

## JOB 36

## ELIHU SPEAKS ON GOD'S BEHALF

Having particularly reproved Job for some of his unadvised speeches (which Job had nothing to say in the vindication of), Elihu now endeavored to set him right in his notions of God's dealings with him. Job's other friends had maintained that because he was a wicked man, his afflictions were so great and so long. But Elihu only asserted that the affliction was sent in order to try him. And therefore, he said that it was lengthened because Job was not yet thoroughly humbled under it, nor had he properly accommodated himself to it. And in support of his words, Elihu provided many reasons which were taken from the wisdom and righteousness of God, His care for His people, and especially His greatness and Almighty power – with which, in this and the following chapter, he persuaded Job to submit to the hand of the Lord.

Elihu sought to ascribe righteousness to his Maker, and to vindicate the truth that the Lord is righteous in all His ways. Such knowledge must be learned from the Word and the Spirit of God, because by nature, we are estranged from it. The suitableness of Elihu's discourse to the dispute between Job and his friends is plain. It pointed out to Job the true reason of those trials with which he had been afflicted. It taught that God had acted in mercy toward him, and it showed him the spiritual benefit that he was to derive from these trials. Also, it corrected the mistake of his friends, and showed that Job's calamities were actually for his ultimate good.

There is something very striking in Elihu's account of himself, in the reason why he spoke. He said that he was speaking on the Lord's behalf, and he did this by ascribing righteousness to Him. Oh! If the glory of God in Christ was made the one and only cause of all our speaking, this would be the standard of everything that is excellent! The Lord says, "He that honoureth me, I will honour" (1 Sam. 2:30). Now, if the one sole object of all our pursuits and desires is to honor God, then depend upon it – in honoring Him, we shall find comfort ourselves. But if our comfort is more the object of our own selfish pursuits than the Lord's glory, we shall find that comfort lacking when we need it most.

In verses 5-14, Elihu showed that God always acts as the righteous Governor. He is always ready to defend those who are injured. If our eye is always toward the Lord in duty, then His eye will always be upon us in mercy; when we are at our lowest, He will not overlook us!

Elihu beautifully showed the gracious purposes of the Lord in afflictions, and he made use of a most delightful chain of reasoning upon the subject. He first dwelt upon the glorious and distinguishing perfection of the Almighty One,

**Outline of the chapter:**

- ❖ Elihu's account of the Lord's methods of Providence to people – verses 1-15
- ❖ He gives fair warnings and counsel to Job thereupon – verses 16-21
- ❖ He gives instances of the Lord's sovereignty and omnipotence – verses 22-33

and His power and sovereignty; and having set this down as the foundation of what he was going to reason upon, he clearly showed some of the causes for which that omnipotence is exercised. By the display of His power, He induces trouble and affliction in order to lead people's mind into a deep sense of sin; and when the Lord has thereby made the heart sensible of sin, the next gracious office is (as Elihu expressed it) to open the ear to discipline. This means that He makes sin appear for what it really is, which is exceedingly sinful; and thereby He puts a person out of love with himself, in order to bring the soul in love with the work of His righteousness in redemption by Jesus. And having thus brought the sinner to be acquainted with Himself, He instills in him a hatred of sin, which will keep the heart from willfully engaging in iniquity.

Elihu showed that if the Lord's afflictions are unheeded, then stubborn and unregenerated persons ought to expect the furnace to be heated hotter until they are consumed! They shall die without knowledge and without grace, and then they shall be lost and undone forever. Whether unconverted sinners die in their youth, or live long to heap up wrath – their case is dreadful. Their souls live after their bodies die, but it is in everlasting misery. Hereby Elihu warned Job to not be the cause for the continuance of his own troubles. He advised his friend to not continue his unjust quarrel with God and His Providence. Elihu thought that Job needed this caution because he had chosen to gratify his pride by contending with God, rather than mortifying it by submitting to Him. It is absurd for us to think that we can teach anything to the Lord Who is the very Fountain of light, truth, knowledge, and instruction!

Elihu had refuted the arguments of Job's friends by clearly proving that affliction – so far from carrying with it tokens of displeasure – was frequently used by the Lord as a gracious means for teaching His people. He had also shown that Job's conclusions, in many instances, had been wrong as well. But then he encouraged Job to magnify the Lord's work, and to have a more settled and steady view of His goodness. He endeavored to fill Job with high thoughts of God, and thereby to persuade him into cheerful submission to His dealings. Man may see the Lord's works, but he is often incapable of discerning His hand in them. The clouds of our sins cause Him to hide His face, and they obscure the light of His lovingkindness from shining upon our souls. All of Elihu's words in the latter part of this chapter correspond to the testimony which the Holy Spirit has given in Scripture concerning the Lord's dealings – namely, that His works are great, and that they are sought out by all who have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious, and His righteousness endures forever (Ps. 111:2-3).

*Lord, we repent of times when – like Job – we have tried to gratify our pride by contending with You, rather than mortifying it by submitting to You. Help us to make Your honor the focus of all our life's pursuits! Amen.*

