

Job Chapter 35

Verses 1-16: Elihu again referred to Job's complaints, first of all his thinking that there appeared to be no advantage to being righteous (verse 3), which Job had said, as recorded (in 21:15; and 34:9). The first part of his answer is that Job gained nothing by sinning or not sinning because God was so high that nothing men do affects Him (verses 5-7). It only affects other men (verse 8). Job had also complained that God did not answer his prayers when he cried under this oppression (see 24:12, 30:20). Elihu coldly gave 3 reasons why Job's prayers had not been heard: pride (verses 10, 12), wrong motives (verse 13), and lack of patient trust (verse 14). Again, all this theoretical talk missed Job's predicament completely because he was righteous. Elihu was no more help than the other counselors.

Job 35:1 "Elihu spake moreover, and said,"

Hebrew, *vaya'an*. "And he answered"; the word "answer" being used, as it is often in the Scriptures, to denote the commencement of a discourse. We may suppose that Elihu had paused at the close of his second discourse, possibly with a view to see whether there was any disposition to reply.

Job 35:2 "Thinkest thou this to be right, [that] thou saidst, My righteousness [is] more than God's?"

Canst thou in thy conscience, upon second thoughts, approve of what thou hast said?

"That thou saidst": This is produced in proof of the foregoing charge. Job had often affirmed that he was, and still continued to be, righteous. Though he had no present benefit by his righteousness, but much bitterness with it. And that God did not act kindly toward him, notwithstanding his former and present piety, but dealt with him as if he had been a most wicked man. Now, Elihu interprets this as implying that he thought himself more righteous than God.

"My righteousness is more than God's": Not that Job said this in express terms, but he said those things from which this might seem to follow, as that God had punished him more than he deserved. Now Elihu was speaking directly to Job. It was such a shame that Elihu was accusing Job of saying things he never even thought of saying. Job had never made a statement that this could have even been twisted to mean.

Job 35:3 "For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? [and], What profit shall I have, [if I be cleansed] from my sin?"

"Unto me": Such changes of persons being frequent in the Hebrew language.

"And what profit shall I have": I have no more present advantage by all my care to please and serve God than wicked men have by their sins against him. God regards my cries no more than theirs, and shows no more kindness or pity to me than he doth to the most profligate wretches. But, it must be remembered, if Job's words implied anything of this kind, it was only with

reference to his state in the present life. He well knew that he should have much, yea, everlasting advantage from his piety in the life to come.

Job had said that his righteousness had brought him no special treatment here on the earth. Of course, we know that what Job was speaking of, was this latest attack that had actually come from Satan. Job had no way of knowing that this attack was from Satan. Job had felt that ultimately God would bring him out of this terrible dilemma he was in.

Job 35:4 "I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee."

I.e. "thy comforters, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar." Elihu has pledged himself to confute their reasoning, no less than those of Job (Job 32:5-20), and now proposes to carry out this intention. But it is not very clear that he accomplishes his purpose. In point of fact, he does little more than repeat and expand the argument of Eliphaz (Job 22:2-3).

It appears that Elihu was trying to prove Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar just as wrong as Job. He had to defame them all, if he would take the high position that Job had held. The three friends were no companions of Job. They had accused Job of things that would have easily classified them as his enemies.

Job 35:5 "Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds [which] are higher than thou."

I.e. "look to the material sky and heavens, so far above thee and so unapproachable. And judge from them how far the God who made them is above thy puny, feeble self. How incapable he is of being touched by any of thy doings."

Elihu was insinuating that all of them thought they were higher than God in the heavens. God had created the heavens, as well as the earth. He was above it all. The Creator is greater than His creation. Job would agree with that completely. In fact he stated that before Elihu did.

Job 35:6 "If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or [if] thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?"

Man's sins against God cannot injure him, diminish from his power, or lower his dignity. They can only injure the sinner himself. God does not punish them because they harm him, but because they are discords in the harmony of his moral universe. Or even if thy transgressions be multiplied; i.e. if thou persist in a long course of sin. And adds "rebellion" to transgression, and self-complacency to rebellion, and "multiplies your words against God" (Job 34:37). Even then, what doest thou unto him? What hurt do you inflict upon him? None.

Mankind cannot do harm to God. The only way they can hurt Him, is to break His heart. The sins and transgressions of mankind do no real harm to God, except to His heart. To commit sin means disobedience to God. The sin will not alter God's plan for the world in any way. The sin causes hurt to your own soul.

Job 35:7 "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?"

By parity of reasoning, as our sins do not injure God, so our righteousness cannot benefit him. As David says, "My goodness extendeth not to thee" (Psalm 16:2).

"Or what receiveth he of thine hand?" All things being already God's, we can but give him of his own. We cannot really add to his possessions, or to his glory, or to his felicity. We cannot, as some have supposed they could, lay him under an obligation.

We cannot do anything directly for God except to love Him. We cannot add to Him by any of our righteous deeds. The easiest way to help God is to help our fellowmen. We read in Matthew what Jesus had to say about this.

Matthew 25:40 "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me."

Job 35:8 "Thy wickedness [may hurt] a man as thou [art]; and thy righteousness [may profit] the son of man."

The verse reads literally: thy wickedness is to (touches, affects), a man as thou art, and thy righteousness is to one of mankind. I. e. thyself who art a man; for it cannot touch God who is exalted above such influence.

Elihu was actually saying that God would punish the wicked man, and bless the man who did righteousness. This is not necessarily so. To be righteous, so that you could benefit for being righteous, would in itself keep you from being righteous. We should never go to church, give our offerings, or live righteous to get a reward from God. We should do all these things because we love God and want to please Him.

Job 35:9 "By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make [the oppressed] to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty."

Rather, by reason of the multitude of oppressions, men cry out. It is not Job only who cries to God. Oppressors are numerous; the oppressed are numerous; everywhere there are complaints and outcries.

"They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty": The oppressors are, for the most part, the mighty of the earth. Kings, princes, nobles (see Isa. 1:23; 3:14-15; Hosea 5:10; Amos 4:1).

Elihu proceeded to tell Job why God had not answered his prayers. In all truth, no one but God knows why God does not answer a certain prayer. The oppressors who cause people to cry, are generally the people who rule over the oppressed. Rulers must remember that someday they will stand before the Ruler of the entire world, and give an account. God will judge them as they judged others on the earth. Those who oppressed others will be oppressed themselves.

Job 35:10 "But none saith, Where [is] God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;"

The oppressed, in many cases, do not appeal to God at all. They mutter and complain and groan because of their afflictions; but they have not enough faith in God to cry to him. Or, if they do so cry, it is not in a right spirit; it is despondingly, despairingly, not confidently or cheerfully.

“God my maker, who giveth songs in the night”: The truly pious man sings hymns of praise in his affliction, as Paul and Silas did in the jail at Philippi, looking to God with faith and a lively hope for deliverance.

The oppressed many times did not know God and did not call out to Him for help. Some of them were from generations of those who had been oppressed. They had never truly been happy.

Job 35:11 "Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?"

Elihu probably alludes to Job's defense of his complaints as natural, like the instinctive cries of beasts and birds (Job 6:5). God, he says, has given to man a higher nature than he has bestowal on the brutes. And this nature should teach him to carry his griefs to God in a proper spirit; a spirit of faith, piety, humility, and resignation. If men cried to him in this spirit, they would obtain an answer. If they do not obtain an answer, it must be that the proper spirit is lacking (compare James 4:3).

God made man in the image of God. Animals, fowls, and fish were all made lower than man. Man has a soul and animals do not. Man was made to rule over the beasts, not to be taught by them.

Job 35:12 "There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men."

"There": Smitten by calamity, they do at last cry to God.

"But none giveth answer": They "ask, and receive not." Why?

"Because of the pride of evil men": Because, i.e., they ask proudly, not humbly. They claim relief as a right, not as a favor. They approach God in a spirit that offends him and prevents him from granting their requests.

This was a sharp criticism of Job. Elihu said Job was not answered by God, because he asks from a heart filled with pride. We learned very early in this book of lessons, that Job was truly a humble man. All of the accusations of Elihu were false.

Verses 13-15: The emphasis here is on God's transcendence in contrast to His nearness. Rather than humans asking for God's response, Elihu argued that humans (and Job especially) needed to approach God with humility.

Job 35:13 "Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it."

God will not hear prayers that are rendered "vain" by sin or defect in those who offer them, as by a want of faith, piety, humility, or resignation.

Neither will the Almighty regard any such petitions.

This was a true statement, but Job was not guilty of doing this. God listens to and answers the prayers of the humble.

Job 35:14 "Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, [yet] judgment [is] before him; therefore trust thou in him."

Or, thou canst not see him. Thou canst not understand his dealings with thee. Here Elihu answers another objection of Job's; and tells him that though God may, for a season, delay to answer, yet he will certainly do him right.

"Yet judgment is before him": Justice is at his tribunal, and in all his ways and administrations.

"Therefore trust thou in him": Instead of murmuring, repent of what is past. Humble thyself under God's hand, wait patiently in his way till deliverance come. For it will certainly come, if thou dost not hinder it.

This was very good advice, if you were not suffering as Job had suffered. Sometimes in great distress, we all feel that God is far away. It does not mean that we have any less faith in His ability to answer our prayers. He is the Judge of all the world. Trust in God is one step beyond faith. It is when we know that God is working everything out to our benefit, and we rest in that fact. I believe Job had come to that point. He had moments of weakness, but never stopped trusting in God.

Verses 15-16: Elihu suggested that although Job had suffered, his suffering was not the fullness of God's anger or He would have punished Job more for the sinfulness of his speeches. He thought God had actually overlooked the folly of Job in his useless words.

Job 35:15 "But now, because [it is] not [so], he hath visited in his anger; yet he knoweth [it] not in great extremity:"

That is, because Job doth not acknowledge God's justice and his own sins, and wait upon God in a proper way for mercy.

"He hath visited in his anger": God hath laid grievous afflictions upon him, all which appear to be too little to bring Job to a compliance with God's will.

"Yet he knoweth it not": Job is not sufficiently sensible of it, so as to be humbled under God's mighty hand.

“In great extremity”: Or, though in great extremity, namely, of afflictions. Though Job hath hitherto been, and still is, exercised with very sore calamities. Yet they have not brought him to the knowledge of God and himself.

Elihu still believed that the anger of God brought this trouble to Job. Elihu was even saying that God had gone easy on Job. Elihu would not have felt that way, if he had the same problems.

Job 35:16 "Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge."

Hence it is manifest that he pours forth his complaints without any success, and gets no relief by them.

"He multiplieth words without knowledge": Thereby discovering his ignorance of God and of himself.

This judgement, as all the others that Elihu had made, was in error. Elihu was in a sense saying that God had turned His back on Job. He said Job spoke without knowledge and God would not hear him. He could speak mountains of words, and God would still not hear. Elihu had made a terrible mistake in saying all of this.

Job Chapter 35 Questions

1. What did Elihu accuse Job of saying in verse 2?
2. Had Job said that?
3. In verse 3, what did Elihu say Job had said?
4. What had he really said?
5. Who had Job's attack come from?
6. Who did he believe it came from?
7. In verse 4, who was Elihu trying to prove wrong along with Job?
8. What did Elihu tell them to look to heaven to see?
9. What was Elihu insinuating?
10. The Creator is greater than His _____.
11. What is the only way man hurts God?
12. What is the only thing we can do for God directly?

13. What was Elihu actually saying in verse 8?
14. We should never go to church, give our offerings, or live righteous to _____ a _____ from God.
15. Why should we do all of these things?
16. Why did the oppressed not call on God?
17. God made _____ in the image of God.
18. How do men and animals differ?
19. Elihu was calling Job a _____ man.
20. Verse 13 was a _____ statement.
21. Sometimes in _____ distress, we all feel that God is far away.
22. _____ in God is one step beyond faith?
23. Why did Elihu say that God would not hear Job?
24. What had Elihu done in saying all of this to Job?