

Session 14

*Elihu Addresses Job Speaking Without
True Knowledge of God*

Job Chapter 33:31–34:35

Scriptures

Job 33:31

Job 33:32

Job 33:33

Job 34:1–4

Job 34:5–6

Job 34:7–8

Job 9:22

Job 34:9

Job 34:10

Job 34:11

Galatians 6:7

Job 34:12

Isaiah 26:9

Job 34:13

Job 34:14–15

Ezekiel 18:4

Job 34:16–20

Job 34:21–23

Job 34:24–30

Job 34:31–32

Job 34:33

Job 34:34–35

Job 38:1–2

I Corinthians 8:2

Job 33:31 Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak.

There must be in the sinner a consideration of the messengers' words to prompt sufficient spiritual internal awareness, enabling him to then be taught by God. Because of this, Elihu instructs Job to hold his peace and listen carefully to the truth he is about to reveal. Because if there is thoughtful and careful consideration of what is said, Elihu assures Job that spiritual understanding will follow.

By hearkening to Elihu's words, Job would be readying himself to be later taught by the Lord Himself.

Job 33:32 If thou hast anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee.

If after Job had heard Elihu's correction and had observed error, then Elihu assures him that he would be given ample opportunity to defend himself. Because Elihu is interested in Job, and his ultimate justification before his three friends' unjust accusations, he will lay no sin upon Job above that which has been committed.

Hence, whereas Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar seemed intent on establishing nothing more than religious dominance over their friend, Elihu's inward heart's desire is to assist in his justification.

It is always the hope of those sent by God that men can be justified and not condemned because of their sin. But for this to occur, sin either cannot be found, or must be repented of.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Job 33:32

I desire to justify thee.—He wishes to justify Job before his friends, that is, to maintain that his afflictions are not on account of past sin, but as a preservative against possible future defection. This being so, he considers that Job's case may justly be defended, and Job himself vindicated against his friends.

Job 33:33 If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

If Job has nothing to say in response to Elihu's words, then he is asked to hold his peace in order that true wisdom may be imparted to him.

No doubt there are some who improperly infer that it is arrogance that prompts Elihu's address, but if we are both objective and honest, and consider that neither Job nor the Lord corrects Elihu at any time in the book, then we must conclude that Elihu was again exactly whom he claimed to be—a messenger sent by God to aid in Job's deliverance.

Hence, if neither the Lord, nor Job expresses fault and error in Elihu's correction, then it is foolish that those greatly removed from a personal exposure to Job's situation should—wisely forming the conclusion that if the Lord never corrects Elihu, and if Job never refutes his words of reproof, then why should any who merely read the account do so hundreds, yea even thousands of years later?

Job 34:1–4 Furthermore Elihu answered and said,

² *Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.*

³ *For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.*

⁴ *Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good.*

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Job 34:4

Elihu calls upon those present to decide with him upon Job's words. The plainest Christian, whose mind is enlightened, whose heart is sanctified by the Spirit of God, and who is versed in the Scriptures, can say how far matters, words, or actions, agree with true religion, better than any that lean to their own understandings.

Whenever a man is led by the Spirit of God, he can appeal to those who are also of the Lord and filled with His Spirit, knowing that they shall be able to discern and confirm the truth that is being brought forth.

In truth, we need not take any man's words alone, even the prophets', simply because God's Spirit, shall confirm when hearing someone who speaks God's Word, whether or not its true source is God.

Thus when the true Word of the Lord is being brought forth from those led by the Spirit, those with the Spirit shall both agree and humble themselves to Its message.

Job 34:5–6 For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment.

⁶ *Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression.*

Job's words contain two highly naive and foolish assumptions: first, the certainty of his own righteousness, and second, the belief that his wounds are incurable. The Lord would eventually prove both of these assumptions false. Job was not nearly as righteous and innocent as he perceived himself to be, and the Lord did in fact heal his life, of what he at this time in the record feels are incurable wounds.

Job 34:7–8 What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water?

⁸ *Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men.*

Benson Commentary, Job 34:7–9

Who drinketh up scorning like water—That is, abundantly and greedily: who doth so break forth into scornful expressions, not only against his friends, but, in some sort, even against God himself. The Hebrew may be interpreted, *What man, being like Job, would drink up scorning?* &c. That a wicked or foolish man should act thus, is not strange; but that a man of such piety, gravity, wisdom, and authority, as Job, should be guilty of such a sin, this is wonderful. *Which walketh with wicked men*—Although I dare not say he is a wicked man, yet in this matter he speaks and acts like one of the wicked.

Though Job was not himself directly wicked in uttering false charges against the Lord, he did to a degree walk in the company of the wicked. Job's exact words were:

Job 9:22 This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.

What this teaches us is that even if we are not evil, if we espouse the same thoughts as those who are, and claim injustice on the Lord's part, then we manifest some agreement with His enemies.

To therefore speak and espouse the same sentiments as the ungodly, undoubtedly reveals a level of walk and harmony with them.

Job 34:9 For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Job 34:9

Job had nowhere used this precise language, though the idea is not an unnatural inference from much that he had said; comp. ch. Job 9:12, Job 21:7, Job 24:1, and ch. 21 throughout. This charge that a man is nothing bettered by being religious Elihu refutes in ch. 35, directing his attention in the meantime to the general charge of in justice so far as it bore on God Himself.

In short, Job had concluded, *What profit is there in serving God*, if he was punished in the very same way as those who had rejected God.

To foolishly believe that just because tragedy hits us that our previous walk of piety is worthless, is actual nonsense.

For this would presume that unless a man's spiritual walk is smooth, absent any bumps, hills, or obstacles, then the path of pursuing piety is not worth it, when the real truth is that the way to God will always be found to be both narrow and difficult, and a very blessed few, find it.

Job 34:10 Therefore hearken unto me ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Job 34:10–15

Elihu had showed Job, that God meant him no hurt by afflicting him, but intended his spiritual benefit. Here he shows, that God did him no wrong by afflicting him. If the former did not satisfy him, this ought to silence him. God cannot do wickedness, nor the Almighty commit wrong.

Elihu draws a strong spiritual line in the sand regarding the spiritual impossibility of God committing sin, through allowing unjust trials, by directly rejecting the foolish notion that the Lord could ever behave improperly or commit iniquity against man.

The sinner will often lay claims of what he thinks are the Lord's wrongdoings, in order that he may continue viewing himself as righteous.

Prompted by personal conceit, sinners will regularly charge the Lord with crimes of which it is spiritually impossible for Him to have committed.

It is man who is accustomed to sin, and has regularly proved himself to be a sinner—it is not God.

This truth Elihu seeks to make abundantly clear to all who hear his words: it is that God absolutely cannot, and shall not *do wickedness*, nor is He spiritually able to *commit iniquity* in any manner. It is beyond His divine nature to do so.

Job 34:11 For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways.

The Lord's rendering to men exactly as they have sown proves that God is neither biased nor partial in His spiritual judgments toward man.

Ultimately, men determine their own fate, and the Lord only renders to them how they have chosen to live.

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 34:11

For the work of a man shall he render unto him—He shall treat each man as he deserves—and this is the essence of justice. Of the truth of this, also, there could have been no question. Elihu does not, indeed, apply it to the case of Job, but there can be little doubt that he intended that it should have such a reference. He regarded Job as having accused God of injustice, for having inflicted woes on him which he by no means deserved. He takes care, therefore, to state this general principle, that with God there must be impartial justice—leaving the application of this principle to the facts in the world, to be arranged as well as possible. No one can doubt that Elihu in this took the true ground, and that the great principle is to be held that God can do no wrong, and that all the facts in the universe must be consistent with this great principle, whether we can now see it to be so or not.

Job 34:12 Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.

Job maintained that God had dealt with him unjustly, either by not hearing his pleas, or by improperly ruling before he could present his defense. Consequently, to maintain himself as righteous, Job had condemned both the Lord and His justice.

When sinners reap as they have sown and do not like the fruit they bear, they generally will transfer and lay blame upon God.

It is also by the Lord exercising spiritual judgment upon the earth's inhabitants and rendering the sinners as they have sown, which provides for them a divine chance to be instructed in God's righteousness.

Isaiah 26:9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Isa. 26:9

For when thy judgments are in the earth— ... The reason is, that the punishments which he [God] inflicted were intended to lead people to learn righteousness. The sentiment is expressed in a general form, though there is no doubt that the immediate reference is to the calamities which the Jews had suffered in their removal to Babylon as a punishment for their sins.

Learn righteousness—The design is to warn, to restrain, and to reform them. The immediate reference here was undoubtedly to the Jews, in whom this effect was seen in a remarkable manner in their captivity in Babylon. But it is also true of other nations; and though the effect of calamity is not always to turn a people to God, or to make them permanently righteous, yet it restrains them, and leads them at least to an external reformation. It is also true in regard to nations as well as individuals, that they make a more decided advance in virtue and piety in days of affliction than in the time of great external prosperity (compare Deuteronomy 6:11–12).

Job 34:13 Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world?

All power that the Lord exerts and exercises on the earth, comes from the fact of His ownership of it. Because both the earth, and man are God's creation, it is His right and spiritual prerogative to do with both as He wills.

If the earth and those upon it were not the result of the Lord's creative power, then men could rightly claim sin on God's part concerning His dealings with them. But since the Creator possesses and maintains ownership of all of His creation, then He can do with it as He wills, and there is no injustice at all in Him doing so.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Job 34:13

If the world were not God's property, as having been made by Him, but committed to His charge by some superior, it might be possible for Him to act unjustly, as He would not thereby be injuring Himself; but as it is, for God to act unjustly would undermine the whole order of the world, and so would injure God's own property (Job 36:23).

Job 34:14–15 If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath;

¹⁵ All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

It is a spiritual reality that if God so willed it, He could choose to gather and return to Himself all the spiritual and breath life that He has imparted to His creatures. Because it is God Who has provided both natural and spiritual life, it is well within His authority and privilege to remove both if He ever deems it spiritually necessary.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 34:14

The argument seems to be this. "If God wished such a thing, and should set his heart upon it, he could easily cut off the whole race. He has power to do it, and no one can deny him the right. Man has no claim to life, but he who gave it has a right to withdraw it, and the race is absolutely dependent on this infinite Sovereign. Being such a Sovereign, therefore, and having such a right, man cannot complain of his Maker as unjust, if he is called to pass through trials."

Elihu's position is this: do not question the Lord in His smaller judgments, lest He administer a far greater judgment. For if God set His heart on fully executing judgment for sin, then He could easily, and without any great difficulty, gather all life and return it to Himself. Indeed, life has its source in God, whether it has been breathed into men's bodies or imparted through the sending forth of the Lord's Spirit.

Thus, all life, either soul or spirit, can either be extended or shortened according to divine will. This is because the Lord deems all souls, His; consequently, if men sin, and continue to embrace it, and possess no spiritual remorse for committing it, then they shall die.

Ezekiel 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Ezek. 18:4

All souls are mine—Man is not simply to ascribe his existence to earthly parents, but to acknowledge as his Father Him who created man in His own image, and who gave and gives him the spirit of life.

Job 34:16–20 If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words.

¹⁷ ***Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?***

¹⁸ ***Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly?***

¹⁹ ***How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands.***

²⁰ ***In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand.***

Elihu argues the fact that God has a legal and just right to govern His creation. If worldly kings have this prerogative, does not He Who rules the universe?

This is also not only a very accurate observation, but a very profound one as well—that God, Who is both the world's and man's Creator, has full right to judge and administer justice as He sees fit.

The earth and creation surrounding it are the Lord's; they are the work of His hands, and man has absolutely no true ownership of anything, absent the Lord imparting it to him.

Job 34:21–23 For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.

²² ***There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.***

²³ ***For he will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God.***

Because God has universal sight of all worldly creatures and is able to see their goings, decisions, and motives throughout the earth, He is in a unique position to judge the earth's inhabitants righteously.

Because the Lord is able to observe all of man's goings, then it is impossible for Him to either incorrectly or improperly exercise unjust judgment upon either the sinner or the saint.

Because the Lord both knows and sees all, then every piece of vital and incriminating evidence is before Him, allowing Him to properly and without bias justly judge all men and the lives they have chosen to live.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Job 34:21

For his eyes are upon the ways of man, . . . This may denote all their inward thoughts, the workings of their mind, the imaginations of their heart; all their secret purposes, designs, and schemes; and all the desires and affections of their soul; and all these, whether good or bad:

and he seeth all his goings; the whole of his walk and conversation, conduct and behaviour; all his external ways, works, and actions; and these whether of good or bad men, see Psalm 139:1 [*O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.*].

Job 34:24–30 He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead.

²⁵ *Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed.*

²⁶ *He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others;*

²⁷ *Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways:*

²⁸ *So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.*

²⁹ *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only:*

³⁰ *That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.*

It is not within man's natural and earthly power to overthrow the will of God, nor within his fleshly ability to find the Lord if He so chooses to hide Himself from man. It is also the Lord Who retains and commands the power to overturn not only the leaders of nations, but also entire nations themselves. Because God knows the works of the mighty, and the hearts of those in the highest positions in the earth, and is fully aware if they turn back from Him, then all heavenly judgment descending from heaven is based on firm legal grounds.

Job 34:31–32 Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more:

³² *That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

A variety of translations provides greater insight on these two verses.

(NIV) "Suppose someone says to God, 'I am guilty but will offend no more.

³² Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again.'

(ESV) "For has anyone said to God, 'I have borne punishment; I will not offend any more;

³² Teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more'?

(NKJV) "For has anyone said to God, 'I have borne chastening; I will offend no more;

³² Teach me what I do not see; If I have done iniquity, I will do no more'?

(AMP) "For has anyone said to God, 'I have endured my chastisement; I will not offend anymore;

³² Teach me what I do not see [in regard to how I have sinned]; If I have done wrong (injustice, unrighteousness), I will not do it again'?

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Job 34:31

It was to lead him to this that Elihu was sent. Though no hypocrite, Job, like all, had sin; therefore through affliction he was to be brought to humble himself under God. All sorrow is a proof of the common heritage of sin, in which the godly shares; and therefore he ought to regard it as a merciful correction. Umbreit and Maurer lose this by translating, as the Hebrew will bear, "Has any a right to say to God, I have borne chastisement and yet have not sinned?" (so Job 34:6).

For men to clearly understand their sin against God, then they need to seek divine enlightenment so that their transgression may become known, and subsequently be repented of. As with every man, including Job, there is darkness within him, which in order for hidden and undetected sins to be made known, the Lord must be sought, since He alone can reveal the depth and extent of sin in the human heart.

What God knows and can prove to be sin, is so much more than those who commit it.

It is also for this purpose of both revealing and judging men's internal hearts, that the Son of God shall be sent back to the earth, in order that divine justice and righteousness is fully executed upon it.

Job 34:33 Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest.

Other translations of this verse read:

(NIV) *Should God then reward you on your terms, when you refuse to repent? You must decide, not I; so tell me what you know.*

(NKJV) *Should He repay it according to your terms, Just because you disavow it? You must choose, and not I; Therefore speak what you know.*

(Holman Christian Standard Bible) *Should God repay you on your terms when you have rejected His? You must choose, not I! So declare what you know.*

Benson Commentary, Job 34:33

Should it be according to thy mind?—Having advised and directed Job how to conduct himself, and what to say to God in his afflicted state, he now proceeds to enforce his advice with solid arguments; *should it*—Namely, God's chastening of thee, about which the great controversy was; *be according to thy mind?*—Or, as thou wouldst have it? Shall thy opinion or affection give laws and measures to God, that he shall afflict only such persons, and in such a manner and measure, and so long, as thou chooseth? Does God need, or should he seek for, thy advice how to govern the world, and whom and when to reward or punish? Dost thou quarrel with him because he chastises thee more severely and longer than thou expectedst?

If there is any quarrel or dispute with the Lord, then reconciliation will not be left to the terms of the transgressor, but must be met on the terms of God.

The sinner is therefore quite foolish to assume that God will either yield or comply with any of his standards for reconciliation.

It is not man who has set the standards for the Lord to walk in, but He man.

Job 34:34–35 Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me. ³⁵ Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom.

Elihu's claims were not that Job was truly wicked, as his three friends had implied, but only that he was a man without true understanding of the Lord, who had also spoken many things concerning the Lord that he was provably ignorant of.

This is also the precise sin that the Lord charges Job with, that he had both spoken and uttered *words without knowledge*; that Job, though he had at great length spoken of God, had uttered words without any true understanding of Him.

Job was sincere in his faith and feared the Lord, but there was still much lacking in his understanding of God's ways and His dealings with man. Indeed Job had spoken at great length of the Lord, but had only in truth, darkened any true understanding of Him.

Job 38:1–2 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, ² Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

Benson Commentary, Job 38:2

Who is this that disparages my counsels, and darkens the wisdom of my dispensations with his ignorant discourses about them? This language becomes not a creature, much less a professor of the true religion. The person here intended is not Elihu, who spoke last, but Job, who had spoken most, as is manifest from the former verse, in which it is said, *The Lord answered Job*; and from Job 42:3, where Job takes the following reproof to himself, as also from the following discourse, wherein God convinces Job by divers of the same kind of arguments which Elihu had used against him. With a single question God shows the absolute emptiness of human abilities, strikes Job to the heart, and puts an end to the dispute.

Just because a man is sincere and authentic in his love and affection for God, does not mean that he truly knows God.

Hence, whatever a man may think he knows of the Lord is surely not equal to what the Scriptures reveal he should know. This is true of all men, including ourselves, with Job being revealed as one of the very first biblical examples of this.

I Corinthians 8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, I Cor. 8:1–6

There is no proof of ignorance more common than conceit of knowledge. Much may be known, when nothing is known to good purpose. And those who think they know any thing, and grow vain thereon, are the least likely to make good use of their knowledge. Satan hurts some as much by tempting them to be proud of mental powers, as others, by alluring to sensuality. Knowledge which puffs up the possessor, and renders him confident, is as dangerous as self-righteous pride, though what he knows may be right. Without holy affections all human knowledge is worthless.

It is the humble man who continues to both pursue and seek a greater knowledge of the Lord; it is not the ignorant man, who foolishly believes he already possesses it.

