

Session 16

Elihu Speaks to Job of God's Righteousness

Job Chapter 36:1–22

Scriptures

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<i>Job 36:5</i>	<i>Job 36:12</i>	<i>Job 6:8–9</i>
<i>Job 36:6</i>	<i>Job 36:13–14</i>	<i>Job 36:21</i>
<i>Job 21:7</i>	<i>Job 36:15</i>	<i>Job 36:22</i>
<i>Matthew 5:3</i>	<i>Job 36:16</i>	<i>Psalm 25:8–9</i>
<i>Isaiah 66:2</i>	<i>Job 36:17</i>	<i>Job 42:2</i>

Job 36:1–3 Elihu also proceeded, and said,

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

³ *I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.*

Where Job's other friends had spoken things originating from their own opinions, experiences, and traditions, thus representing themselves, Elihu would speak *on God's behalf*. It is here we see the distinct difference between Elihu and Job's other three friends.

They had spoken from personal reason and experience. In spiritual contrast to this, Elihu reveals that he has searched for his knowledge *from afar*.

Elihu also assures Job that the wisdom he was about to bring forth did not originate from himself, but from above. He had not looked for the truth of Job's situation in his own mind, or through prior personal experience, knowing that to do so, would prove him just as ineffective in helping Job, as his other three friends. Instead it was from heaven that he sought understanding, and from heaven it would be given to him.

Because Elihu brings inspiration *from afar*, he reveals that he will *ascribe righteousness to [his] Maker*.

How rare are messengers such as this, who instead of seeking to justify themselves, and/or other sinners like themselves, rather have chosen that divine path which pursues justifying God and ascribing righteousness to Him.

Job 36:4 For truly my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Job 36:4

For truly my words shall not be false, . . . But strictly true; he would take the utmost care to say nothing but the truth, with the greatest impartiality and sincerity, so that what was said might be depended upon; truth spoken briefly, clearly, and on so important a subject as the righteousness of God, deserved attention;

Elihu assures Job that he would not err nor speak false words concerning Job's situation, as his other three companions had done.

This was because Elihu's source for wisdom was via inspiration of the Spirit. The Spirit is truth, and only He can reveal where sin actually abides and the real cause of it.

In his previous words to Job, Elihu revealed where he knew the source of all true wisdom resided, and it was not in himself, but rather in He, Who imparts His Spirit to man. It is from this Spirit, this Holy Spirit, Who descends from above, and originates from the higher spiritual realm, that divine knowledge is imparted to those who through mere natural birth lack it.

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

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

Elihu assures Job that the Lord does not despise men and cannot do anything unbecoming toward them beyond what they deserve.

Ultimately, the Lord is neither capricious, nor are His judgments concerning man erratic or haphazard.

Because of the Lord's great might and His distance from man, He is above all human vendetta and emotion.

Consequently, all the Lord's judgments will be fair, equitable, and deserved. The Lord's high and exalted position above creation allows this. Because He has no equal, God judges all men impartially, and as such, righteously.

Job 36:6 He preserveth not the life of the wicked: but giveth right to the poor.

Pulpit Commentary, Job 36:6

He preserveth not the life of the wicked. There is no special providence over the life of the wicked, as Job had supposed, or pretended to suppose (Job 21:7; comp. Job 12:6). On the contrary, God "overturneth" wicked men "in the night, so that they are destroyed; he striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others" (Job 34:25, 26). *But giveth right to the poor.* The poor and afflicted, the meek and humble, God vindicates.

Assuring Job of God's justice, Elihu refutes Job's claim that the wicked become old and live long lives while simultaneously increasing in both influence and power.

Job 21:7 Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?

One needs only to observe the actual lives of sinners to know that no wicked man has a good end. Hence, even if the lives of evil men appear momentarily blessed, it is only for a time before they reap as they have sown.

Elihu also rightfully proclaims that the real blessed, are those who remain poor in spirit, who have humbled themselves before the Lord, and yielded to His sovereignty over their lives.

Because the Lord's deep affection has always been toward the humble and those contrite in spirit, it is foolishness to suppose that the same God Who adores and cherishes the lowly, would ever promote the proud. It is also not the wicked who actually live long lives, but the humble, who also by divine grace are given eternal life as a gift from God.

This is why sinners should never be envied or admired, simply because even abundant worldly prosperity is a small thing, compared to being loved by the Lord and given His eternal life.

It is the meek to whom God looks upon with favor, and bestows His blessings; it is not the proud.

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Matt. 5:3

To be poor in spirit is to have a humble opinion of ourselves; to be sensible that we are sinners, and have no righteousness of our own; to be willing to be saved only by the rich grace and mercy of God; to be willing to be where God places us, to bear what he lays on us, to go where he bids us, and to die when he commands; to be willing to be in his hands, and to feel that we deserve no favor from him. It is opposed to pride, and vanity, and ambition.

It is those who are truly poor in heart, and who genuinely possess a broken and contrite spirit, and tremble at God's Word, whom the Lord looks upon with favor.

Isaiah 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Isa. 66:2

But to this man will I look—That is, 'I prefer a humble heart and a contrite spirit to the most magnificent earthly temple' (see the notes at Isaiah 57:15).

... The Septuagint renders it, *Ἰταπεινὸν Tapeinon*—'Humble,' not *πτωχόν ptōchon* (poor). The idea is, not that God looks with favor on a poor man merely because he is poor—which is not true, for his favors are not bestowed in view of external conditions in life—but that he regards with favor the man that is humble and subdued in spirit.

And of a contrite spirit—A spirit that is broken, crushed, or deeply affected by sin. It stands opposed to a spirit that is proud, haughty, self-confident, and self-righteous.

Job 36:7 He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Job 36:7

God does not forsake the godly, as Job implied, but "establishes," or makes them sit on the throne as kings (1Sa 2:8; Ps 113:7, 8).

***Job 36:8–10 And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction;
9 Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded.
10 He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.***

Elihu reveals to Job that if the righteous find themselves bound in affliction, it is because of their own transgressions.

By the Lord's allowing sinners to reap as they have sown, it is hoped that they see the error of their ways, and humbly realize that their affliction is the result of divine discipline.

The aim of spiritual discipline is also not simply to punish past sins, but to prevent new ones from being committed.

Hence, personal chastisement for sin is not solely purposed to avenge the past, but hopefully to protect the transgressor from even greater future divine judgment.

Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Job 36:9

The fundamental thought of Elihu here once again comes unmistakably to view: the sufferings of the righteous are well-meant chastisements, which are to wean them from the sins into which through carnal security they have fallen—a warning from God to penitence, designed to work their good.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Job 36:9

This is Elihu's special doctrine, that God's chastisements are by way of discipline, to reform the future rather than to chastise the past.

Though most will almost universally disagree with this truth, Scripture clearly reveals that the Lord does use captivity, suffering, and affliction to open men's minds to the guilt of their sin, and to assist them to come to realize their need to repent for it. But if sinners do not repent, when they are being chastised by the Lord, then all hope for gaining salvation will be lost.

Pulpit Commentary, Job 36:10

God's chastisements are to be viewed as commands to men to "go and sin no more.

Job 36:11 If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures.

Elihu instructs Job that it is obedience and service to the Lord, which produce a life filled with prosperity and pleasure. Thus it is through true and genuine subjection and service to the Lord, that men's lives are both blessed and prosper, ultimately allowing spiritual contentment to fill their souls.

Job 36:12 But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 36:12

But if they obey not—If those who are afflicted do not turn to God, and yield him obedience, they must expect that he will continue their calamities until they are cut off.

He who resists heavenly chastisement, Elihu reveals, will die without any true knowledge of the Lord.

It is not simply then that spiritual disobedience shall produce eternal death, but also that sinners will die without ever really being able to come to know the Lord.

To *die without knowledge* is to die without any true understanding of Him, Who is the source of all true knowledge.

Job 36:13–14 But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them.

¹⁴ They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.

Advancing his argument of the godless and how the Lord deals with them, Elihu now draws Job's attention to the hypocrite, who refuses to cry unto God even in his affliction, and as a result dies before his time.

Spiritual hypocrisy also has no other end, than storing up divine wrath, and ultimately being accounted in death, with the unclean.

A religious hypocrite therefore, though he professed to both know and follow God, but actually did not, shall have his lot cast with those who never even sought the Lord.

This includes being counted, and being numbered among what the Bible reveals are some of the most unclean and vilest of sinners, sodomites.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 36:14

And their life is among the unclean—Margin, "Sodomites." The idea is, that they would be treated in the same way as the most abandoned and vile of the race. No special favor would be shown to them because they were "professors" of religion, nor would this fact be a shield against the treatment which they deserved. They could not be classed with the righteous, and must, therefore, share the fate of the most worthless and wicked of the race.

Every hypocrite is not merely a sinner; rather, he is one who compounds his sin by lying about his true inner thoughts and feelings towards God. For this sin, he shall both die and lie with the unclean.

To engage in hypocrisy, Elihu argues, is in God's eyes, likened as committing sodomy, which is one of the highest forms of human perversion.

Job 36:15 He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression.

For the second time Elihu stresses to Job that through affliction men's ears are opened, in order that they may hear God's voice, and come to know His will for their lives.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Job 36:15

He delivereth the poor in his affliction.—The point of Elihu's discourse is rather that He delivereth the afflicted by his affliction; He makes use of the very affliction to deliver him by it as a means, "and openeth their ears by oppression."

The Lord's divine hope is always that sinners after experiencing adversity will be humbled enough to come to know their great need for subjection to divine will. For this reason affliction is just one of many means whereby the Lord continually attempts to save sinners from the pit, and from progressing even further towards eternal death.

Job 36:16 Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Job 36:16

Elihu shows that Job caused the continuance of his own trouble.

How sinners deal with affliction in its beginning, will often determine the length of its duration. If they are not brought to come to know themselves, and the sin that lives within them, as the real culprit of their bondage, then it shall prove virtually impossible to escape it.

Job 36:17 But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 36:17

According to this the meaning is, that if Job held the opinions of wicked people, he must expect that these opinions would be rapidly followed by judgment, or that they would go together, and support each other. This seems to me to be in accordance with the connection, and to express the thought which Elihu meant to convey. It is a sentiment which is undoubtedly true—that if a man holds the sentiments, and manifests the spirit of the wicked, he must expect to be treated as they are.

When any man, even one who thinks himself righteous, aligns himself with the wicked, even if it is only in speech, he opens himself up for divine judgment. Job did fear God,

but by agreeing with the opinions of those who opposed Him, he had unknowingly opened the door to be treated exactly as them.

Job 36:18 Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.

If the Lord is continuously provoked by sin, and if even affliction does not turn the sinner away from it, then divine wrath is promised to quickly take him away.

Job 36:19 Will he esteem thy riches? no, not gold, nor all the forces of strength.

Job had possessed both riches and wealth, yet none of his previous worldly abundance could prevent the Lord from allowing Satan to touch his life. Hence, just as worldly riches and honor could not prevent Job's affliction, neither would they be able to prevent Job's death if the Lord so willed it.

Whatever therefore a man possesses, be it wealth, honor, or privilege, will not prevent divine justice, if sin is neither accounted for, nor repented of.

Hence, not even great worldly prosperity and power can prevent the Lord's spiritual judgment, in rendering to men exactly as they have sown. To prosper in this life, is also surely not grounds for hope of gaining eternal life in the next.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 36:19

Will he esteem thy riches?—That is God will not regard thy riches as a reason why he should not cut you off, or as a ransom for your forfeited life. The reference here must be to the fact that Job "had been" a rich man, and the meaning is, either that God would not spare him because he "had been" a rich man, or that if he had now all the wealth which he once possessed, it would not be sufficient to be a ransom for his life.

Nor all the forces of his strength—Not all that gives power and influence to a man—wealth, age, wisdom, reputation, authority, and rank. The meaning is, that God would not regard any of these when a man was rebellious in affliction, and refused in a proper manner to acknowledge his Maker.

Job 36:20 Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place.

Job had desired death, which Elihu warns is never something the sinner should wish for. The reason for this is that there is a finality in death, which when entered into cannot be reversed.

In death the sinner can no longer repent, nor is there any more chance of him being reconciled to God.

It was death that Job had sought, which if actually entered into, could result in being eternally cut off from the Lord.

Job 6:8–9 Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for!

⁹ Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 6:9

The sense is, that Job wished that God would wholly finish his work, and that as he had begun to destroy him he would complete it.

Job 36:21 Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Job 36:21

Regard not iniquity.—Or, perhaps, the special sin of longing for death, for thou hast desired to die rather than bear thine affliction.

The sinner often hopes for a quick death, in order that he need not have to bear the full punishment for his sin. For this reason, when suffering the consequences of sin, death is often preferred by the transgressor of divine will, above life.

Job 36:22 Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?

Elihu now instructs Job that if there is to be deliverance from his captivity, it must require the Lord instructing him.

Psalms 25:8–9 Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

In regards to pointing out and revealing sin committed against God, there is none who can instruct like God.

This relevant truth would very soon be apparent in Job's life, for immediately after Elihu's correction, the Lord begins His own spiritual chastisement of Job, by illuminating him not only to the error of his words, but also to his inward, and thought-to-be-hidden secret thoughts. The Lord would instruct Job, and some of this correction would be directly related to the accusative considerations Job had wrongfully assumed could be hidden in his heart.

Job 42:2 I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

When this is understood, that the Lord's correction of Job was not solely based on merely his words against God, but also his inward murmuring against Him, then the book is far more easy to understand. To think evil, is the same in God's eyes, as committing it.

