

JOB 32

ELIHU ENTERS THE SCENE

The controversy between Job and his friends was now at an end. They had failed to make out their case; but before God Himself took up the argument, there was another side of the case that was yet to be presented by the fervid life of a member of the younger generation. The stage was clear, for Job and his friends had sat down; and neither he nor they had anything more to say. And so it was a very seasonable time for a moderator to interpose – and Elihu was the man! Elihu had apparently been listening and looking on throughout the entirety of this whole debate, although he had preserved a respectful silence while his elders were speaking. But now that they had fallen silent without resolving the question under dispute, he could refrain no longer. He was greatly indignant with Job for not justifying God, and also with Job's friends for their inability to answer him. Seldom is a quarrel begun – and even more seldom is a quarrel carried on – in which there are not faults on both sides. Those who seek for truth must not reject what is true and good on either side, nor ought they to approve or defend what is wrong. But in addition to these criticisms, Elihu did have some positive contribution to make to the debate – and he felt that he could not refrain himself from speaking! Silence is golden; but there is a time to speak, too.

The unjust wrath of man “worketh not the righteousness of God.” Yet Elihu's anger was not entirely out of place. It seems that his anger against Job was not so much because he had justified himself, but rather because he had been busy justifying himself rather than God. If Job had made use of his arguments to show that the Lord's righteousness was not at all impeached by his afflictions, instead of endeavoring to show that his own unrighteousness was not the reason why he was afflicted – the outcome would have been the same, but the method would have been much more suitable and becoming. Therefore, Elihu's anger was aroused against Job because he seemed to have manifested a greater regard for his own character than for the glory of God.

Elihu's anger was certainly well-grounded against Job's three friends; for they had come for the purpose of comforting him, but they had only added to his afflictions. They charged him with being a hypocrite, but not one of them could make good their charges. Elihu stood as the arbiter or mediator in this conflict, and condemned both sides; and so far, he acted impartially.

Elihu modestly considered his youth, in comparison with Job and his friends; and therefore, he waited for the proper time to speak before he interject-

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Elihu is introduced to the scene – verses 1-5
- ❖ He apologizes for boldly venturing to offer a new perspective in the debate – verses 6-17
- ❖ He says that his mind is full of this matter, and that he was resolved to speak impartially – verses 18-22

ed his opinions in the matter. He did not begin talking until the others had nothing more to say. But if a thing is both well-spoken and rightly spoken – this is what Solomon compares to “apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25:11). Elihu acknowledged that those who had the most experience because of their longer lives should speak first. But God gives wisdom as He pleases, and this encouraged Elihu to state his thoughts. The young mediator professed to speak by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and so he corrected both parties involved in the debate. By attention to the Word of God and dependence upon the Holy Spirit, the young may sometimes become wiser than the aged; but this wisdom will render them swift to hear, slow to speak, and inclined to give others a patient hearing. Even if we are sure that the Spirit of the Lord has suggested to our hearts what we are about to say with our mouths, we still ought to refrain until our turn comes to speak; for our God is the God of order, and not of confusion.

Elihu said that he needed to speak in order to relieve the abundance of his thoughts, because he felt as if he were an animal-skin bottle that was so full, it was about to burst. In other words, he told his four listeners that he was bursting to deliver what he had to say – that was how important it was, from his viewpoint. He also resolved that he would not be a flattering man-pleaser as he gave his opinions on the question under debate; he would not be a respecter of persons, but would speak only the truth. It is a great refreshment to a righteous person to speak for the glory of the Lord and to edify others. And the more that we consider the majesty of God as our Maker, and the more that we dread His wrath and justice – the less shall we sinfully fear or flatter our fellow human beings.

These verses are like the preface to Elihu’s discourse. His frame of mind, and his earnestness which he felt to be useful in this controversy, may serve to teach us how a believer whose soul is full of Jesus – and who longs to go forth in His name, for the salvation and blessing of others – will feel, as he engages in his labor of love. To be shut up in a corner and prohibited from speaking of the Lord, when we see souls perishing for lack of knowledge – what a grief this must be to faithful servants of the Lord Jesus! The prophet Jeremiah described himself under this affliction; he said that the word of the Lord was in his heart as a “burning fire” shut up in his bones, so that he forbearing and could not be silent (Jer. 20:9). If we have truly experienced the saving mercy of Jesus, let us pray for grace to not be silent, but to share the good news of the Gospel with all those persons whom the Lord places in our life!

Lord, we praise You as the Great Teacher, Who graciously reveals precious truths to those who – like Elihu – diligently search for You and desire to speak for Your glory! Amen.

