

Session 11

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

Job 32:15–33:3

Scriptures

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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 spiritual impact of Elihu's divinely-ordained ministry begins to be seen here.

Once Elihu begins to speak, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, who had previously felt their wisdom superior in every manner and in every way, now became *amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking.*

The Hebrew word for *amazed* is #2865 *chathath*. *Strongs' Concordance* defines it as "to be shattered or dismayed."

Brown-Driver-Briggs defines the word, "be shattered, broken, figurative of nations under divine judgment Isaiah 7:8; Isaiah 30:31; so probably also Isaiah 8:9."

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines the word, "A primitive root; properly, to prostrate; hence, to break down, either (literally) by violence, or (figuratively) by confusion and fear—abolish, affright, be (make) afraid, amaze, beat down, discourage, (cause to) dismay, go down, scare, terrify."

From these definitions we can see the strong spiritual impact that Elihu's presence would begin to make on Job's miserable comforters.

They begin to realize that they have been wrong, their arguments shattered, and fear for their error is increasingly growing.

The dramatic effectiveness of Elihu's words to Job's friends is threefold, as they are (1) *amazed*, (2) *answered no more*, and (3) *left off speaking*.

Where previously they assumed to know all, and spoke incessantly about their own personal wisdom and experiences, now there is deafening silence.

Where previously they had much to say, and were certain of all they said, now exposed to true wisdom, their appearance is as mute men.

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.

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 . . .

It takes spiritual power to turn the sinner from the evil of his way, and until it is introduced, he will continue as he always has.

Jesus equipped His apostles with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), and all who are sent by Him will share in possessing similar spiritual power and wisdom. This is essential in ministry, without which no leader can be effective in it.

To be truly dynamic in turning the lost to Christ will require the presence of the Spirit of Christ. And then God's Holy Spirit—and not the reasonings, opinions, and foolish assumptions produced by the spirits of men—sinners are made known their sins, and hopefully are convicted by them.

Micah 3:8 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.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Mic. 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. 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” . . .

The power to either silence or refute critics was evident not only in Jesus' earthly ministry (Matt. 22:15–22) but also in those He ordained to continue to spread His name. Though men have no power, ability, and/or strength in their own words, the Lord has great power in His.

Wherever true ministers of the gospel reside, the Lord's spiritual power will be manifested by them.

Where the Spirit of the Lord truly is, spiritual power will be clearly evident in those who possess it. This was the case with Micah (Mic. 3:8), Zechariah (II Chrn. 24:20), Elijah (I Kgs. 12:1–24), David (I Sam. 16:13), and God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ (Luke 4:14) along with so many others (Heb. 11:32–35). Elihu's divinely-ordained ministry will prove to be no different.

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

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 which hath no vent*.

Where the Spirit of God truly is, there will exist great internal spiritual energy and compulsion to carry out divine will.

This internal force is so great, that even if God's messengers would seek to suppress its internal promptings, they cannot. Jeremiah briefly attempted to not speak in the Lord's name, but the Spirit of the Lord would not allow him to hold his peace.

The Lord's passion is so strong and so compelling in His messengers' hearts, that if He compels truth to be brought forth from them, then faithful men of God have no natural ability whatsoever to resist becoming obedient to divine will.

Jeremiah 20:9 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.

Just as Elihu spoke of the Word of God in him, *as wine which hath no vent and ready to burst like new bottles*, so does Jeremiah speak of the spiritual Word from within him, *as a burning fire shut up in his bones*. This is always the case with those ordained by God to bring forth His Word, when the truth of God is not brought forth by mere duty, but rather through strong spiritual fervor and desire.

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 the Lord had been impressing upon him.

The Spirit of the Lord was like a burning fire, which could only be quenched, by speaking forth the truth. It was only when this would be done, that both relief and refreshment could return to his soul.

Distinct from Job's other three friends, Elihu did not desire to speak, but the Spirit of the Lord within him gave him no reasonable alternative. Sin was present, and the Holy Spirit's will, was that it must be addressed.

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

True ministers of the Lord neither can be, nor will be, respecters of persons. To do so would endanger their own spiritual standing and ministry before God.

Deuteronomy 1:17 *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.*

Partiality in judgment will always result in improper justice. All true judgment belongs to the Lord; it is revealed by Him, and is to be administered in His name. For this reason neither the fear of man, nor praise from him should alter the judgment of God. To do so, will disqualify a man from either becoming, or remaining, a true servant of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:10 *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.*

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.

Just as it was God who called Paul to ministry, so it was God Who chose Elihu to speak on His behalf. Because of this, Elihu's loyalty remained with the Lord, and not man. It was the Lord Who had made, sustained, and saved him, understandably his allegiance and loyalty remained with his Savior.

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

The consequential result of engaging in flattery, shall produce greater spiritual blindness to the sin in self.

Psalms 36:2 (NIV) *In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin.*

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.

Elihu was more than fully aware of the sin of flattery and its dangerous consequences. He knew that if committed, the Lord would take him away. It was neither in Elihu's character or nature to flatter. He did not know how to do it and was not about to begin learning to engage in it now.

What Elihu knew of flattery, David also was acutely aware of as well—that the Lord would cut off, disown, and dissociate Himself from all who engage in this sin.

Psalms 12:3 *The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.*

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Ps. 12:3

All flattering lips—The meaning is, that he will cut off all “persons” who use flattery; that is, he will cut them off from the favors which he will show to his own people, or will punish them. The word used here is the common one to denote disowning or excommunicating, and derives its meaning from the act of separating offenders from a community. See Genesis 17:14; Leviticus 17:10; Leviticus 18:29; Leviticus 20:3, Leviticus 20:6...

Flatterers smooth over not only their own sins against God, but also the sins of others.

Hence, where flattery minimizes sin, the Holy Spirit and God's holy Word both highlight and expose it.

Flattery also requires a very sweet, candied, and agreeable tongue so that what is said will be perceived as pleasing to those it is purposed to both deceive and influence.

Many a false prophet has gained his religious reputation and spiritual influence through flattery, through preaching what the simple desire to hear, and not what the Lord demands they hear.

Through also false revelations, flatterers seduce people to believe untruths (Luke 6:26).

Ultimately, the flatterer's main spiritual objective is to enlarge the egos, hopes, and imaginations of others, in order that he may enhance himself.

The devil leads, influences, and deceives as many with flattery, as he pressures with persecution.

This was evidenced in Genesis with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:5), and he employs this same tactic today.

Through flattery many have been led to trust in lies, which in the end ultimately destroyed their own life.

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 has its source in God. Hence, if the Spirit of God is truly working within to speak His Word, it is quite appropriate, and even essential, that others are alerted to the importance of what is about to be said.

Those also sent by God, have more than enough right to demand that sinners hear the truth.

The Lord does not coax nor beg sinners to hear His message; He commands them to.

To foolishly assume that the Lord has no right to enter into your life, is to conclude that life does not originate from Him. Every potter has the right to either shape or mold the clay as he pleases, and the Maker of both the potter and the clay is no different.

***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 utter knowledge clearly. His words, he states, will not bring more confusion, but rather impart clarity and lucidity regarding Job's sin.

Job, who previously rejected being convicted by the spirit of man, now is given a chance to be reconciled through being exposed to the Spirit of God.

The words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had done nothing but provoke Job and cause him internal unrest.

Yet Elihu's message would accomplish the complete opposite. Since it originated from above, it would prove easy to be entreated and recognized as having the Lord as its true source.

Ultimately, Elihu would provide a breath of fresh air, whereas previously only debate and strife had prevailed.

Job's friends had spoken through their own will, but now Elihu, sent *on God's behalf*, would speak through the direction of the Lord's Holy Spirit, and as such would introduce to Job the healing and restorative power of God's Word.

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

It is easy to see why the confusing human arguments of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had collectively failed, simply because their words had not God as their true source. True prophecy originates not from human imagination, but from heavenly revelation. Its source is not man, but God.

II Peter 1:21 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.

Many have failed in ministry simply because they sought and attempted to operate a divine calling which God has not give them.

Understandably, no man can possess any legitimate spiritual ministry without Jesus calling him to it. The Lord has set the members in His church as it has pleased Him, and surely not how it pleases the members.

Whenever also the spiritually ignorant speak through their own human supposition, they can do nothing but bring forth false prophecy, which is exactly what Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had done.

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

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; 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.

All true and legitimate spiritual ministries in the church require a divine call before they are entered into. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin, and this is especially so in regard to being ordained to speak for God. To presume to either be a prophet, or speak as one, requires first being called by God to the office.

But, if spiritual counterfeits dangerously engage in presumably speaking for the Lord, absent being actually commissioned by Him, then the divine judgment for their sin is death.

Deuteronomy 18:20 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.

It is a great crime to come in the Lord's name, and not be commanded by Him to do so.

It is also not uncommon in professed Christian ministry, that both pastor and priest can be alienated from the Lord, while still claiming to speak in Christ's name. No doubt there are far more false prophets and teachers operating in both the world and the professed church, than true ones. Just like in Micaiah's day there are always far more false prophets to be inquired of, than true ones (I Kgs. 22:1–38).

Jeremiah 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.

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,

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:

