.

Practically, Elihu's ministry readied Job for a much greater ministry to follow: the ministry of the Lord Himself.

As John the Baptist was a forerunner to Christ (Mark 1:1-8), so does Elihu assume a similar role for Jehovah.

It is customary that before sinners are ready for direct exposure to the Lord, repentance of sin must first take place.

And just as John the Baptist's ministry preached the need for repentance (Matt. 3:1-2), so shall Elihu's ministry do the same.

In studying the book we observe that Elihu speaks to Job for five uninterrupted chapters. Strikingly, Job offers no retort or disagreement with any of his words, as he had previously done with his other three friends.

While Job resisted Eliphaz's, Bildad's, and Zophar's unjust accusations of committing sin, once Elihu begins his address, Job remains silent.

Perhaps the reason for this is that true wisdom will often silence those who know it is lacking in their own lives.

Jesus' words to those who brought to Him the woman taken in adultery is a great example of this (John 8:1-9), revealing that the words of the Holy Spirit, spoken by true messengers of the Lord, often produce speechlessness in the hearers.

Ultimately, the sword of the Spirit pierces the sinner's heart so effectively that even the tongue is stopped from defending itself.

Only by Elihu's spiritually-appointed ministry, could the self-righteousness in Job begin to be broken. His other friends' attempts to do this had astoundingly failed.

Teaching us that it requires inspired spiritual prophecy, provided by the Lord, for a self-righteous man's heart to be touched, whereas mere human wisdom attempting to do this, will accomplish nothing.

I Corinthians 14:24-25 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

²⁵ And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

Inspired prophetic truth will do for the unbeliever, what human assumption and reason cannot—prompting him to recognize the presence and reality of God. The Holy Spirit accomplishes this great feat by revealing to sinners that God knows both their thoughts and the hidden intentions of their hearts.

When the sinner's inner soul is made known to him, via the Spirit of God, the door then opens for him to realize that it is not man who is actually addressing him, but the Lord Himself.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Cor. 14:24

The word here rendered "convinced" (ἐλέγγετῶν *elengchetai*) is rendered "reprove" in John 16:8, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin," etc. Its proper meaning is to "convict," to show one to be wrong; and then to rebuke, reprove, admonish, etc. Here it means, evidently, that the man would be convicted, or convinced of his error and of his sin; he would see that his former opinions and practice had been wrong; he would see and acknowledge the force and truth of the Christian sentiments which should be uttered, and would acknowledge the error of his former opinions and life. The following verse shows that the apostle means something more than a mere convincing of the understanding, or a mere conviction that his opinions had been erroneous. He evidently refers to what is now known also as "conviction" for sin; that is, a deep sense of the depravity of the heart, of the errors and follies of the past life, accompanied with mental anxiety, distress, and alarm. The force of truth, and the appeals which should be made, and the observation of the happy effects of religion, would convince him that he was a sinner, and show him also his need of a Saviour.

When a man filled with God's Holy Spirit brings forth prophecy from the Lord, its power will produce personal conviction of sin for those who believe it. Examples include David (II Sam. 11:1–26), Nineveh (Jnh. 3:1–10), and Saul (Acts 9:1–21).

Once Elihu had finished addressing Job's sin in chapters 32–37, the Lord commenced His own correction in chapters 38–42.

God's reproof and correction of Job includes that he had spoken without knowledge (Job 38:2) and had dismissed the Lord's judgments in order to maintain his own self-righteousness (Job 40:8).

Sinners are often willing to condemn the Lord and His dealings with them, in order to hold steadfast to their false belief of being innocent before Him. By falsely claiming fault with the Lord, this allows sinners to justify themselves. And most, because they love self more than the Lord, are much more ready to find fault with Him, than with themselves.

The last eleven chapters of the book reveal the great amount of heavenly correction needed for Job to come to know the extent of his sin, and the critical need to repent for it.

Although Job feared the Lord, he still lacked much understanding concerning the Lord's dealings with man.

Thus, it would take not only God's messenger, Elihu, but also Jehovah Himself to fully instruct this sincere though self-righteous man in things still deficient in his faith.

Job's confession at the end of the book helps us to understand one of the great spiritual lessons he learned, that the Lord knows even the thought of sin, hidden and attempted to be kept secret in the heart.

I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

Job 42:1–6 Then Job answered the Lord, and said,

² *I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.*

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.*

⁴ *Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.*

⁵ *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.*

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

To understand properly the Book of Job, Job's confession here to the Lord is critical to remember.

For it is not simply Job's words against the Lord that he repented of, but also his thoughts.

Teaching us that what was transpiring inside of Job, was even more contentious than what he actually spoke.

It was therefore not just Job's words that found fault with God, but also his heart, of which a degree of what he felt, he wished to remain private.

Job's confession of sin ultimately led him to repent in *dust and ashes*.

When the Lord reveals to a truly God-fearing man his spiritual ignorance, he will repent.

Little also will bring a sincere, godly man to his knees more quickly, than when he realizes that so much of what he has spoken concerning the Lord has been both false and in error.

To harm our own name because of personal sin is painful; to harm God's name, is tragic.

Job 32:2–3 Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.

³ *Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.*

Elihu's wrath was twofold. (1) He was angry with Job's three friends for having no answer for Job yet they had still condemned him. (2) His wrath was directed toward Job because he justified himself rather than God.

Whenever two parties have the same flaw of self-righteousness (as evidenced by Job and his three friends), the revelation needed for deliverance shall remain elusive.

Often when men cannot help the broken, they will judge them instead.

Job's friends had condemned him when in fact they should have spent more time analyzing why they could not persuade him of his guilt. It takes little wisdom to condemn others; it takes much greater wisdom to help them find their way back to God.

What these verses also teach us is that inspired spiritual anger prompted by the Lord in His servants, should not be considered wrong nor sinful, and especially so when dealing with those who remain self-righteous in their own sight.

Elihu's wrath was kindled against Job and his three friends, and very soon a similar spiritual anger would both appear and be manifested by the Lord.

*Job 32:4–5 Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he.
5 When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.*

Elihu, maintained proper respect and deference for those older than himself, because not until Job's other three friends had finished voicing their opinions, did Elihu, who was younger than all of them, voice his.

Elihu's anger stemmed from the fact, that though older than himself, and supposedly more spiritually mature, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had offered nothing truly useful to help Job.

Job's friends had spoken much, but not a word was fitly and rightly spoken regarding Job's sin, or a way to escape it.

A word fitly spoken is one uttered at exactly the most opportune time, and no word can be truly this, unless a man is led by the Spirit concerning when he should speak. Examples of this include Peter calling Israel to repent after they had seen the Holy Spirit descending upon the apostles (Acts 2:38), as well as Nathan's words to David informing him that he was guilty of sinning against Uriah and Bathsheba after hearing Nathan's story of the poor man's lamb (II Sam. 12:1-13).

Wisdom should teach us that it is not enough to speak for the Lord, until it is first revealed what is right and proper to speak.

Patience also is often essential in doing the will of God. Since there is a moment when it is righteous to hold forth God's Word, even as there are times that God's Spirit will instruct His messengers to remain silent.

Elihu possessed the spiritual wisdom to know when to do both. Hence, Elihu had remained quiet, spiritually subject, and discreet in listening to those older than himself, until it was fully realized that they had absolutely no answer for Job, but had still foolishly condemned him.

As with all things, timing—even the time to speak—is everything.

Ecclesiastes 3:7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Eccl. 3:7

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak (k); when it is an evil time, a time of calamity in a nation, it is not a time to be loquacious and talkative, especially in a vain and ludicrous way, Amos 5:13 [Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.]; or when a particular friend or relation is in distress, as in the case of Job and his friends, Job 2:13 [So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.]; or when in the presence of wicked men, who make a jest of everything serious and religious, Psalm 39:1 [I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.]; and so when under afflictive dispensations of Providence, it is a time to be still and dumb, and not open the mouth in a murmuring and complaining way, Leviticus 10:3 [Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.].

Job 32:6 And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Job 32:6

Elihu professes to speak by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and corrects both parties. He allowed that those who had the longest experience should speak first. But God gives wisdom as he pleases; this encouraged him to state his opinion. By attention to the word of God, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit, young men may become wiser than the aged; but this wisdom will render them swift to hear, slow to speak, and disposed to give others a patient hearing.

Youth alone does not disqualify a man for either spiritual service or divine responsibility.

Timothy was a young Christian when Paul gave him the charge to preach the Word of the Lord with boldness and assume the role of overseeing the early Christian church (I Tim. 4:1-2). No doubt Elihu was a man like Timothy; though young in years, still the Lord had chosen him for a very specific and important ministry. David also was the youngest of Jesse's sons when the Lord anointed him (I Sam. 16:13).

Teaching us that a humble young man can be much more valuable in ministry, than an aged and foolish old man, who also lacks the spiritual wisdom to know either what to speak, or when to speak it.

Jesus also stated that it was necessary for all believers to maintain the heart of a child, regardless of age, in order to enter His kingdom.

Matthew 18:3-4 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Mark 10:15

Whosoever shall not receive—Whosoever shall not manifest the spirit of a little child. . . .

As a little child—With the temper and spirit of a child—teachable, mild, humble, and free from prejudice and obstinacy.

No matter the length in ministry, or position in the church, if men do not have the heart of a child then heaven cannot be entered, nor others helped in their time of need.

Job 32:7 I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.

One might assume that the older men get the wiser they become; however, this is generally not the case, since true wisdom is not imparted through the number of years lived, but rather is solely a gift from God.

It is the Lord Who imparts wisdom into men's hearts; consequently without Him doing so, it cannot be actually possessed.

Proverbs 2:6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Spiritual wisdom is the first gift listed in connection to possessing the Holy Spirit in I Corinthians 12.

I Corinthians 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.

For a man to possess the wisdom of God, the Spirit of God must dwell in him. Hence, just as God gives the Holy Spirit, so too must He impart the gift of divine wisdom for any to possess it.

Men generally have very small minds, constrained also by rigidity of human thought.

But in contrast to this, the Lord gave Solomon what was said to be *largeness of heart*, or a heart that was able to be instructed in, and enlightened to, understanding the will of God, and how it was to be applied in leading the people of God.

I Kings 4:29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.

Benson Commentary, I Kgs. 4:29

And largeness of heart—Vastness of understanding, or a very comprehensive mind, capable of receiving the knowledge of all things, both divine and human.

Jesus spoke of giving spiritual enlightenment to some, while withholding it from others.

Matthew 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

Without wisdom being given to men by God, it is impossible for them to understand any of the workings of God. For this, both the Spirit of God and the gift of wisdom are necessary.

Ecclesiastes 8:17 Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Eccl. 8:17

that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: he can find out that it is done, but not the reason why it is done: the ways of God are in the deep, and not to be traced; they are unsearchable and past finding out; there is a depth of wisdom and knowledge, in them, inscrutable by the wisest of men . . .

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

These are Elihu's words, and they reveal what every fruitful and faithful minister of God knows: that it is the Spirit of God and the inspiration of the Almighty that produces true spiritual understanding in the soul; that true wisdom is received from above, and cannot be gained through natural means.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 32:8

But there is a spirit in man— . . . All true wisdom, is the sentiment, is from above; and where the inspiration of the Almighty is, no matter whether with the aged or the young, there is understanding. Elihu undoubtedly means to say, that though he was much younger than they were, and though, according to the common estimate in which the aged and the young were held, he might be supposed to have much less acquaintance with the subjects under consideration, yet, as all true wisdom came from above, he might be qualified to speak.

Job 32:9 Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.

Elihu reinforced his point that though Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar eclipsed him in years, neither their age, nor their previous religious experience, had brought them to understand not only the nature of Job's sin, but more importantly, how to help him to recover from it.

Job 32:10 Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion.

Elihu, now ready to instruct, summons those present to hearken to what he is about to reveal.

Pulpit Commentary, Job 32:10

Therefore I said, Hearken to me. Elihu evidently claims, not exactly what is ordinarily understood by inspiration, but that his spirit, is divinely enlightened, and that therefore he is more competent to take part in the controversy that has been raised than many of the aged. I also will show mine opinion. "I also," or "even I"—i.e. I, young as I am, "will show my opinion," or "utter what I know on the subject." Elihu does not speak of his convictions as mere "opinions," but claims to be in possession of actual "knowledge."

It is not prideful to speak boldly for the Lord, especially if God is inspiring the message.

Hence, just as Peter and John at the gate called Beautiful, demanded the lame man to *look on us* (Acts 3:4-7), so does Elihu demand the same spiritual attention given to him here. Jonah also heralded the prophecy of Nineveh's destruction, if its inhabitants did not repent of their sin (Jnh. 3:4). Jeremiah likewise cried to open the ears of those in Jerusalem for their sins against God (Jer. 2:1-2), John the Baptist also with great boldness publicly proclaimed Christ's coming (Matt. 3:1-5). Thus, where the Spirit of the Lord truly abides, boldness to speak on God's behalf, will also abide.

Job 32:11–12 Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say.

¹² ***Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words:***

It is worth considering that Elihu could actually be the author of the Book of Job. This would explain a great deal, as only two people are realistic candidates as to who would be most qualified to record the events in Job's life: either Elihu or Job himself. Hence, the Lord very likely used one of the most obscure men in the Bible, to bring forth one of the most important messages—that a *broken* and *contrite spirit* is always a pearl of great price. And to possess this, God will not despise.

Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Ps. 51:17

Thou wilt not despise—Thou wilt not treat with contempt or disregard. That is, God would look upon them with favor, and to such a heart he would grant his blessing. See the notes at Isaiah 57:15; notes at Isaiah 66:2.

Job 32:13 Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man.

Here we see the spiritual reason why Job's three friends were never given the wisdom to help their friend—simply because in human arrogance they would have claimed that they themselves had found out wisdom.

But just as a fool does not know God, neither will God grant heavenly wisdom to any who secretly desire to use divine wisdom as a means for glorying in themselves.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 32:13

You were not permitted to refute or convince him, for if you had been you would have been lifted up with pride, and would have attributed to yourselves what belongs to God.

What was true of Job's friends is equally true of many today, that even if God did provide for them spiritual wisdom, the praise would not go to God, but rather only to themselves.

No doubt the old saying that the Lord created man last, so that he could never claim that creation was his own work, has a realistic measure of truth to it.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 32:13

God thrusteth him down, not man—These are the words of Elihu. The meaning is, "God only can drive Job from his position, and show him the truth, and humble him. The wisdom of man fails. The aged, the experienced, and the wise have been unable to meet his arguments and bring him down from the positions which he has taken. That work can be done only by God himself, or by the wisdom which he only can give." Accordingly Elihu, who proposes to meet the arguments of Job, makes no appeal to experience or observation; he does not ground what he says on the maxims of sages or the results of reflection, but proposes to adduce the precepts of wisdom which God had imparted to him; Job 33:4, Job 33:6.

Elihu knew that the Lord alone could convict Job of sin, and that His divine spiritual correction was necessary to sufficiently humble Job, in order that he might know the real depth of his sin.

Job 32:14 Now he hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches.

Elihu makes it very clear that he had absolutely no role whatsoever in the previous failed attempts to help Job.

Elihu will also reveal later in the book, that he would both search and fetch his wisdom from afar.

Because of this, that His source was from the Spirit of the Almighty, Elihu's answers to Job's problems would contain a spiritual newness and freshness, not found in any of the preceding arguments of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, as well as Job himself.

Elihu's words would bring forth new spiritual understanding, which would both humble and ready Job, for the Lord's entrance into his life.

Pulpit Commentary, Job 32:14

Now he hath not directed his words against me. Elihu thinks that he can interfere in the controversy with the better prospect of a good result, since he is untouched by any of Job's words, and can therefore speak without passion or resentment. *Neither will I answer him with your speeches.* He is also going to bring forward fresh arguments, which, as they avoid the line taken by the three friends, may soothe, instead of exasperating, the patriarch.

