

Job Chapter 33

Verses 1-33

The first of Elihu's challenges to Job began with proud claims (verses 1-7), followed by references to Job's questions/complaints (verses 8-11).

Then came Elihu's answers (verses 12-33).

Elihu charges that Job has had a complaining attitude toward his suffering and a hostile attitude toward God.

God does not have to answer to man (verse 13), but He does reveal Himself through dreams and visions (verses 15-16), pain and suffering (verses 19-22), and angelic beings (verse 23).

When a man responds favorably to his suffering, God restores him (verses 25-28).

Job 33:1 "Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words."

Young Elihu turns from addressing all four men to addressing Job alone.

In the last lesson, we were introduced to Elihu.

We may safely assume that this was Elihu speaking here.

He was a young man.

He believed that God had guided what he was about to say.

Job had not received the messages from his three friends, so Elihu started out by telling Job to listen carefully to what he had to say.

Elihu felt that he was speaking the words to follow for God.

Job 33:2 "Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth."

Now I have begun to speak, and intend, with thy good leave, to proceed in my discourse with thee.

Job 33:3 "My words [shall be of] the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly."

I will not speak passionately or partially, as one resolved to defend what I have once said, whether true or false.

But what I verily believe to be true and important, and from a sincere desire to profit thee.

"My lips shall utter knowledge clearly":

What I speak will be plain, not hard to be understood.

Elihu had carefully considered what he was about to say and he felt the things he would say were more important than what Job's friends had said.

He would be speaking from a pure heart.

He will not speak in circles, but directly, as much as his knowledge would allow him to.

Job 33:4 "The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."

First of all, consider that I am thy fellow creature, made by God's Spirit (Gen. 1:2), and quickened by a soul of the same nature with that which God at first breathed into the body of man.

And I am ready to discourse with thee upon even terms according to thy desire.

This was Elihu's way of saying that what he was, was by the act of God.

Even the life within him was put there by God.

Elihu believed the Holy Spirit of God had quickened him to speak.

He was not saying that he spoke as an oracle of God however.

Job 33:5 "If thou canst answer me, set [thy words] in order before me, stand up."

Thou need not, therefore, decline the encounter, but if thou art able to answer;

"Set thy words in order":

I shall allow thee all freedom of discourse.

I cannot terrify thee as God would, and I shall not reproach thee, or make petty or unnecessary objections, as thy friends have done.

"Stand up":

To oppose and argue with me in this cause.

He wanted Job to carefully listen to him and then answer him if he could.

Job 33:6 "Behold, I [am] according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay."

I.e. I am the antagonist for whom thou hast asked (Job 9:33; 13:19), ready to enter into controversy with thee, instead of God.

I am thine equal, a creature like thyself.

I also am formed out of the clay (compare Gen. 2:7).

Job had asked for audience with God, or for God to send an angel with a message for him that he might state his case to God.

Elihu claimed to be sent of God for that purpose.

He explained to Job that he was flesh and blood man and not an angel.

Job 33:7 "Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee."

To come near, join issue in a debate, and speak freely.

This Job had wished for, and desired of God that his fear might not terrify him, and his dread not make him afraid, and then he could talk and reason freely with him (Job 9:34).

Now Job had nothing to fear from Elihu, he was a man and not God, with whom there was no terrible majesty, as with God.

He was but a clod of clay, and had nothing in him or about him to strike terror into him. He was no great personage, as a king or prince, nor in any civil authority, nor had so much as age to command awe, much less could inject dread and terror.

"Neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee":

Which is not to be literally understood; Job could be in no fear of that, nor Elihu guilty of such rudeness.

But figuratively, that he should not seek to afflict and distress him, or add to his affliction, and make it heavier, by hard words, severe reflections, and cruel reproaches.

He seems to refer to (Job 13:21).

The Targum is, "my burden upon thee shall not be heavy;" he promises not to aggravate things, but make them as easy as they would admit of.

Elihu would not be a terror to Job as God would have been, if He were arguing with Job.

Job would not be intimidated by Elihu.

Verses 8-11

In summarizing Job's argument, Elihu recalls Job's claim of sinlessness.

Here Elihu is not accusing Job of claiming to be without original sin.

Rather, he is rightly understanding Job's assertion that he has not committed a transgression that warrants the suffering he has endured.

Job 33:8 "Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of [thy] words, [saying],"

Elihu does not quote exactly what Job had said.

He probably intended to be perfectly fair and just, but in reality he greatly overstates the truth.

Job had never said the words he ascribes to him (in verse 9).

At best they are an inference, or deduction, from what he had said.

And he had said a great deal on the other side, which Elihu overlooks.

It appears that Elihu had been there, when Job was talking to his three friends.

He heard both sides of the conversations.

The things Elihu heard and repeated here, were not exact but approximately what he believed he heard Job say.

Job 33:9 "I am clean without transgression, I [am] innocent; neither [is there] iniquity in me."

Job had not said that he was "clean," or "without transgression," or "innocent."

With respect to "cleanness," he had observed, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

Not one," implying that all men were unclean (see Job 14:4).

Concerning "transgressions," he had declared, "I have sinned...

Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?" (Job 7:20-21).

Job had never said these exact words.

He had said, that he was innocent of the charges that his friends had made.

Job knew and expressed, that all men were sinners to some extent.

He was not living a sinful life however.

His heart was stayed upon God.

He had asked God to weigh him on the balance scales.

Job also knew that he had been forgiven of all sins he ever committed, when he said his Redeemer liveth.

Job 33:10 "Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy,"

This charge may perhaps be justified by reference to Job's complaints (Job 7:17-19; 10:3-6); but the exact words are not Job's.

"He counteth me for his enemy":

Certainly, Job had said this more than once (see Job 16:9; 19:11).

But he cannot really have believed it, or his trust in God must have failed.

The fact that to the last he clung to God, appealed to him, hoped to receive judgment from him (Job 31:2, 6, 28, 35-37), is proof sufficient that he knew God was not really alienated from him.

But would in the end acknowledge him and vindicate his character.

Job 33:11 "He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths."

This also he had said (Job 13:27); by which he would suggest not only that his afflictions were painful and disgraceful, and from which he could not extricate himself, being close fettered by them.

But that they were inflicted on him as punishments, and he was treated as a criminal, as a malefactor, who had been guilty of some notorious breach of the law.

"He marketh all my paths":

Looked narrowly at them, numbered and counted them; this also he had said (Job 13:27).

Meaning not only his natural and civil paths and steps, but his moral ones, that he could not step the least awry, but presently it was marked and observed (Job 10:14).

But though God does take notice of the sins of his people, and chastises them for them, yet he does not mark them in strict justice, for should he, they could not stand before him (Psalm 130:3).

Again, these exact things were not said.

Job in his despair, had thought for a moment that God had turned against him.

In a sense, God had turned his back on Job for just a short time.

God even turned his back on Jesus on the cross for just a moment.

Jesus even said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

Job just felt forsaken for a moment in time.

Job 33:12 "Behold, [in] this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man."

I do not accuse thee of hypocrisy, nor rip up the former errors of thy life.

But in this thou art unjust and much to blame, that thou boasts so much of thine own integrity, and charges God with rigorous dealing, and calls him to an account before thy tribunal, and offers to dispute the matter with him.

"That God is greater than man":

Not only in power and majesty, which thou acknowledges, but also in justice, and wisdom, and goodness.

And therefore, thou does very foolishly, and presumptuously, and wickedly in contending with him, and censuring his judgments.

Thou forget thy distance from him, and casts off that awe and reverence which thou should constantly maintain towards thy sovereign LORD.

Job had never denied that God was greater than man.

The only reason that Job had questioned what had happened to him at all, was because he did not understand what he had done to be punished with such calamities.

Job had not done anything offensive to God.

This was Satan bringing all of these calamities to Job.

Job 33:13 "Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters."

Job had complained that God did not speak to him.

Elihu reminded Job that God didn't have to defend His will and actions to anyone.

Elihu had obviously misunderstood Job's intentions.

Job was not criticizing God for anything He had done.

He was not asking God for an account.

He just wanted to understand, why this was happening?

I personally do not feel that Job erred in this.

Verses 14-18

God does speak, he contended, in many ways such as dreams and visions to protect people from evil and deadly ways (verses 17-18).

Job 33:14 "For God speaketh once, yea twice, [yet man] perceiveth it not."

To Job's charge Elihu replies that God speaks to man in many ways, as in dreams and visions of the night, by which He instructs men and seeks to turn them away from doing evil that would destroy them.

Job now did not understand that God, whom he called upon to answer him (Job 10:2; 13:22; 23:5), was already speaking to him in various ways.

By his judgments, by thoughts suggested inwardly to his heart, by the dreams and visions whereof he complained (Job 7:14).

Elihu was trying to say that God would not answer Job.

God speaks to man on His own terms.

Elihu believed that God speaks, and man does not understand.

Verses 15-18

Elihu suggested that perhaps Job had missed some of the ways God speaks, beginning with dreams.

The Old Testament reports prominent dreams in the lives of Joseph (Gen. 37:40-41) and Daniel (Dan. 2:4, 7-12).

Job 33:15 "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;"

This he mentions as one usual way of God's revealing his mind and will to men in those days, before God's word was committed to writing (Gen. 20:6; 41:1; 41:28).

"When deep sleep falleth upon men":

When men's outward senses are bound up, and their minds are free from all distracting cares and business of the world, and wholly at leisure to receive divine impressions.

"In slumberings upon the bed":

This is added because, in this case, man is like one that slumbers, or is between sleeping and waking.

Or uncertain in which state he is.

As Paul, when he was in his ecstasy, could not tell whether he was in the body or out of the body.

In the very earliest of times, this might have been true to some extent.

It was not true in the case of Adam.

God came in the cool of the evening and fellowshiped with Adam.

I would believe that Elihu believed this to be the only communication that God had with man, simply because it was the way He communicated with him.

We all believe in the things that have happened to us personally.

God does use dreams and visions, but He uses many other ways as well.

Job 33:16 "Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction,"

Not the ears of his body, which remaining shut while things are presented to his mind in a dream or vision, but his internal ears.

It is the same with opening the heart or understanding to attend to and receive the things delivered in this visionary way.

"And sealeth their instruction":

Sends home the instruction given in this manner, and imprints it upon the mind, so that it is well remembered when awake.

Not only the dreams themselves, but the lessons taught and learnt there, as may be observed in the cases of Abimelech and Laban (Gen. 20:3).

The word signifies "chastisement" as well as instruction, that being one way in which God teaches and instructs men (Psalm 94:12).

And so, the sense may be, that God in a dream or vision makes it known to men, that if they regard not what he says to them, and repent not of their evils, and turn from them, he will correct and chastise them.

And this he assures them of; and they may look for the certain performance of it, that he will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes.

Things that are sealed being sure and firm.

This was not speaking of the physical ear.

It was speaking of the ear of their understanding.

This was speaking of God speaking to the spirit of man, and giving him instructions.

Job 33:17 "That he may withdraw man [from his] purpose, and hide pride from man."

Or "work", his wicked work, as the Targum.

Either which he has begun upon, or which he designed to do.

Thus, Abimelech and Laban were restrained from their intentions by a divine admonition in a dream.

The one from taking Abraham's wife, as he intended, and the other from doing harm to Jacob, which he designed.

"And hide pride from man":

By pardoning his sins, in which there is always pride.

To some; pardon of sin being expressed by covering it (Psalm 32:1).

Or rather by repressing, weakening, and preventing it.

And that by not suffering vain and proud men to perform their enterprises, but obliging them to submit to the will of God, and humble themselves under his mighty hand.

These are the ends proposed, and which are effected through the LORD speaking to men in dreams, opening their ears, and sending instructions to them.

Elihu believed that God would re-direct a person's life through dreams and night visions.

Elihu believed that Job was a prideful man.

Job's friends had thought this too.

They all believed that because Job had been a wealthy man, and God had taken all of it away.

Job 33:18 "He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword."

“The pit”:

A reference to the realm of the dead (verses 21, 24, 30).

He again said, that God would warn man in a dream not to go to a battle or get killed, if he would listen.

Verses 19-28

Job has lamented that his suffering was not deserved.

Elihu answered that complaint by saying he was God’s messenger, a mediator to Job to show him that God doesn’t act in a whimsical way, but allows suffering as chastening to bring a person to submit to Him as upright (verse 23), and to repent (verse 27), that his life may be spared (verses 24, 28, 30).

God allows suffering for spiritual benefit.

Elihu’s words here to Job agree with the gospel presented in the New Testament.

Similar to much of what Paul wrote in his letters, a “ransom” is necessary to secure a person’s redemption and to avoid the deserved judgment (Rom. 5:6-11).

Job 33:19 "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong [pain]:"

God also speaks through suffering.

Although not true in Job's case, sometimes suffering is for disciplinary purposes (Psalm chapter 30; Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-13).

Elihu said that the pain and suffering that Job had been feeling on his bed was a chastisement from God.

He said that even that was a message from God to Job.

Job 33:20 "So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat."

Eating and drinking are detestable to the man who is stretched on a bed of sickness (compare Psalm 107:18).

"Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death".

The chains that bind to earth fall off, and the soul is left open to loftier influences.

He was speaking of a sickness so bad, that he did not want to eat.

Job 33:21 "His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones [that] were not seen stick out."

All being gone, none left to be seen, nothing but skin and bones.

And this partly through the vehemence of strong pain, and partly through the nausea of food.

Not being able to take anything for nourishment and the support of the fluids, and so quite emaciated.

"And his bones that were not seen stick out":

Which before were covered with flesh and fat, so that they could not be seen.

But now the flesh and fat being wasted, they seem as if they rose up in an eminence, and stood out to be beheld.

This was also Job's case, being reduced to a mere skeleton (Job 19:20).

Elihu, in this description of an afflicted man, seems to have Job chiefly in view, and by this would intimate to him that God had been, and was speaking to him by those afflictions, which he would do well to advert unto.

He was describing the very illness that Job had.

He counted Job's illness as a chastisement from God.

Elihu believed that God brought this illness on Job to give him time to repent, before he died.

We know that this part of his statement was not true.

Job was attacked by Satan, because God thought Job to be righteous.

Job 33:22 "Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers."

Angels of death commissioned by God to end man's life (2 Sam. 24:16; Psalm 78:49).

The death pains personified may, however, be meant; so "gnawers" (see Job 30:17).

Elihu went on to say, if the person did not repent, God would send the angels (destroyers), to take his life from him.

These threats by Elihu were very obvious.

Verses 23-26

Some scholars argue that Elihu was presenting himself as the "daysman" (interpreter), job needed (9:31-33).

Even if this were the case, he was not the mediator Job sought.

Job needed an intermediary who could be a "ransom" for him.

Christ alone is qualified as that ransom, for Job and for all people (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

Job 33:23 "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness:"

If there be a prophet or teacher with the afflicted man; an interpreter.

One whose office and work it is to declare to him the mind and will of God.

And his design in this dispensation of his providence, and what is the sick man's duty under it.

"One of a thousand":

A person rightly qualified for this great and difficult work, such as there are but very few.

"To show unto man his uprightness":

Not man's, but God's uprightness.

Namely, his justice in inflicting these sufferings, and the sufferer's desert of condemnation and wrath.

God's way of pardoning and justifying the penitent.

His sincerity and faithfulness to his promises, and the necessity of acquiescing in his will without murmuring or feeling discontent, and of walking in the way of faith and holiness.

The messenger, interpreter, could be speaking of an angel sent from heaven to show uprightness.

This was prophetically speaking of that great Redeemer Jesus Christ who came to save the sinner.

Job 33:24 "Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom."

"The pit" is death and all its effects, not just physical death but spiritual death.

The prophetic meaning here, was that Jesus ransomed all who would believe.

He is the great Mediator between God and sinful man.

We are saved by grace.

Job 33:25 "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth:"

Presently the sick man shall begin to recover.

These joyful tidings delivered to him by God's messenger shall revive his spirit, and, by degrees, restore his former health and vigor.

So that he shall become a new man in his body, as well as in his mind.

His flesh shall look as fresh as when he was a child.

"He shall return to the days of his youth":

To the same healthful and strong constitution of body which he had in his youth.

This is speaking of the restoration provided by God to man.

Jesus took the sin of the whole world on His body on the cross.

It is sin that destroys the flesh.

When the sin is removed, man is restored.

Job 33:26 "He shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness."

That is, when he fully understands the design of affliction; and when his mind is brought to a proper state of penitence for his past conduct, then he will find God merciful and ready to show him kindness.

Being engaged and encouraged to do so, either by the aforesaid gracious message, or by his miraculous recovery through God's goodness.

"And he will be favorable unto him":

In hearing and answering his prayers, which before he seemed to neglect.

"And he shall see his face with joy":

Either, God will look upon the man with a smiling or well-pleased countenance; whereas before he either hid his face from him, or frowned upon him.

Or, the man shall then be emboldened and encouraged to look God in the face with comfort and joy.

Which before he was, not without cause, afraid to do.

But now he shall find that God is reconciled to him by the blessed effects of it, both in his body and in his conscience.

"For he will render unto man his righteousness":

I.e. according to his righteousness, or the fruit of his righteousness.

As on the contrary, iniquity is oft put for the punishment of iniquity.

The sense is, he will deal with him as with one reconciled to him through the Mediator.

And sincerely repenting of and turning from his former sins unto the serious practice of righteousness and true holiness.

This was prophetically speaking of that great Intercessor for all mankind (Jesus Christ).

Notice, He gave His righteousness to man.

Job 33:27 "He looketh upon men, and [if any] say, I have sinned, and perverted [that which was] right, and it profited me not;"

God diligently observes all mankind, and the conduct of every one, especially of every one in sickness and distress.

"And if any say, I have sinned":

If any one sincerely, humbly, and penitently confess and forsake his sins.

"And perverted that which was right":

I have judged perversely of the just and righteous ways of God, censuring his proceedings against me, as too rigorous and severe.

Whereas, in truth, I only was to be blamed; or I have swerved from the right and good way of God's commands, and have made to myself crooked paths.

"And it profited me not":

I got no good by so doing, as I vainly supposed I should, but got much hurt by it, and that both in body and mind, which was the just fruit of my sins.

Job 33:28 "He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light."

There are two readings in the Hebrew here, of which one is represented by the Authorized Version.

But the better one is, "He hath redeemed my soul from going into the pit, and my life shall see the light".

This is part of the restored man's confession, which appears to be continued till the speaker resumes in Job 33:29.

All of this was prophetic about the sinner coming to Christ and being saved.

Jesus is the Light of the world.

Job 33:29 "Lo, all these [things] worketh God oftentimes with man,"

All these ways and methods does God take to awaken, convince, and save sinners.

"Oftentimes with man":

One way with one man, and another with another.

Or, using these several methods with the same man, trying by various means, one after another, to lead him to repentance, and prepare him for deliverance.

Elihu had gone back to his statement of God working with men through dreams and visions.

Job 33:30 "To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."

For discipline and correction, not for vengeance.

In love and not in anger (compare Heb. 12:5-11), where the doctrine is set forth fully.

"To be enlightened with the light of the living":

Or, that he may be enlightened.

This is God's purpose, ordinarily, in afflicting men.

Or, at any rate, a part of his purpose He aims at enlightening their understandings.

And so enabling them to comprehend his ways, and clearly see the path which it is their true wisdom to walk in.

He was stressing in this, that God was their only hope, and that they could reach Him through repentance and receiving their instructions from God.

Job 33:31 "Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak."

Consider and weigh well what has been said; or rather attend to what is further to be said.

"Hearken unto me":

To what he was about to say; for he was full of matter, and had not yet vented all he had to utter.

"Hold thy peace, and I will speak":

Be silent and do not interrupt, and I will go on with my discourse.

He wanted Job to pay very close attention to what he had said.

He wanted Job to hold his peace and not speak until he was completely through, and then he could speak.

Job 33:32 "If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee."

"I desire to justify thee":

Elihu expressed he was on Job's side and wanted to see him vindicated in his claims to righteousness, so he gave opportunity for Job to dialogue with him as he spoke (verse 33).

It appears, he believed that Job would be so astonished by what he had said, that he would not have any answer to this.

He said if you can answer this, then go ahead and speak.

Elihu said, that he would like to find Job innocent of all charges.

Job 33:33 "If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom."

Elihu is certainly quite sufficiently impressed with the sense of his intellectual capacity.

Job's silence may have been meant as a sort of tacit rebuke to him.

Considering his youth (Job 32:6), there is something of arrogance in the whole tone of his address, and especially in his notion that he could "teach Job wisdom."

It is significant that neither now, when expressly invited to reply, nor at any subsequent point of the discourse, nor even at its close, does Job condescend to make any answer at all to Elihu's speech.

Elihu had become overzealous, or else he felt he knew a great deal more than Job.

This I would call being conceited, or self-centered.

Job probably did not answer him earlier, because he felt he did not need to justify himself to this young man.

It was a very braggadocios (bold), statement on his part, that he might teach Job wisdom.

Job found it totally unnecessary and unprofitable to speak to Elihu.

We could safely assume that this was Elihu's youth speaking.

He should have known better.

Job Chapter 33 Questions

1. Who was speaking in verse 1?
2. He thought he was speaking for whom?

3. Elihu believed he would be speaking from a pure _____.
4. Elihu said, the very life within him was from _____.
5. In verse 6, Elihu said he was in _____ _stead.
6. Elihu was formed of what?
7. Job would not be _____ by Elihu.
8. How did Elihu know what had been said up to now?
9. Instead of what Elihu said in verse 9, what had Job really said?
10. What were some other things that Elihu said Job had said?
11. Job had never denied that God was greater than _____.
12. What was Elihu trying to say in verse 14?
13. What were the only ways that Elihu knew of that God spoke to man?
14. Why did he believe that?
15. Verse 16 is speaking of what ear?
16. Elihu believed that Job was a _____ man.
17. What did Elihu believe the pain and suffering of Job was?
18. Who actually had attacked Job?
19. Who were the destroyers in verse 22?
20. Who was verse 23 prophetically speaking of?
21. What was the prophetic meaning of verse 24?
22. Who is the great Intercessor?
23. Why did he think Job would not answer him?
24. What was the real reason Job did not answer him?