

Message #37

Job 35:1-16

On August 8, 1529, the famed reformer Martin Luther and his wife were very sick with a dysentery fever. At the same time Luther also had terrible trouble with his sciatic nerve. When he and his wife were going through this, he wrote these words: “God has touched me sorely, and I have been impatient: but God knows better than we whereto it serves. Our Lord God is like a printer, who sets the letters backwards, so that here we must so read them; when we are printed off, yonder, in the life to come, we shall read all clear and straightforward. Meantime we must have patience. Tribulation is a right school” (*Table Talk*, p. 288).

Martin Luther learned to use personal troubles, trials and tragedies as a means of developing his relationship with God. In moments of trouble and trial, he turned to God. He learned patience and perseverance and even though there were some things he never did understand in this life, he knew he would in the next. Frankly, we need to learn the same lesson and the fact is we rarely do learn it.

Elihu was a young man who had an impressive grasp of God’s Word and ways. He knew that God gave His faithful people trouble so His faithful people would learn to patiently “wait” on Him (**35:14**). Now it is one thing to wait in silence and ignorance, but it is quite another to wait and at the same time be criticizing and challenging God. That was Job’s problem and it is often ours, too.

Job was a righteous man and Satan had hit him hard. But Job could learn a great lesson in the trials—the lesson of patience, which, according to James, he eventually did learn (James 5:11). In the process of learning this great lesson, Job made some mistakes like we all do and in this text, Elihu addresses that. **Now the real mistake Job made was the mistake of criticizing God.** That was the thing that prompted Elihu to jump into the situation.

WHEN GOD PERMITS TERRIBLE, NEGATIVE THINGS TO HAPPEN TO US AND WE HAVE NOT DONE ANYTHING TO DESERVE IT, HE IS TRYING TO DEVELOP OUR PATIENCE; SO THE WISEST THING FOR US TO DO IS NOT TO QUESTION OR CRITICIZE GOD, BUT TO QUIETLY WAIT FOR GOD’S DELIVERANCE.

This is exactly the message Elihu communicates in Job 35. Job had not done anything to bring these problems on himself, but he could learn from them and he could develop patience. Now **verse 4** makes it clear that this was not only a lesson aimed at Job, but also his friends. We all need to learn this valuable lesson. There are nine themes that Elihu develops in this text:

THEME #1 – It is not just to ever think or say that our righteousness is more than God’s.
35:2

Now Elihu starts off by asking a couple of questions that Job needed to hear. 1) Job, do you think this is a justice issue? 2) Do you think you are more righteous than God?

Now if Job would think about this, it would be of some great help. Job had been saying that what had happened to him was not just. Job had been saying that he had not sinned to bring any of this on. Okay, if that is true, then the things that hit Job are not about justice and they are not about his sinfulness, so there must be another explanation.

But the fact is Elihu does raise an interesting point in this verse, namely based on God's righteousness and based on God's pure justice, what is it that we would deserve? Think about that for a moment.

God is totally righteous and we are totally sinful. If God decided to dish out justice based on that principle, what we deserve is his wrath and condemnation. What we do not deserve is His grace.

Years ago I spoke with an older, godly woman who was going through some very difficult things. Her attitude was, no matter what God sends my way, it is far less than what I deserve. That was the lesson Job needed to learn.

THEME #2 – It is not right, in trials, to say one may as well live a life of sin. **35:3**

Here is some interesting data that any prosecutor could use against Job. First in **verse 2**, he refers to the fact of how righteous he was and now in **verse 3** he is claiming well righteousness doesn't really profit me so he should just live a life of sin. **Verse 3** proves the fallacy of **verse 2**. If you are really righteous, you do not think this way. God is not fickle like that.

When negative things hit, one can begin to foolishly think in bizarre ways such as, "I may as well live a life of sin because my commitment to a life of righteousness hasn't gotten me anywhere." Job had said that wicked people, for the most part, seem to spend their days in prosperity and not adversity (i.e. 21:13-14).

The truth is this kind of thinking is crazy. Regardless of trials or troubles, a life with God is the best possible life. A life of sin will ruin you. Sin will ruin your relationship with God. Sin will ruin your relationship with others. Sin will ruin your reputation. Sin will ruin your health.

THEME #3 – Man is in no position to question or criticize God, because God's ways and work are much higher than man. **35:5**

There are times in our lives when the best thing we can do is to quiet down and shut our mouths and just wait on God because His ways are way above and beyond our ways. Man cannot ever even begin to figure out all God is doing. All man has to do to prove this point is look up into the sky. The heavens and clouds stand as a continual testimony that God's ways are far above our ways. We are in no position to debate and argue with God on anything.

THEME #4 – Man does not affect God’s program by his sin or by his righteousness; he affects himself and others. **35:6-8**

Our sin only hurts ourselves. Since all men are sinners, our sin is not affecting or altering the plan of God, for God is carrying out His high and holy plan in spite of the fact that all men are sinners.

Our best attempts at righteousness certainly do not add anything to the character of God. In fact, they are a mere shadow resemblance of His righteousness. What possible benefit does God get from our righteousness when He is completely righteous?

Truth is our wickedness is for ourselves and our righteousness is for other men, but neither our wickedness nor righteousness affects the eternal plan of God. We can earn rewards or lose rewards, but we cannot alter the plan of God.

There is a great illustration of this in the book of Esther. Mordecai is challenging Esther to speak to King Ahasuerus about Haman’s plot to destroy the Jews. In one of the most powerful verses of the book, Mordecai says to Esther, “For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father’s house will perish” (Est. 4:14). God could deliver Israel with or without Esther, but her obedience or disobedience affected her. That is Elihu’s point.

We need to realize this very important point. Our decision to pursue sinful things or righteous things is one that affects us and affects those near to us. **It does not affect God.** God is completely and totally righteous and sovereign at all times. His program is in full operation with or without us. So for us to spend time thinking or saying foolish things about God is a complete waste of time.

Our wickedness can hurt somebody else and our righteousness can help somebody else, but it does not alter the sovereign plan of God.

THEME #5 – The majority of people, when being oppressed, cry out for help. **35:9**

Most people, when they find themselves in difficult circumstances, cry out for help. People will cry out to other people, government, various organizations and powers. When people are going through difficult times they will cry out to any who will listen to them. Most people will talk to anyone who will empathize.

THEME #6 – The majority of people do not cry out to the personal God. **35:10-11**

This is what is so sad. Most people will cry out to others, but not cry out to God. Most people being oppressed do not cry out to God and say, “where is ‘my’ maker.” **People being oppressed do not want a real, personal relationship with God; they only want help out of their problem.**

Anyone can cry out to God when in some foxhole of trouble, but most don't really want a real relationship with God.

Now Elihu gives three potential blessings that come to one who wants a personal relationship with God:

(Potential Blessing #1) - A personal relationship with God gives one a song in the night.
35:10b

No matter how dark or depressing life is, God is the One who can actually put a song back into your life. You'll not end up happy by singing the blues, you'll end up happy by cultivating a relationship with God. Happiness comes from one's relationship with God.

No matter how dark or dreary the life, no matter what the sin or guilt, it is God who can put a song back into life.

(Potential Blessing #2) - A personal relationship with God gives one instruction in difficulties. **35:11a**

God uses difficulties to teach us and those with a personal relationship with God will be instructed. People right with God will learn valuable lessons in difficulties. God uses difficulties to even teach the animals, so certainly we can learn some wonderful things.

(Potential Blessing #3) - A personal relationship with God gives wisdom in difficulties.
35:11b

Wisdom comes from God and those who develop a relationship with God will become wiser as they go through the difficulties. Now the reference to being "wiser than birds" is not something we can even decipher, which is precisely the point. We don't know what God is doing to teach the animals and the birds, which is precisely the point God will confront Job with (38:39-39:30).

Most people are so busy running their mouths that they miss out on the wonderful blessings of God. The problem is most people will miss out on all of these blessings because most people do not want a close personal relationship with God; they want God to get them out of their troubles.

THEME #7 – The majority of people who cry to God will not be answered . **35:12-13**

Even godless people cry out to God for help in times of trouble. But two things block answers to prayer: 1) Sin; 2) Disobedience to God's Word (Ps. 66:18; Is. 59:1-2; Jer. 11:10-11).

The majority of people who cry out to God will not have their prayers answered. Most are too proud to humble themselves to God and God will not listen to their prayers in the sense of answering them.

Unless one is willing to submit to God, the prayers will not be answered. In fact, most prayers will not be answered because people want to hang on to their sin and not obey God's Word.

THEME #8 – God will not answer the prayers of His people who say negative things against Him. **35:14a**

When God's own people are saying they don't see God, God isn't about to answer their prayers. When we stop seeing God's hand at work, we aren't learning anything.

THEME #9 – God wants His people to patiently wait on Him. **35:14b**

See the point—instead of criticizing and questioning, God wants His people to wait on Him. In fact, the Apostle Peter says after we have suffered for “a little while” the God of all grace will do some wonderful things for us (II Pet. 5:10).

Elihu concludes the chapter by making three powerful applications to Job and us:

(Application #1) - We need to patiently wait on God. **35:14b**

(Application #2) - We need to realize that when we have not sinned against God, negative things are not a punishment because God was angry. **35:15**

(Application #3) - When we don't know what God is doing, we need to keep quiet and not say empty things. **35:16**