

Session 15

Elihu Corrects Job for Speaking Without Wisdom

Job Chapter 34:35–35:16

Scriptures

Job 34:35

James 1:26

Matthew 12:36–37

I Peter 3:10

Job 34:36

Job 34:37

Job 35:1–2

Job 35:3

Hebrews 11:25

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Job 35:4–8

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Proverbs 6:16–19

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Job 35:14

Job 35:15

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Job 42:3

Job 34:35 Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom.

Job had spoken of himself as righteous and had said of God that He denied him justice. Both of these statements would be proven false.

All thoughts, like all spirits, must be tried, and it is only God's Holy Spirit Who can truly do this.

If men are quick to speak, and especially against the Lord, then they will very soon quickly find themselves ashamed.

A fool utters all his mind, and if a man does not carefully control his tongue, then his entire religion the Lord esteems as vain.

The tongue is an important member of the body, and as such it can either assist in securing a man's salvation, or potentially be grounds for his condemnation.

James 1:26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Jas. 1:26

If any man among you seem to be religious—Pious, or devout. That is, if he does not restrain his tongue, his other evidences of religion are worthless. A man may undoubtedly have many things in his character which seem to be evidences of the existence of religion in his heart, and yet there may be some one thing that shall show that all those evidences are false. Religion is designed to produce an effect on our whole conduct; and if there is any one thing in reference to which it does not bring us under its control, that one thing may show that all other appearances of piety are worthless.

And bridleth not his tongue—Restrains or curbs it not, as a horse is restrained with a bridle. There may have been some reason why the apostle referred to this particular sin which is now unknown to us; or he may perhaps have intended to select this as a specimen to illustrate this idea, that if there is any one evil propensity which religion does not control, or if there is any one thing in respect to which its influence is not felt, whatever other evidences of piety there may be, this will demonstrate that all those

appearances of religion are vain. For religion is designed to bring the whole man under control, and to subdue every faculty of the body and mind to its demands. If the tongue is not restrained, or if there is any unsubdued propensity to sin whatever, it proves that there is no true religion.

Nowhere is self-righteousness more exuberant and on public display more, than when men joyfully take pleasure in listening to the sound of their own voices.

In Christ's parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the Pharisee did not worship and praise God in his prayer; instead, he only self-righteously, with high personal praise, exalted himself (Luke 18:11).

This is also what Job's three friends had done, and Job's sin was not much different.

Loose lips, it has been said, sink ships, and the same is true of any who allow their tongue unrestrained activity without careful spiritual restraint.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and just as a man's heart and actions determine his destiny, so also, the Word of God states, shall his words.

Matthew 12:36–37 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

³⁷ For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Matt. 12:36

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment—They might say, "It was nothing: we meant no evil; we merely threw out a supposition, as one way of accounting for the miracle we witnessed; if it will not stand, let it go; why make so much of it, and bear down with such severity for it?" Jesus replies, "It was not nothing, and at the great day will not be treated as nothing: Words, as the index of the heart, however idle they may seem, will be taken account of, whether good or bad, in estimating character in the day of judgment."

Idle, careless, and uninspired speech will often cause injury to the one spoken of, as well as the one who speaks.

In Job's case, because of his narrow knowledge of the Lord, Elihu proclaimed Job's words to be injurious to Him.

In trying to defend and justify himself, Job had carelessly brought reproach upon the Lord.

No man also should foolishly believe that errant, misguided, and/or emotional words, especially when not inspired by God, will not directly affect his life.

I Peter 3:10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.

Benson Commentary, I Pet. 3:10–13

He that will love life—That would make life amiable and desirable; *and see good days*—Namely, such as are prosperous and happy; *let him refrain his tongue from evil*—From railing, back-biting, tale-bearing, from all rash and provoking expressions; *and his lips that they speak no guile*—No deceit; nothing contrary to sincerity and simplicity. See on Psalm 32:2.

If a man hopes to see good days, as Job undoubtedly desired, then he must keep his tongue from speaking evil, especially if there is any insinuation that the Lord has committed it.

None also shall live a quiet and blessed life if the tongue is improperly used for anything other than sincere worship and praise of God while similarly pursuing the edification of our fellow man.

All speech therefore should be directed toward the godly intention of either praising the Lord, or the edification, instruction, and/or admonishment of other Christians, if a blessed and happy life is desired.

Job 34:36 My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end because of his answers for wicked men.

Elihu's desire was for Job to be tried because he had, if not intentionally, inadvertently provided ammunition for the wicked. This sin needed to be addressed, and Elihu desired that sufficient time be given for Job's words to be fully brought to light.

Job had sought an audience with the Lord in order to defend himself, and he would indeed be given one, but its real purpose would be to bring Job's ignorance to light and reveal no fault on God's part. Yes, Job's prayer would be answered, just not the way he originally envisioned.

All men, without exception, including ourselves, will have to give account for our words and will likewise need to undergo a similar heavenly inspection of what we have both thought and spoken in our life, just as Job is now needing to do.

Job 34:37 For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.

Though Job had successfully defended himself against the false accusations of his three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—he should not have had any assumption of gaining any true realistic spiritual victory.

It was accurate that he had refuted his critics' weak and unsubstantiated arguments regarding his spiritual integrity, but in doing so he had unintentionally indicted himself before the Lord.

Benson Commentary, Job 34:37

He addeth rebellion unto his sin—He sinned before by impatience under his afflictions, but now he is grown obstinate, and, instead of humbling himself for his sins, he justifies himself, and accuses the blessed God. *He clappeth his hands among us*—In token of victory, insulting and triumphing; *and multiplieth his words against God*—In effect, though not directly.

Job's heart rejoiced that his arguments had countered those of his friends, but in truth he had done nothing to help his broken condition. Winning any debate, especially with fools, surely does not guarantee release from personal bondage.

And though a self-righteous man may praise himself, thinking he possesses superior wisdom, what good is winning any biblical argument and/or religious debate without gaining spiritual freedom as a result? It is actually belief and trust in Christ which sets men free; it is not praise of self.

Job 35:1–2 Elihu spake moreover, and said,

² Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?

Though Job did not directly say this, and this is only a summarization of his words and inner thoughts, it is still accurate.

Whenever anyone accuses the Lord of injustice, there is an implication that human righteousness is greater than God's righteousness.

If men also believe that they are already on the same level as the Lord, it is a very small step to both think and believe that their own personal righteousness is equal or superior to His.

By questioning the Lord's way and doubting His sovereignty, Job had implied that the Lord had acted unrighteously, and that he, Job, alone remained righteous.

It is common in both sinner, and saint, to be tempted to believe that human righteousness is superior to divine righteousness. When men regularly and genuinely believe themselves able to govern the world, better than God.

Job 35:3 For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?

As evidence that Job had thought his righteousness greater than the Lord's, Elihu addresses his previous statement that there appeared to be no profit in living a godly life.

By challenging God's government, Job had unintentionally challenged the righteousness of the Governor, He also is the Ruler and Creator of all living and breathing things.

In short, Job was both angry and disgruntled by the way he thought the Lord had governed his life and had unjustly allowed the loss of possessions, family, and health.

What Job did not know was that no sin can be properly confessed, or atoned for, until it is first known.

If there is any ignorance of sin, there cannot be full and complete repentance for it.

It is also very foolish to judge anything as being right or wrong solely according to whether or not it is profitable to us, simply because the Lord has called many to suffer for His name, and surely this could never be calculated as sin on their part.

Moses was called to suffer affliction with the people of God, in his response to God's call for his life.

Hebrews 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

The apostle Paul likewise suffered persecution for the Lord's name, in order to proclaim the name of Christ.

***Acts 9:15-16 (NLT) But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel.
16 And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."***

What Job did not know, and what was lacking in his faith was the spiritual understanding that all who seek to live a godly life will be persecuted.

II Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Whenever saints then either fear or serve the Lord, they will open themselves up to religious and/or devilish persecution. Because Job feared the Lord, this prompted Satan's spiritual assault upon him.

To foolishly conclude if we are persecuted for our faith, that it is not worth pursuing, is to lack any true understanding of Christ's call in the first place.

The servant is not above his Master (John 13:16), nor is the believer above his Lord, and as such every true saint will need to undergo a degree of trial and persecution in his life.

Job 35:4–8 I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee.

⁵ *Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou.*

⁶ *If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?*

⁷ *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?*

⁸ *Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.*

Pulpit Commentary, Job 35:7

If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? By parity of reasoning, as our sins do not injure God, so our righteousness cannot benefit him. As David says, "My goodness extendeth not to thee" (Psalm 16:2). *Or what receiveth he of thine hand?* All things being already God's, we can but give him of his own. We cannot really add to his possessions, or to his glory, or to his felicity.

Men often overestimate what they think should be their reward for pursuing righteousness. Just as Job vastly overestimates what his fear of God should yield him, by presuming that the pursuit of righteousness, should prevent any pain and suffering.

But it is unwise to naively assume that our desire to walk righteously before the Lord, means that we will be kept immune to either earthly tragedy, or divine chastisement.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 35:8

Thy wickedness may hurt a Man as thou art—That is, it may injure him, but not God. He is too far exalted above man, and too independent of man in his sources of happiness, to be affected by what he can do. The object of the whole passage Job 35:6–8 is, to show that God is independent of people, and is not governed in his dealings with them on the principles which regulate their conduct with each other. One man may be greatly benefited by the conduct of another, and may feel under obligation to reward him for it; or he may be greatly injured in his person, property, or reputation, by another, and will endeavor to avenge himself. But nothing of this kind can happen to God. If he rewards, therefore, it must be of his grace and mercy, not because he is laid under obligation; if he inflicts chastisement, it must be because people deserve it, and not because God has been injured. In this reasoning Elihu undoubtedly refers to Job, whom he regards as having urged a "claim" to a different kind of treatment, because he supposed that he "deserved" it. The general principle of Elihu is clearly correct, that God is entirely independent of human beings; that neither our good nor evil conduct can affect his happiness, and that consequently his dealings with us are those of impartial justice.

Job 35:9–10 By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty.

¹⁰ *But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;*

At first glance, this is a difficult verse to understand. The Cambridge Bible helps with its interpretation:

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Job 35:9

Having laid down his principle Elihu now proceeds to clear away some anomalies which seem to support Job's contention. There are instances where godliness does not seem to advantage men, where oppressed innocence cries in vain for redress. The reason is that

the cry is merely the natural voice of suffering; it is no true devout appeal to heaven—none saith, Where is God my maker?

It is not enough to merely cry by reason of oppression if the cry is not directly lifted to the Lord, since many have lamented their personal suffering without sufficient faith in God to directly call upon Him for deliverance.

When men also experience the difficulties of religion, as Job did, they often incorrectly bring into question its validity, teaching us that when things are difficult and it appears that prayers have gone unanswered, it is not uncommon that men will question the profitability of faith.

The apostle Paul revealed that all Christians need to go through some form of tribulation to enter the kingdom, establishing the truth that the road to heaven will not always be an easy one.

Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Acts 14:22

And that we must—καὶ ὅτι δεῖ kai hoti dei. That it is fit or proper that we should. Not that it is fixed by any fatal necessity, but that we are not to expect that it will be otherwise. We are to calculate on it when we become Christians. Why it is proper, or fit, the apostle did not state. But we may remark that it is proper:

(1) Because such is the opposition of the world to pure religion that it cannot be avoided. Of this they had had striking demonstration in Lystra and Iconium.

(2) it is necessary to reclaim us from wandering, and to keep us in the path of duty, Psalm 119:67, Psalm 119:71.

(3) it is necessary to wean us from the world; to keep before our minds the great truth that we have here “no continuing city and no abiding place.” Trial here makes us pant for a world of rest. The opposition of sinners makes us desire that world where “the wicked shall cease from troubling,” and where there shall be eternal friendship and peace.

(4) when we are persecuted and afflicted, we may remember that it has been the lot of Christians from the beginning. We tread a path that has been watered by the tears of the saints, and rendered sacred by the shedding of the best blood on the earth. The Saviour trod that path; and it is enough that the “disciple be as his master, and the servant as his lord,” Matthew 10:24–25.

Job 35:11 Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?

Beasts do not know the reason for their afflictions or why they are led to slaughter. But having access to his Creator gives man a distinct advantage over the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven. Yet, if sinners reject the pursuit of God, and choose to reject divine instruction and correction, then they will digress to becoming exactly like earthly creatures, who are themselves fully ignorant of the Lord, as well as their own absence of spirituality.

When sinners also refuse to seek the Lord in their trials, they reveal themselves to be as deficient in spiritual wisdom as the beasts of the field (Ps. 73:22).

Job 35:12 There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men.

Benson Commentary, Job 35:12

There they cry—Or then, as the Hebrew particle here used often means; that is, in that time or condition of trouble; *but none giveth answer*—The reason that God doth not deliver them is, because, though they lie crying under their afflictions, they continue to be evil, wicked, and impenitent; proud and unhumbled for those sins, on account of which God brought these miseries upon them.

Here we see why sinners receive no heavenly assistance when they cry. It is simply because pride still maintains control of their hearts and lives. Elihu thus reveals to Job that the Lord will never hear those who possess and embrace pride as an acceptable way of living.

To live in pride, is to forfeit all spiritual assistance and aid from the Lord. If a man is lifted up with pride, then he will practically remove himself from receiving mercy from heaven.

This teaches us that not until sinners remove both pride and arrogance from their hearts, can they rightfully presume that God will both hear their prayers, and answer them in their time of need.

Pride is one of the six, yea seven things that the Lord hates, and as such, will never come to the aid of those walking in it.

Proverbs 6:16–19 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

¹⁷ *A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,*

¹⁸ *An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,*

¹⁹ *A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

Job 35:13 Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Job 35:13

vanity—that is, cries uttered in an unhumbled spirit, Job 35:12, which applies in some degree to Job's cries; still more to those of the wicked (Job 27:9; Pr 15:29).

Where there is vanity there will not be humility; ultimately the Lord will never answer the prayers of the vain.

God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.

Matthew Poole's Commentary, Job 35:13

1. Vain and light persons, that have no true wisdom or solid piety in them, but are wholly addicted to vain and worldly things, rejoicing immoderately when they have them, and crying out for want of them, as here they do. Or,

2. Vain cries, which proceed not from faith or piety, but only from self-love and a natural sense of their misery; which is common to them with brute beasts. The abstract is here put for the concrete, as wickedness is oft put for wicked men, and pride for proud persons, and the like.

Neither will the Almighty regard it: though God be able to help them, as this title of God implies, and though he be the Judge of the world, as the former name of God signifies, to whom therefore it belongs to right the oppressed against the oppressor, yet in this case he justly refuseth to help them.

If a man's heart is not right and is controlled by either vanity or vain things, God will neither hear his prayers, nor come to his aid, when he is in need of divine help.

The condition of men's hearts, greatly affects whether or not the Lord responds to their prayers.

Job 35:14 Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.

Benson Commentary, Job 35:14

Here Elihu answers another objection of Job's; and tells him that though God may, for a season, delay to answer, yet he will certainly do him right. *Yet judgment is before him*—Justice is at his tribunal, and in all his ways and administrations. *Therefore trust thou in him*—Instead of murmuring, repent of what is past, humble thyself under God's hand, wait patiently in his way till deliverance come, for it will certainly come, if thou dost not hinder it.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 35:14

Elihu here says that though it is true in fact that God is invisible, yet this ought not to be regarded as a reason why he should not confide in him. The argument of Elihu here—which is undoubtedly sound—is, that the fact that God is invisible should not be regarded as any evidence that he does not attend to the affairs of people, or that he is not worthy of our love.

To trust God, especially in times of trial, is one of the most neglected and often forgotten elements of true faith. It is this counsel that Elihu wisely imparts to Job, that he should remain trusting in the Lord despite his affliction, simply because his trust would be eventually rewarded.

Job 35:15 But now, because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger; yet he knoweth it not in great extremity:

Benson Commentary, Job 35:15–16

But now, because it is not so—That is, because Job doth not acknowledge God's justice and his own sins, and wait upon God in a proper way for mercy; *he hath visited in his anger*—God hath laid grievous afflictions upon him, all which appear to be too little to bring Job to a compliance with God's will. *Yet he knoweth it not*—Job is not sufficiently sensible of it, so as to be humbled under God's mighty hand.

Men often commit sin that they are initially unaware of, similar to David's sin against both Uriah and Bathsheba. However, though sin may be committed in ignorance, this ignorance does not mitigate the Lord's anger towards it.

It has been said, and is true, that ignorance of the law is no excuse. The same holds true if men are ignorant of divine law.

Hence, though sin may be both unknown and even unintentional, still there must be spiritual consequence for committing it.

Job 35:16 Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 35:16

Therefore—In view of all that Elihu had now said, he came to the conclusion that the views of Job were erroneous, and that he had no just cause of complaint. He had suffered no more than he had deserved; he might have obtained a release or mitigation if he had applied to God; and the government of God was just, and was every way worthy of confidence. The remarks of Job, therefore, complaining of the severity of his sufferings and of the government of God, were not based on knowledge, and had in fact no solid foundation.

Job had spoken much, and much he had said was found to be in error. His words had been many, but the more he spoke, it became increasingly evident that he lacked any deep understanding of the Lord. We know this truth to be true, simply because Job confesses as much.

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.

