

“Regaining a Right Perspective”

Job 32-37

Samuel Brengle was a worker with the Salvation Army in Boston in the late 1800's. As he passed by a saloon, a drunken man threw a brick that struck him in the head. So severe was the blow that Brengle nearly died. As it was, he spent eighteen months in recovery and was unable to preach. It was during that time that he wrote a little book that was entitled, “Helps to Holiness.” Thousands of copies were published.

After he was able to begin preaching again, people would often thank him for the book. He would respond by saying, “If there had been no little brick, there would be no little book.” His wife saved the brick and had Genesis 50:20 engraved on it: “But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”

Samuel Brengle had what we would refer to as the right perspective. All of us are viewing the circumstances of life through some type of lens. That lens is your perspective.

Perspective is not **what** we see but the **way** we see it.

Steve Lawson - *“Life can be so confusing. Sometimes the pieces just don't seem to fit. We cannot understand why something has happened. That's when we need to God again for who He is. Only then will the big picture come back into focus.”*

After the three rounds of arguments between Job and his friends conclude, there is a break in the book. This comes at the end of chapter 31 where a statement is made—“The words of Job are ended.”

A new character is introduced in chapter 32, a young man named Elihu. There's not a whole lot that we are told about him, but what we are told is important. He is described as being the son of Barachel the Buzite of the family of Ram. These names are also found in the book of Genesis, and it helps us date Job in the time of Abraham and the patriarchs.

Elihu is younger than Job and the other three, which is why he speaks last. It may come as a surprise to you that others were more than likely standing around listening to Job and his friends go back and forth. Elihu is likely a young man in the crowd.

Many Bible scholars have differing opinions about this guy. Some see him as an arrogant young man. They have interpreted his anger as proof that he is rash, impulsive, and quick tempered. Some say that he adds nothing new to what has already been said. Some say that his speech is nothing more than a meaningless interruption. The text itself doesn't support these conclusions. I believe that Elihu's speech is very important and is essential for understanding the theme of the whole book.

While Elihu says some of the same things that Job's friends have said earlier, his purpose is different from theirs. Unlike Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, this young man doesn't try to prove that Job has sinned in some way. He simply points out to Job that his view of God has been skewed by his pain.

“Elihu” - *literally means ‘My God is He’*

Elihu is a key figure in the book, for he is going to help Job regain a right perspective. He will help him reestablish a proper view of God. He will introduce a new truth to the debate—God sends suffering, not necessarily to punish us for our sins, but to keep us from sinning and to make us better people.

Elihu's speech consists of six back-to-back chapters, making it the longest speech of anyone in the book. The length of these chapters in the text is longer than twelve other Old Testament books, and it is longer than 17 out of the 27 books of the New Testament.

Elihu is important for a few reasons:

- God does not rebuke Elihu like He does the other friends
- His message occupies a prominent place in the book
- Elihu is sensitive to Job's pain, unlike the others mentioned
- He speaks from revelation rather than experience, tradition, and assumption

John Wesley - *“At present, I am hardly sure of anything but what God has revealed to me.”*

Before we look at what he says in his speech, there are three observations that are worth mentioning about Elihu's speech as a whole:

He is COMPELLED by the Spirit

32:6-9 - “I am young in years, and you are aged; therefore I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you. I said, Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom. But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. It is not the old who are wise, nor the aged who understand what is right.”

Job 32:18 - “For I am full of words; the spirit within me constrains me.”

Job 33:4 - “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”

He is COURTEOUS in tone

Job 33:6-7 - “Behold, I am toward God as you are; I too was pinched off from a piece of clay. Behold, no fear of me need terrify you; my pressure will not be heavy upon you.”

He essentially says, “I’m going to speak, and you may confront me. I’m just a man like you are, made by the same Maker as you are. What I am going to say is what God has taught me. But you don’t have to fear that I will be harsh with you, as those other three guys have been. I’m not going to accuse you of sin. I’m not going to browbeat you. Instead, I’m going to simply speak as the Spirit of God leads me to speak.”

He is CORRECT in his assertions

Job 33:12 - “Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you, for God is greater than man.”

Elihu’s arguments represent the importance of revealed truth, and for that reason they express the core message of the entire book. He will emphasize that in order for Job to have a right perspective, he needs to remember three essential truths about God.

1. When life doesn’t make sense, God is still SPEAKING (33:13-14)

“Why do you contend against Him, saying, ‘He will answer none of man’s words?’ For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it.”

The most painful part of Job’s suffering was what he perceived as God’s silence. He desperately wanted to hear from God. He felt that he was being punished by God, though he had done nothing wrong. In chapter 33, Elihu will begin by asking Job to listen to him. He will also analyze some of Job’s remarks in previous chapters.

Job 33:8-11 - “Surely you have spoken in my ears, and I have heard the sound of your words. You say, ‘I am pure, without transgression; I am clean, and there is no iniquity in me. Behold, He finds occasion against me, He counts me as His enemy, He puts my feet in the stocks and watches all my paths.’”

Even though we know that Job is a godly man, he has said some things about God that reveal he has lost perspective. He’s viewing God from his life perspective rather than viewing his life from God’s perspective.

Elihu will point out the fact that Job is overlooking the fact that God’s ways are not our ways, and that His thoughts are higher than ours.

Then, he will contend that God does not remain silent, but is always speaking to us. He mentions three ways to Job:

- God speaks through dreams (33:15-18)

All throughout the Old Testament, we frequently read where God speaks to His servants through dreams and visions. Keep in mind that Job was not as fortunate as we are to have a complete copy of God’s revealed Word. While it may be true that God uses our dreams, He speaks to us today through His Word.

- God speaks through pain (33:19-22)

Job needed to hear that God is speaking to him through his pain. It is through our pain that God often has a way of getting our attention unlike anything else. Job interprets his suffering as the silence of God, while Elihu says that Job’s suffering is God speaking to him.

C.S. Lewis - *“Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”*

- God speaks through a Mediator (33:23-26)

Elihu is prophetically describing the ministry of Jesus Christ!

Hebrews 1:1-2 - “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.”

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are able to see God's purposes behind our pain. It is faith that enables us to discern the truth that God uses our momentary pain to prepare us for eternity. It is pain that stretches the muscles of our faith. Just as our muscles grow stronger when put under stress, so also does our faith grow stronger when under stress and pressure in this life. We learn and grow from pain.

Ray Stedman - *"Throughout his trial of suffering Job has experienced the emergence of a slow and certain light within his heart. Suffering has produced a depth of understanding in Job's life that he never had when his bank account was full, his body was healthy, and his life was easy and free from sorrow."*

It is through pain that he gradually learns more about God's grace:

Job 9:33 - **"There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both."**

Job 16:19 - **"Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he who testifies for me is on high."**

Job 19:25 - **"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth."**

Job 23:10 - **"But He knows that way that I take; when He has tried me, I shall come out as gold."**

Indeed, God had been speaking to Job through his pain all along. The problem is not that God is silent, but that we are often deaf when it comes to discerning His voice! When life doesn't make sense, God is still speaking.

2. When circumstance doesn't seem fair, God is still FAITHFUL (34:10)

"Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding: far be it from God that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that He should do wrong."

Not only does Elihu remind Job that God is still speaking, but he also reminds Job that God is just in all He says and does. As Job looked on his life, he had concluded that there really is no profit to loving and obeying God. All it has done is bring him misery and heartache. He was innocent and, from his perspective, God had denied him justice.

God is just in all that He does (34:10-12)

Job has maintained all along that he is righteous. He has been wounded deeply, even though he was not guilty of sin. His argument for the last several chapters has been that God has sentenced an innocent man.

Elihu says to Job in these verses that God cannot be unjust, for it is not His nature and character. He always does what is right!

God is accountable to no one (34:13-15)

Elihu says that no one put God in charge over the earth, but that He has always been in charge. He is sovereign over the affairs of man and not subject to popular opinion. If it were not for His grace, all flesh would perish from the face of the earth.

Colossians 1:17 - “And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Hebrews 1:3 - “He upholds the universe by the word of His power.”

If for one millisecond God removed His Spirit and the breath that He placed in man, we would all perish. It is only by grace He doesn't!

God is impartial in His dealings with man (34:16-20)

Men are partial and play favorites, but God does not. Elihu says that men will flatter kings and rulers to keep them happy, but God will judge even a king when he is wrong.

If God were not just, then He could not govern. There is not even a hint of injustice with Him.

God is perfect in knowledge (34:21-30)

Elihu says that God doesn't need to do an investigation in order to know a human heart, but that He always has perfect knowledge. In theology we call this God's 'omniscience.' There is nothing that He needs to learn, for He already has perfect knowledge and everything that can be known. Thus, since this is true, God always treats us fairly. Even when our circumstances may tell us otherwise, God is always faithful!

3. When hope doesn't come through, God is still THERE (36:4)

“One who is perfect in knowledge is with you.”

To regain a proper perspective, Job needed to know that when life doesn't make sense, God is still speaking. And when circumstance doesn't seem fair, God is still faithful. Elihu also reminds Job that when hope doesn't come through, God is still there. Even though things have not turned out in Job's life the way he expected, Elihu reminds him that he has not been abandoned or forgotten by God.

The Bible begins by declaring the truth that there is a God to whom we are accountable, and He is all-wise and all-powerful and in total control of the universe.

God is transcendent, but not distant (35:1-8)

Elihu tells Job that God is not distant in our suffering, but instead is right here with us in our pain. We may feel that God is far removed from us in our pain, but in reality that is when He is the closest.

He uses the clouds in heaven as an illustration of God's transcendent nature. Though He is exalted and far above us, He is not far from us.

Isaiah 55:8-9 - “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”

God is invisible, but not oblivious (35:9-11)

When we are hurting, we cry out to God for help. When we do, we cannot rightfully say, “God is not there for me when I need Him most.” Elihu is saying, “No one can claim that God is not there, because He will never leave us.” In the darkest hours of life, God is the One who gives us ‘songs in the night.’

Hebrews 13:5-6 - “Be content with what you have, for He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we can confidently say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

God is patient, but not late (35:12-16)

God operates on His time table and not ours. He may be slow, but He is never late. When He acts, it is always on time. The only time He doesn't hear us is when our hearts are full of pride. It is not until we come to the end of ourselves that we truly cry out to God in faith.

Faith teaches us to wait on God's perfect timing.

God is mysterious, but not unknowable (36-37)

The last two chapters of Elihu's speech are an anthem to the greatness and majesty of God. He gives examples from nature that illustrate the power of God. If our God provides rain and covers the earth with snow, will He not much more provide and take care of those who trust in Him?

God is still speaking. God is still faithful. God is still there. Those are some very important truths for us to remember when we've lost our sense of perspective. Regardless of the pain of our situation, these three truths will never change, for God Himself never changes.

In Romans 8, the apostle Paul explains how these truths impact our life and provide true perspective when we are hurting:

God is still speaking:

Romans 8:18 - "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

Romans 8:26 - "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

God is still faithful:

Romans 8:31 - "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?"

Romans 8:34 - "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the One who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

God is still there:

Romans 8:38-39 - "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Don't let your current perspective shape your view of God; let your view of God shape your perspective. He has not forgotten you, nor has He abandoned you to your circumstances. He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Trust in Jesus, believe and obey His Word, and you will regain a right perspective in life!