

JOB 34 ELIHU DESCRIBES GOD'S JUSTICE AND POWER

Job not only listened patiently to all of Elihu's words, but he also took them kindly, because he saw that Elihu meant well. And while his other three friends had accused him of that which his own conscience acquitted him from, Elihu charged him only with that which his own heart probably began to smite him with, now that he had some time to reflect upon it.

Hitherto every fresh speech had only tended to increase the confusion in this debate. But now, turning to others who were apparently present, whom Elihu designated as men of understanding, he requested their grave attention so that they might satisfactorily arrive at a good and sound judgment in this matter. Even the plainest Christian – whose mind is enlightened, whose heart is sanctified by the Spirit of God, and who is well-versed in the Scriptures – can say how far words or actions agree with true religion, and they can do so much better than any who lean upon their own understandings.

It is beautiful to trace the order and plan of Elihu's reasoning. He set out by laying it down as a truth perfectly incontrovertible, that the Lord of heaven and earth can never do any wrong. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And in addition to this, Elihu contended further that in all His righteous dealings, He is everlastingly pursuing the well-being of His people; and that no matter what outward Providences may seem to indicate, yet His love always remains the same! "Far be it from God," said he, "that he should do wickedness." And so the conclusion was obvious: Job's impatience under his sufferings was unsuitable and unbecoming.

Here, indeed, seems to have been the great difference between Job's arguments and Elihu's. Job was anxious to justify his own integrity more than the glory of God, but Elihu evidently thought the same as the Apostle Paul – "Let God be true, but every man a liar!" (Rom. 3:4) Elihu appealed directly to Job himself. Could he imagine that the Lord was like earthly princes, who hate righteousness and justice, and prove to be the scourges of mankind? It was daring presumption to condemn God's proceedings in this way, as Job had done by his discontentment. Elihu suggested various considerations of the Lord's character to Job, in order to encourage him to think high thoughts of God, and thereby to persuade him to submit to Him. Job had often wished to plead his cause before God; but Elihu asked, "To what purpose?" All that God does is well; and even if it does not appear to be so now, yet one day it will be proven. All the smiles of all the world cannot quiet those upon whom God frowns; but on the contrary,

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Elihu charges Job with more indecent expressions that he had said – verses 1-9
- ❖ He attempts to show him that he had spoken amiss, by very fully describing God's justice, dominion, power, omniscience, and Providence – verses 10-30
- ❖ He teaches Job what to say, and concludes with a sharp reproof – verses 31-37



what can make anyone uneasy, if their soul is dwelling at ease in God? When a person has peace and quietness of conscience, he is well-provided against all trouble and disturbance whatsoever. He who enjoys peace and atonement in Jesus possesses a treasure within him which swallows all outward sadness and trouble. And when God gives this quietness and peace, it also comes with an assurance that all outward calamities are working for our ultimate good.

Elihu gave a very striking account of the righteousness of God's sovereignty. He endeavored to show that a sense of our creatureship – especially when connected with a proper understanding of our guilt and corruption – would induce in every person (even the very greatest and best of people) a patient and humble submission to the Divine will in all things. And Elihu's observations upon this occasion must be the humble determination of every enlightened mind. A deep sense of our nothingness, as sinful human beings, will cause every one of us to lay our hand upon our mouth; and we will say with the Lord's people of old, "Thou hast afflicted us less than our sins deserve!" (Ezra 9:13)

When we reprove a person for something that is amiss, we must also direct their focus to that which is good. Job's friends only desired to see him acknowledge himself as a wicked man, who spoke unadvisedly with his lips. But Elihu encouraged Job to humble himself before the Lord for his sins, and to pray to Him to reveal his sins to him. A Godly person is willing to know the worst of himself, especially under affliction. But it is not enough to merely be sorry for our sins; we must also, in Christ's strength, go and sin no more! And as affectionate children, we shall love to speak with our Father, and tell Him all our mind.

Elihu reasoned with Job concerning his discontentment under his afflictions. We are often inclined to think that everything in life should be just as we wish it, but this is unreasonable. Elihu asked whether there was sin and folly in what Job had said, and he closed his discourse in this chapter with a desire that Job might be "tried unto the end." As a real friend, Elihu could not help hoping that Job's afflictions would be continued until the Lord's glory was fully manifested by the outcome of them, and until Job himself was brought to the blessed and gracious conclusion that "God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Ps. 145:17). The believer will say, "Let my Savior – my wise and loving Lord – choose everything for me! I am sure that it will be wisest and best for His glory and my good."

We praise You, O Lord, that Your power, sovereignty, wisdom, and love are all working together to promote Your glory and our own well-being; and therefore, we need not be anxious! And according to Elihu's suggestion, we beseech You that You would be pleased to teach us and show us our hidden sins, so that we may repent of them and forsake them. Amen.