

Job 35

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- [0 : 00] Job 35. That's the preaching text for the evening. And if the name Elahu sounds strange to you up to this point in the book of Job, it should.
- We have not seen him. He does not enter into the picture until chapter 32. We, of course, we've heard of Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar.
- We saw them back in chapter 2, early in the scene and quick to counsel Job as it concerns the things that they really don't quite get.
- I mean, they've tried to put the ends together in their counsel with him. But you and I, the reader, know some things that they don't know.
- They work hard. They counsel hard. They push hard. But they are in the dark. In chapter 31, Job has had the last word.
- [1 : 07] He likewise held to his position. His plea of innocence had not changed. Still, his plea at this juncture in the book.
- I'm innocent. Thus, there was a stalemate. It is after Job's last stand, as it were, chapter 31, that Elihu enters into the picture.
- Let's look briefly in chapter 32 at Elihu's biographical sketch. It's brief. But nonetheless, we get a glimpse of this particular man, this particular counsel in chapter 32.
- I want to do this in leading up to chapter 35 because we want to get a glimpse of the stuff, if you will, of what this man is made of. Look at that in chapter 32, verse 1.
- So these three men ceased to answer Job because he was righteous in his own eyes. Three men, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.
- [2 : 18] But notice, here he comes, chapter 32, verse 2. Then Elihu, the son of Barakal, the Buzite of the family of Ram, burned with anger.
- He burned with anger at Job because he justified himself rather than God. He burned with anger also at Job's three friends because they had found no answer, although they had declared Job to be in the wrong.
- So you've got two parties, two entities, Job's three friends, entity number one, and Job at a stalemate, at a face-off.
- None of them is moving. Notice, continuing to read. Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he.
- And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, he burned with anger. Check it out.
- [3 : 25] Elihu is here. His family background. Verse 2, the first part of it. His disposition. He's angry.
- He's angry. He's angry with Job and he's angry with Job's three friends. There's another thing you need to know about him.
- He's young. He's young in answer. And he is a, not only young and angry, but he's a young man with answers.

At least he thinks he has the answer. Isn't that somewhat characteristic, and Frederick, you're smiling, of youth?

Sometimes we feel as young people, and yes, that we have answers. Now, this is not to say we throw away the baby with the bathwater, but to the young people, I would say on this evening, keep living.

[4 : 24] Keep living. He's younger than Job and his friends, but he's respectful. He's waited for them to speak. He's listened, if you will, to them.

Look at verses, verse 10. He says, answers that he is ready to share. Therefore, I say, listen to this. Listen to me. Let me also declare my opinion.

I've got something to say about this. I've been looking. I've been in silence, but I've been looking. I've got a few things to do. Look at verse 17. I will also answer with my share.

I will also declare my opinion. I've got something to say. He's anxious to share his thoughts. Look at verses 19 and 20. Behold, my belly is like wine that has no vent.

I'm about ready to burst. Like new wine skins ready to burst. I must speak that I may find relief. I must open my lips and answer.

[5 : 24] There he is. Young man. Respectful. Angry. And with answers.

Elihu, as you look at what scholars have to say about this young man, has been deemed to be the most complicated person in the book. In the chapters he appears in, it's our most difficult to understand.

He comes from out of nowhere. He's not mentioned before chapter 32 or after chapter 36. The jury, on the one hand, is still out as it regards him.

Some regard him as an added voice of a later writer. The Job that has been added. He has been added in after the completion of the book itself.

Not a part of the original work. Some understand his position as a middle ground kind of position between Job and his friends. He argued that suffering is actually discipline to keep one from sinning.

[6 : 37] Not necessarily because you sin, but you suffer. Suffer is a way of restraining you from sinning. Not punishment because one is sin.

Yet, and as I've looked at him in Elihu, we have one more perspective. One more well-meaning human being trying to figure out what is beyond hidden view.

Attempts are noble. Nonetheless, noble attempts, friends, does not mean insightful kind of attempts. One might ask Elihu and others, Is there not anyone among us who is simply willing to say, I don't know?

Or, I can't figure that one out. Or, it's beyond me. Now, hard science really thrives on hard, fast, concrete, objective facts.

But life is not always that way. Where we can land hard on some of the issues of life.

[8 : 04] They demand more than your facts and my facts or even the facts of others. Are we, friends, willing to mimic the silence of God?

Are we willing to speak as God's representatives for God? Hmm? Now, in all of this, I'm not suggesting that you and I will be passive.

Not at all. Yet, do not Job's friends in Elihu teach us something about human limitations? Perhaps Elihu represents other failed attempts to fully understand the one whose ways are ultimately inscrutable and past finding out.

Elihu is the fourth person. Maybe there's a fifth. Or a sixth. Or a seventh one who will attempt to answer the questions or to weigh in.

Huh? Now, we're not willing to write him off as totally irrelevant. But, even with him, we must proceed with caution.

[9 : 29] Listening well. Listening, comparing perhaps what he has to say with other passages in Scripture. So, by the time we get to chapter 35, Elihu is already given two different speeches.

He gives four in the course of six or seven chapters that we find him in. Chapter 35 is the third one. And, as we look at it, trying to decipher what he has to say.

First of all, look at verses 1 through 3. There, we have Elihu's questions regarding Job's standing before God.

Look at there. He answered and said, Do you not think this to be just? Do you say it is my right before God that you ask? What advantage have I? How much better off than if I had not sinned?

It's questions regarding Job's standing. Now, we have to back up a bit into verses 34 through 37 of chapter 34. Elihu notes that wise men who hear will concur with his assessment of Job's self-judgment, that he's righteous.

[10 : 51] It really misses the mark. You see that in chapter 34 and 35. Job speaks without knowledge. His words are without insight. Huh? Further, in verses 36 and 37, he highlights Job's wickedness and his rebellion.

For he adds rebellion to his sin. He claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God. Again, speaking as it relates to Job.

So, the questions of verses 2 and 3 concern Job's advantage of being upright, in fact, upright with God, if his uprightness with God has gotten him nowhere.

That's what's in view. If this is what I get for being upright before God, what has it profited me? How am I better off than if I had sinned?

Huh? Do you think this to be just? Do you say this is my right before God? What advantage I buy? Again, verse 3. How am I better off than if I had sinned? So, he puts, you might say, he puts those words in Job's mouth.

[11 : 59] Then, in verse 4, he gives an answer. Huh? Answers that really deserve our reflection, but also maybe these answers are not the best answers, and they deserve our questions.

Huh? He begins to answer in verse 4, and his answer is for Job and his friends. Look, I will answer you and your friends with you.

Huh? Now, several things come forth from its answer that deserves our consideration, as well as our questions. Here's the first thing. This is what he says, in essence.

God is unaffected by human conduct, whether it is good or bad. You see that? Look at the heavens and sea, and behold the clouds which are higher than you. If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against them?

Well, if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him? If you're righteous, what do you give to him? Or what does he receive from your hand?

[13 : 08] Huh? God is unaffected by what you do, Job, whether it's good or bad. What comes into view is God's transcendence.

The fact that he is high, high as the heavens. Again, he's using that as a comparison just to say, as just as the heavens, it speaks about God's transcendence.

And basically, Job, God is unfazed by what you do. The distance between heaven and earth represents his concerns for what is done, good or ill.

What you do, you do it to yourself. So, Job, go ahead. Admit your wrong, your responsibility for it. What you've done, good or ill, you've done it to yourself.

It's not the way some people view life. It's detached from God, thinking that what he or she does does not really matter.

[14 : 10] You've heard people say that. Well, I'm not hurting anybody. What I do is, I'm not, you know. No. Listen to what the psalmist says. Though the Lord be high, Psalm 138, yet he has respect for the lowly.

And I think of Psalm 139 that really follows 138 in this regard. Oh, Lord, you've searched me and known me.

You know my down-sitting, my out-rising. Lord, you do know me. You are, though you're high, yet you have regard. What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that you visit him?

Huh? You made him a little lower than the angels. You've crowned him with loving kindness. You've set him over the works of your hands. Yeah, the Lord is high.

But he is engaged with and concerned with those of us who are on earth. Huh? So, again, the thought, God is unaffected by human conduct, good or ill?

[15 : 22] Oh, not necessarily so. But there's another perspective that's shared here. And you see that in verses 9 through 13. The cries of the oppressed are misdirected and mis-God in the process.

Look at what he begins to say. Because of the multitude of oppressions, people cry out. They call for help because of the arm of the mighty.

Again, when people are oppressed, they cry out. But in the midst of that oppression, the word is shared.

None says, where is God, my maker, who gives songs in the night? Again, saying some truth about God. But is it really true that perhaps some oppressed people don't cry out to God and miss him and really direct their cries to him?

Where is God, who teaches us, verse 11, more than the beasts of the field and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven? There they cry out.

[16 : 32] There it is again. But he does not answer because of the pride of man. So, in the midst of oppression, what Elihu is saying here is that the cries of oppressed people are misdirected and miss God in the process.

Job, does this profile fit you? Are you missing God with your particular cries? Look at verse 13. Surely God does not hear an empty cry, nor does the almighty regard him.

None directed to God who can really give relief. Not directed to the one who has made us as the crown of his creation above the beast.

They cry, but he doesn't answer because their cries are misdirected, not really toward him. They sort of miss him. Is that really the way it is?

Is such a case with those whose cries are misdirected? How much more when one says he's invisible and unresponsive? That's what he begins to say.

[17 : 41] Surely God does not hear an empty cry, nor does the almighty regard it. How much less when you say you do not see him, that the case is before him and you are waiting for him.

Huh? Look at this word, these words. The Lord's restraint, Job continues to defend himself with words without knowledge.

So as we consider these things and what Elihu has said, what do we say to these things? Is God really unaffected and silent as life goes by?

Does he leave us alone to ponder and pass through life, confused and alone? Does he really distance himself from the cries of the confused?

Yeah. Some would make you believe that. Some would cast Job in that particular mode. He's not listening to you. Are we really alone when we feel alone and uncared for and really whipped by life?

[18 : 45] Is that what? How futile life is if that is in fact the case. Are we left to our own devices and have to figure life out alone?

Huh? It doesn't seem like that's the God of the Bible. How do we answer these kinds of questions? Is the wisdom or the so-called wisdom of Elihu enough?

Or do you and I need more? Or do you and I need another perspective? I believe Jesus helps answer that question for us and I believe Paul does too.

Listen to Jesus' words. He said, I thank you, Lord, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you've hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, those who think they're in the know.

And you reveal them to little children, those who are dependent, those who recognize their smallness.

[19 : 48] Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. If he hides certain things from those who feel they're in the know, he reveals them to those who are dependent.

Oh, don't you love Paul's words that I think we hear echoes of in this particular text in Romans 11?

Listen to what he says. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments in inscrutable his ways.

For who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counselor? Who has given a gift to him that he may be repaid?

Don't you love this? Verse 36. For from him and through him and to him are all things. And to him be glory forever.

[21 : 00] Amen. This is the God that you and I can humbly come to. And though he doesn't give the kind of answers that you and I, I think that we need.

We can posture ourselves before him. We can cry unto him. And though there may be a deafening silence.

The silence of God does not mean the absence of God. And may you and I find ourselves running to him. Even running to him with our questions.

When they're not answered in the way that we feel they should be. God's word to you this evening.