

However, Job's other friends, the ones who rely on history and science to explain God keep talking.

As we have seen glimpses of the system of grace and the gospel, which is outside of people's fleshly thinking is in view. But Eliphaz and Bildad are not persuaded and continue with their faulty arguments, until at last, the One who has the final word speaks.

#### 4. Round 3 (22:1-37:24)

##### A. Eliphaz's 3<sup>rd</sup> Speech (22:1-30)

In chapter 22, Eliphaz, the historian, argues again that Job must be unrighteous. However, he no longer uses history to make his argument. Instead, he argues based on what he feels is true. Job has broken down each argument based on objective realities, so Eliphaz resorts to subjective accusations. He begins his attack in verse 5,

**Job 22:5-7** "5 "Is not your evil great, And your iniquities without end?" 6 "For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, And stripped the clothing of the naked." 7 "To the weary you have given no water to drink, And from the hungry you have withheld bread."

Eliphaz accuses Job of sinning without end. First, he asserts that Job has taken the clothes off his brothers' backs to secure debts they owe him. Then, he states that Job refused to share his immense wealth with the weary and the poor. He continues in verse 9,

**Job 22:9-10** "9 "You have sent widows away empty, And the might of the orphans has been crushed." 10 "Therefore snares surround you, And sudden dread terrifies you,"

Instead of caring for the least among him, Eliphaz declares that Job has slammed his door on the widow and trampled on the orphan. It is for this reason that God has taken everything from Job. God has ensnared him in Job's trap for the poor and needy. The question is, are these things true of Job? No, he is blameless and upright. Eliphaz concludes his attack in verse 15,

**Job 22:15-16** "15 "Will you keep to the ancient path Which wicked men have trod," 16 "Who were snatched away before their time, Whose foundations were washed away by a river?"

Eliphaz is a historian who studied the ancient path of the wicked and asserts that Job has been on this path for quite some time. This path always leads to their life and livelihood being taken quickly and decisively, just like Job's. This leads into his last words of *comfort* for Job, verse 21,

**Job 22:21** "21 "Yield now and be at peace with Him; Thereby good will come to you."

Job needs to repent. Be at peace with God, and good will come back to you. In the following verses, Eliphaz provides an excellent description of repentance, which begins with receiving God's word at the heart level, leading to rejection of one's sins and a return to following faithfully after God by removing idols and temptations in one's life and wholly worshipping and delighting in Him. The only problem here is that Job does not need to repent of the sins Eliphaz accuses him of because he hasn't done them. Eliphaz shared *his truth*, which wasn't based in reality at all.

B. Job's Initial Response (23:1-24:25)

Job is now faced with the struggle of defending himself against false accusations. He longs again to bring his case before God, verse 3,

**Job 23:3-6** "3 "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat!" 4 "I would arrange my case for justice before Him And fill my mouth with arguments." 5 "I would know the words which He would answer, And discern what He would say to me."

See again that this is a wish statement. He desires to be able to find God. He is desperate for direct access to his Creator so that he can make his case to Him instead of debating his friends. Notice that he desires God to answer and speak. Job doesn't just want to declare his righteousness before God. He wants God to reveal Himself and His purposes. However, Job has a problem. Verse 8,

**Job 23:8-10** "8 "Behold, I go forward but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot discern Him;" 9 "When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him." 10 "But He knows the way I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold."

Job has no idea how to find the God he seeks an audience with. However, Job again asserts that God knows all. He knows that Job is innocent. Despite this reality that Job believes in, he is terrified of God, vs 13,

**Job 23:13-16** "13 "But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does." 14 "For He performs what is apportioned for me, And many such decrees are with Him." 15 "Therefore, I would be dismayed at His presence; I carefully consider, and I am in dread of Him." 16 "It is God who has made my heart faint, And the Almighty who has dismayed me,"

Again, Job recognizes that God is God. He is unique. He is alone. He is the one God. No one can control His desires or change His decrees. Everything that has happened to Job has been appointed to him by God. He is the Almighty, and the thought of standing before God to argue his case makes his heart tremble. Job is unsure how to balance his longing for a compassionate God who would meet with and listen to him with the all-powerful sovereign God he has experienced. Job's uncertainty about the character of God comes forth in verse 1 of the next chapter,

**Job 24:1** "1 "Why are times not stored up by the Almighty, And why do those who know Him not behold His days?"

Job knows that God is sovereign and has the power to give and to take away. But he has no idea why God allows actual wickedness to continue unpunished. In a counterargument against Eliphaz, Job describes the ways of wicked men who steal property (vs. 2), oppress the widow and orphan (vs. 3), and persecute the poor (vs. 4). Then he describes the suffering of the persecuted who are presumably innocent, vs. 10,

**Job 24:10-12** "10 "Those poor ones walk about naked without clothing, And hungry ones carry the sheaves." 11 "Within the walls they produce oil; They tread wine presses but thirst." 12 "From the city men groan, And the souls of the wounded cry out; Yet God does not pay attention to such offense."

The poor have to look for food in the desert (vs. 5) and work for wicked masters (vs. 6), working and walking about without adequate clothing (vs. 7-8). The hungry are forced to carry wheat they will never eat, and the thirsty are forced to make wine they can never drink. The cries of

their suffering fill the city walls, and yet it is as if God does not pay any attention to judging the wicked and relieving the innocent. Job takes the imaginary oppression that Eliphaz accused him of and uses it as the reason for Job's suffering and then goes on to point out real oppression happening in their towns that goes unaddressed by God. Then, in verses 13-17, Job highlights the actions of evil people daily. Rebels fight during the day, murderers and thieves kill and steal in the night, and adulteresses seduce at dawn. Wickedness goes on at all times of the day. And yet Job's friends declare that the wicked are swiftly punished, that their lives are wiped from the earth and quickly forgotten (vs. 18-19). This is not so, as Job states in verses 23-25,

**Job 24:23–25** “**23** “He provides them with security, and they are supported, And His eyes are on their ways.” **24** “They are exalted a little while, then they are gone; Moreover, they are brought low and like everything gathered up; Even like the heads of grain they are cut off.” **25** “Now if it is not so, who can prove me a liar, And make my speech worthless?””

God allows these evildoers to live a secure, prosperous life, and then their deaths are quick and painless. The divine retribution principle is wrong because God doesn't execute justice swiftly, or even in this life. Eliphaz cannot just conclude that Job is suffering for some made-up wickedness when the wicked are prospering and live unpunished all around them.

#### C. Bildad's 3<sup>rd</sup> Speech (25:1-6)

This leads to Bildad's final speech. He begins with a beautiful expression of God's sovereignty in verse 2,

**Job 25:2–4** “**2** “Rule and dread belong to Him Who makes peace in His heights.” **3** “Is there any number to His troops? And upon whom does His light not rise?” **4** “How then can mortal man be right with God? Or how can he be pure, born of a woman?”

God has unlimited authority, and all creation should fear Him. He alone is in control because He has all the power. His strength is limitless, and His scope is infinite. Therefore, Bildad argues, His Job or any man could never stand and claim righteousness before Him without being overwhelmed by His might. No one is right and pure before Him. The naturalist turns to creation to make his point, verse 5,

**Job 25:5–6** “**5** “Behold even the moon has no brightness, And the stars are not pure in His sight;” **6** How much less mortal man, that maggot, And the son of man, that worm!”

Bildad argues that all creation is flawed. Even the most spectacular things, the sun and the stars, sometimes fail. If they are not perfect, man is not perfect. Notice that Bildad's reliance on the cause-and-effect argument is abandoned here. Just as in Eliphaz's final argument, Bildad makes an unqualified assertion, imposing what he thinks about nature upon what he believes about God and man. He has no idea that God created the sun and the stars and declared them good. He concludes with scientific extrapolation.

#### D. Job's Final Response (26:1-33:40)

##### i. Human Wisdom vs. God's (26:1-14)

Job begins his final rebuttal with sarcasm, vs 2

**Job 26:2–3** “2 “What a help you are to the one without power! How you have saved the arm without strength!” 3 “What counsel you have given to one without wisdom! What sound wisdom you have abundantly made known!”

Job sarcastically declares that his friend’s counsel has been unhelpful and lacks wisdom. And in verse 4, he identifies why,

**Job 26:4** “4 “With whose help have you declared words? And whose breath comes out from you?”

Job asks a rhetorical question – *who helped you with your answers? Who was your source?* The answer Job implies is that the source is themselves. They base all of their logic and wisdom on themselves. The foundation of their epistemological certainty is them. On its face, Job is providing a counter to Bildad. If man is imperfect, all your arguments have come from an imperfect source. However, this statement is ultimately an indictment of the wisdom of man. Job’s friends began by arguing based on their conclusions about God’s character and objective observations of history and nature. Then, they argued their conclusion about man’s nature using the same objective observations of history and nature. Lastly, they argued using *their* subjective assertions. The bottom line is that no matter if they were arguing using objective logic or subjective assertion, they were still basing their conclusions on *their* wisdom. Since they are flawed and finite, their assertions of truth are flawed and finite. The 35 chapters in the middle of Job display the faultiness of human wisdom and its utter inability to explain God and His purposes. Job then turns to creation to begin to make his argument. Verse 5,

**Job 26:5–6** “5 “The departed spirits tremble under the waters and their inhabitants.” 6 “Naked is Sheol before Him, And Abaddon has no covering.”

God knows and rules what we cannot see nor fully comprehend. His dominion extends to the supernatural realm. He rules over places that we have never been. The spiritual life of men after death is mysterious, but everything is clear and uncovered to God. In verse 7, Job moves to ponder the mysteries of the natural realm, beginning with the skies,

**Job 26:7** “7 “He stretches out the north over what is formless And hangs the earth on nothing.”

Job begins observing the physical heavens, marveling that God keeps the earth completely suspended in space. Even today, our best theories and calculations about the gravitational pull of the sun and our greater solar system still need to fully explain why, how, and where we remain in orbit relative to space’s nothingness. But God knows. Job moves down in verse 8 to the skies in our atmosphere,

**Job 26:8–9** “8 “He wraps up the waters in His clouds, And the cloud does not break out under them.” 9 “He obscures the face of His moon And spreads His cloud over it.”

God controls the water cycle. Outside the Bible, the earliest description of the water cycle was in 700 BC. The modern water cycle wasn’t scientifically defined until 1580. Yet Job observes that God is the one who binds up evaporated water in his clouds, causing these fluffy water sacks to float about in the sky. According to calculations found on the National Weather Service website, the typical fair weather cloud weighs, on average, 1.1 million pounds. The only reason that clouds can float is because they are less dense than the dry air below them. It took millennia for man to calculate and comprehend this. And yet God has known and ruled over the water cycle since before its creation. Job then moves to the waters below in verse 12,

**Job 26:12** “12 “He quieted the sea with His power, And by His understanding He crushed Rahab.”

God controls perhaps the most chaotic force on earth: the sea. Rahab is an ancient near-eastern name for a sea monster referenced poetically and metaphorically in Job, Psalms, and Isaiah. God’s power can calm the sea and crush the chaotic creatures within. Can man? Never. This is Job’s conclusion in verse 14,

**Job 26:14** “14 “Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; And how only with a whisper of a word do we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?”

Job’s majestic examples of God’s sovereign and wise rule over the universe are just the tip of the iceberg. Our knowledge of Job’s examples is minuscule. How could we presume to understand Him on our own? He is far greater than us. How could we explain Him or His ways?

## ii. The Fault in the Friend’s Logic (27:1-23)

In chapter 27, Job narrows his argument to focus on his friends. He begins by making an oath, verse 2,

**Job 27:2–6** “2 “As God lives, who has removed my justice, And the Almighty, who has embittered my soul, ”3 For as long as breath is in me, And the spirit from God is in my nostrils, ”4 My lips certainly will not speak unrighteousness, Nor will my tongue utter deceit. ”5 “Far be it from me that I should declare you right; Till I breathe my last, I will not remove my integrity from me. ”6 “I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go. My heart does not reproach any of my days.”

Since Eliphaz and Bildad resorted to making subjective declarations of their perceived reality, Job will make a declaration of his own. He swears on the eternal life of God that he will never lie about two truths. He will never admit that his friends were right, and he will also never admit that his unrighteousness led to his suffering – he will hold fast that he was right until he breathes his last. After this declaration, Job sarcastically attacks the reasoning of his friend’s final arguments, vs. 8,

**Job 27:8–10** “8 “For what is the hope of the godless when he is cut off, When God requires his soul? ”9 “Will God hear his cry When distress comes upon him? ”10 “Will he take delight in the Almighty? Will he call on God at all times?”

Both Bildad and Eliphaz continued their call for Job to repent so that God would remove his hand of judgment. However, they also asserted that Job was a wicked, irreverent, godless man (8:13, 15:13, 20:5). In their system of divine retribution, God’s judgment upon the godless is swift and painful. How would he have an opportunity to repent? If given the chance, why would God choose to hear his cry? That would betray His justice. Ultimately, why would the godless man even repent? He hates God. According to their flawed reasoning, their counsel is impossible to perform.

## iii. Where Can Wisdom be Found? (28:1-28)

In Chapter 28, Job concludes his argument regarding wisdom. He begins with an analogy in verse 1,

**Job 28:1–4** “1 “Surely there is a mine for silver, And a place where they refine for gold. ”2 “Iron is taken from the dust, And copper is smelted from rock. ”3 “Man puts an end to

darkness, And to the farthest limit he searches out The rock in thick darkness and shadow of death. ”4 “He sinks a shaft far from habitation, Forgotten by the foot; They hang and swing to and fro far from men.”

Job meditates on the mining of precious metals. Silver, gold, iron, copper, and gemstones are rare and hard to access, making them extremely valuable. The fact that men have the industry, knowledge, skill, and strength to acquire what is otherwise unobtainable. Men search the deepest darkness for these metals—they use mechanical inventions to bring their findings to the surface. In verse 7, Job notes that the strongest and sharpest animals can’t access these things. Man has the ingenuity to use explosives to move mountains (vs. 9) or build barriers to stop the flow of rivers (vs. 10-11). Yet, with all of this skill, strength, and ingenuity to find the rarest of gemstones and precious of metals, we cannot access true wisdom, vs. 12,

**Job 28:12–13** “12 “But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” 13 “Man does not know its worth, And it is not found in the land of the living.”

Man doesn’t know the path to wisdom. With all his skill and knowledge, he can’t find it. It cannot be found in the depths of the mountains or the depths of the seas (vs 14). Nor can it be purchased, vs. 15,

**Job 28:15** “15 “Pure gold cannot be given in place of it, Nor can silver be weighed as its price.”

How can you buy something invaluable? Wisdom is more challenging to access than the purest of gold. If wisdom cannot be found on this earth and cannot be purchased with the most valuable treasures, then where is it? Who possesses it? Verse 23,

**Job 28:23–27** “23 “God understands its way, And He knows its place. ”24 “For He looks to the ends of the earth And sees everything under the heavens. ”25 “When He set weight to the wind And meted out the waters by measure, ”26 When He set a limit for the rain And a course for the thunderbolt, ”27 Then He saw it and recounted it; He established it and also searched it out.”

God has a monopoly on wisdom. He alone knows its place, for God alone sees everything. He alone knows everything. He alone has the power to execute everything that He ordains. The wind blows as strong and in whichever direction He pleases. The waters fill the streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans as full as He desires. He tells each raindrop where to fall and each lightning bolt where to strike. God knows wisdom. He ordains wisdom. He tests wisdom to search and see if it is true. He is the definitive source. And this leads to the main point of the whole book, vs. 28,

**Job 28:28** “28 “So He said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to turn away from evil is understanding.’”

You can never understand anything apart from God. To understand, know, and be wise, we must receive truth from God. Wisdom doesn’t come from following our heart. Wisdom is not something we gain after going through the gauntlet of life. We cannot receive wisdom after purchasing a masterclass from some guru. Wisdom belongs to the Lord, and it comes to us from fearing Him.

### Excursus on *The Fear of the Lord*

But what does this mean? We often translate fear as reverence. This statement has some truth: fear includes reverence but goes beyond reverence. **Fear is the terrifying and arresting recognition of one's power over you.** This fear produces an understanding that we are nothing in light of His magnificence. This fear makes us recognize that He holds our every heartbeat in His hands. This fear produces a humble submission to His will and His rule. And **He is to be feared because He is Adonai, He is Lord, He is the Master.** How is this fear enacted? Rejecting any wickedness and turning one's back to all that the Master deems evil is wisdom – this is the skill of discerning how to apply truth rightly to life.

Job's limitation is that he does not have God's truth revealed through His Word. All that Job has is God's natural revelation and the Law of God written on his heart. This is why Job is the perfect introduction for the Wisdom Books. For the past 27 chapters, Job has shown that created beings, both men and the devil, do not accurately or precisely understand God and His purposes. Therefore, their fallenness and pride misconstrued the conclusions they draw about living with righteousness and wisdom.

Wisdom must come from God; to receive wisdom, we must approach Him with fear, submission, trust, and obedience. This is extremely practical. **We must approach God and His Word with fear. Any other approach results in folly and, ultimately, death.** This is the message of Psalm 1. This is the theme of Proverbs. This is the conclusion of Ecclesiastes.

#### iv. Job Remembers His Righteousness (29:1-25)

Sadly, Job did not stop there. Job descends from this mountaintop to ponder his situation again. He begins in chapter 29 by looking back to the good days before his suffering. The question we must ask is: has Job gone over the line? Has he clung to his righteousness so much that he has become sinfully self-righteous? Let's begin in verse 2,

**Job 29:2–3** “2 “Oh that I were as in months gone by, As **in the days when God kept me,**  
”3 When His lamp shone over my head, And by His light I walked through darkness,”

Job wishes for the days when God kept him and was with him (vs. 5). Note the hint of the divine retribution principle. In verses 7-10, Job reminisces when he was not a reject of society. In those days, the young and old, rich and poor, were in awe of me. They always positively responded to his wisdom (vs. 8-9). In verse 14, he declares,

**Job 29:14–17** “14 “**I clothed myself with righteousness,** and it clothed me; **My justice was like a robe and a turban.**”15 “**I was eyes to the blind And feet to the lame.**”16 “**I was a father to the needy,** And I searched out the case which I did not know.”17 “**I broke the fangs of the unjust** And snatched the prey from his teeth.”

Job longed for when he was the mediator of justice, wisdom, and the paragon of righteousness. Because of this, he concluded that he deserved to live a long life and die in the comfort of his home (vs. 18).

#### v. Job Laments His Affliction (30:1-31)

Job then turns to lamenting the change that suffering has brought, verse 1,



**Job 30:1** “1 “But now those younger than I laugh at me, Whose fathers I rejected even to put with the dogs of my flock.”

This who once stood in awe of his great wisdom and sought his aid now mocks him. In verses 2-9, Job expresses his grief that the vagabonds of society mock him. Verse 8,

**Job 30:8-9** “8 “Wicked fools, even those without a name, They were scourged from the land. ”9 “And now I have become their mocking song; I have even become a taunting word to them.”

He is ashamed that he went from being honored as the wisest of all men to being treated as a fool by the genuinely foolish. But in verses 19-23, he turns his attention to God, verse 19,

**Job 30:19-21** “19 “He has cast me into the mire, And I have become like dust and ashes. ”20 “I cry out to You for help, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You carefully consider how to be against me. ”21 “You have become cruel to me; With the might of Your hand You hunted me down.”

Ultimately, Job laments that his God refuses to answer or come to his aid. This stands in direct contrast to Job’s ready willingness to help the helpless (29:14). Instead, Job believes that God has met him with cruelty, verse 26

**Job 30:26** “26 “When I hoped for good, then evil came; When I waited for light, then thick darkness came.”

Job longed for goodness to come from God, but instead, he received evil. He longed for light, for answers, but God met him with darkness and silence.

#### vi. Job Question’s God’s Rightness (31:1-31)

Ironically, Job has stooped down to his friend’s level. His musings have brought him to the conclusion provided by the divine retribution principle: If you are righteous, you deserve blessing from God. This becomes explicit in Job’s final speech, vs. 1,

**Job 31:1-4** “1 “I have cut a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin? ”2 “And what is the portion of God from above Or the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? ”3 “Is it not disaster to the unjust And misfortune to those who work iniquity? ”4 “Does He not see my ways And number all my steps?”

This is one of the most famous verses in the Old Testament. And on its face, what Job says here is not evil or wrong; it’s admirable. However, Job uses his purity to boast and argue that he deserves better from a just God. His argument in verses 3 and 4 is that if God is a just God who punishes iniquity, *He must either be blind or unjust to punish me in my purity*. Throughout the rest of the chapter, Job makes a series of oaths, beginning with an “If” statement and ending with a “Let” statement. The “if” defines a wrong job that might have been done, and the “let” defines the just punishment that Job deserves from God. Begin looking at verses 7-10,

**Job 31:7-10** “7 “If my step has turned from the way, Or my heart followed my eyes, Or if any spot has stuck to my hands, ”8 Let me sow and another eat, And let my crops be uprooted. ”9 “If my heart has been enticed by a woman, Or I have lain in wait at my neighbor’s doorway, ”10 May my wife grind for another, And let others kneel down over her.”

Job deserved to lose his crops *if* he rejected his responsibility to work his field and followed after the lust of his eyes. Job deserved for his wife to be unfaithful *if* he was an adulterer. Job continues this pattern with several more oaths, culminating in verse 33,



**Job 31:33–36** “**33** “If I have covered my transgressions like Adam, By hiding my iniquity in my bosom,” **34** Because I feared the great multitude And the contempt of families terrified me, And I kept silent and did not go out of doors— **35** “Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; Let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my accuser has written,” **36** Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it to myself like a crown.”

If Job ever hid his sinfulness from God, like Adam, or from his family and friends, then he should receive an indictment from God. But Job asserts that he has never done this, he has never covered his sin. If he has, he *demand*s an answer from God. He is demanding an answer because he believes he is right. He believes this so strongly that if God were ever able to accuse him, he would wear that indictment as a sign upon his head. Job has defended his righteousness so vehemently that he stooped to accusing God of cruelty and injustice.

#### E. Elihu’s Response to Job (32:1-37:24)

##### i. Elihu’s Anger (32:1-22)

The author of Job transitions to Elihu’s response in verse 1,

**Job 32:1** “**1** Then these three men **ceased answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes.**”

First, Job’s friends ceased answering, not because they were convinced that they were wrong by Job but because Job was *righteous in his own eyes*. This phrase is not an attack by Job’s friends but an editorial comment from the author. Job transitioned from arguing his innocence in light of his suffering to crossing the line into prideful self-righteousness. Being right in one’s own eyes implies that you have become the decider of good and evil, replacing God as judge.

The author then introduces Elihu with the most detailed character sketch in the entire book, vs 2,

**Job 32:2** “**2** But the anger of **Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, burned; against Job his anger burned because he was proving himself righteous before God.**”

The meaning of Elihu is “*He is my God*,” which indicates that he will defend vigorously against God. This is a Semitic name, unlike Job’s other friends. He is also from the family of Buz, arguably linking him with Abraham, the uncle of Buz (Gen 22:21). This likely identifies him as the link between Israel and the true story of Job. As the author states in verse 2, Elihu is angered by Job because Job has superseded the place of God as a judge and declared himself righteous. This differs from Job’s friends’ frustrations over Job’s rejection of their worldview. They tried to prove to Job that his suffering proved that he was unrighteous. Here, Elihu is incensed by Job becoming self-righteous before God. Elihu begins by rebuking Job’s friends, vs. 11,

**Job 32:11–12** “**11** “Behold, I waited for your words, I gave ear to your reasonings, While you searched out what to say.” **12** “I even carefully considered you; And **behold, there was no one who reproved Job, Not one of you who answered his words.**”

Elihu waited out of respect for his elders. He weighed their arguments. But he has found them lacking. They failed to accurately answer Job’s questions or rightly reprove Job’s faults. Instead, they condemned Job (vs. 3). This failure also caused Elihu to burn angrily against these friends

(vs 5). If the wisest and oldest failed, then the whole system of human wisdom failed. The experts were proven lacking, and this caused Elihu's frustration. But notice in verse 14 that he desires to bring something new to the table,

**Job 32:14** "14 "Now he has not arranged his words against me, Nor will I respond to him with your words."

He will not continue the discourse between Job and his friends. Job addressed their faulty arguments and accusations, and Elihu was resolved not to use their words.

## ii. Elihu's Appeal and Accusation of Job (33:1-35:16)

He begins his address to Job by pleading with Job to hear him, verse 1,

**Job 33:1-3** "1 "However now, Job, please hear my speech, And give ear to all my words. "2 "Behold now, I open my mouth; My tongue in my mouth speaks. "3 "My words are from the uprightness of my heart, And my lips speak knowledge sincerely."

Note the stark difference in Elihu's approach. Job's other friends immediately begin to accuse and correct Job. Elihu asks Job to listen. Even though Elihu's following words will be challenging and complex, he prefaces them with a humble request. He prefaces his speech by stating that his arguments come from a pure and sincere heart. He has no ulterior motive but to help Job and contend for the fear of the Lord. In verse 6, Elihu seeks to show solidarity with Job,

**Job 33:6** "6 "Behold, I belong to God like you; I too have been formed out of the clay."

He is not seeking to prove Job wrong or lord his wisdom and insight over Job. He states that he is like Job, God's creature made from dust.

After this empathetic and humble introduction, Elihu then progresses to recounting Job's words, vs. 8,

**Job 33:8-11** "8 "Surely you have spoken in my hearing, And I have heard the sound of your speech: "9 "I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent, and there is no guilt in me. "10 "Behold, He finds reasons for opposition against me; He counts me as His enemy. "11 "He puts my feet in the stocks; He keeps watch over all my paths."

An important distinction is that Elihu is not entirely accurate in his Job quotations. He claims that Job said that he was without sin or guilt. Job has never claimed that he was utterly sinless. He has argued his innocence relative to the onset of his suffering, and even acknowledged his sinfulness and longed for a God who would forgive and cleanse him (7:21; 14:3-4). On the other hand, Job did accuse God of thinking of him as an enemy (13:24) and treating him as a criminal to be punished (13:27). Job's suffering has driven him to be overly optimistic about himself and overly accusatory toward God. After addressing the main issue with Job's words, he then addresses Job's complaint that God hides himself and his ways, vs. 13,

**Job 33:13-18** "13 "Why do you contend against Him? For He does not give an answer for all His doings. "14 "Indeed God speaks once, Or twice, yet no one perceives it. "15 "In a dream, a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls on men, While they slumber in their beds, "16 "Then He opens the ears of men, And seals in their discipline, "17 "That He may turn man aside from his conduct, And keep man from pride; "18 "He holds back his soul from the pit, And his life from passing over to death by a weapon. "

Elihu asks why Job finds a need to contend with God. Why does Job demand his day in court? We do not need to contend with Him when He reveals Himself. And the purpose of this

revelation is our salvation – to keep us from pride, to hold us back from the pit of destruction. He does so through supernatural revelation and suffering. Look at verse 19,

**Job 33:19** “19 “Man is also reprov'd with pain on his bed, And with unceasing contention in his bones,”

In verse 13, Elihu asks, “Why do you contend against Him?” in verse 19, Elihu argues that our aching bones contend against us in suffering. Job longed to contend and argue his case before God, but this whole time, Job’s aching bones have been contending God’s case to Job, calling him to greater humility and obedience. Elihu’s view of God is not that of an angry Judge like Job’s friends. He views God as a Rescuer, as the Divine Surgeon who works with a scalpel to cut out the disease of pride.

In chapter 34, Elihu shifts to address Job’s accusation of God’s injustice in light of defending his righteousness vs. 5

**Job 34:5–6** “5 “For Job has said, ‘I am righteous, But God has removed my justice;’”6 Should I lie concerning my justice? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.”

Again, Elihu misconstrues Job’s defense of his righteousness and claims to be without sin. However, Job did say in 27:2 that God acted unjustly by not acquitting Job. Elihu defends God’s justice in verse 10,

**Job 34:10–12** “10 “Therefore, listen to me, you men with a heart of wisdom. Far be it from God to do injustice, And from the Almighty to do wrong.”11 “For He pays a man according to his work, And makes him find it according to his way.”12 “Truly, God will not act wickedly, And the Almighty will not pervert justice.

God’s justice is unassailable. He is too holy to do anything wrong, judge incorrectly, act wickedly, or fail to punish the guilty. Moreover, He is an impartial judge, verse 19

**Job 34:19–20** “19 Who shows no partiality to princes Nor recognizes the rich above the poor, For they all are the work of His hands?”20 “In a moment they die, and at midnight People are shaken and pass away, And the mighty are taken away without a hand.”

He is the all-powerful Creator and King. Every man and woman, both low and high, are the works of His hands, and He does not show unjust partiality to the mighty. He sovereignly condemns the wicked and prevents the spread of evil *as He wills* (vs. 24-28). But even if He does not act in this life, He is still just and holy, verse 29,

**Job 34:29** “29 So if He keeps quiet, who then can condemn? So if He hides His face, who then can perceive Him? He is above both nation and man altogether,”

Elihu begins to attack the divine retribution system here, and he does so more explicitly in chapter 35. Look at verse 2,

**Job 35:2** “2 “Do you think this is according to justice? Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s?’”

Satan argued that God’s blessing induced man’s righteousness – God’s righteousness and man’s righteousness are both a sham. Job’s friends claimed that Job’s sins led to God’s punishment – His suffering evidences Job’s unrighteousness. Job descended to the complaint that his consistent righteousness should have led to God’s unending blessing. Elihu sees the conclusion of Job’s logic and rightly summarizes that Job thinks he is more suitable than God. However, Job’s suffering has nothing to do with justice, verse 6,

**Job 35:6–7** “6 “If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him?” 7 “If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, Or what does He receive from your hand?”

Everyone has been thinking that God is reactionary. He sits in heaven waiting for a man to prompt His blessing or curse. But think back to Chapter 1: Who does the summoning? Who initiates? Who sets in motion? God does. God is high above the cause-and-effect nature of human interactions. In verse 9, Elihu then addresses Job’s frustration at his unanswered cries for justice (19:7),

**Job 35:9–12** “9 “Because of many oppressions they cry out; They cry for help because of the arm of many oppressors. ”10 “But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker, Who gives songs of praise in the night, ”11 Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth And makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’ ”12 “There they cry out, but He does not answer Because of the pride of evil men.”

Elihu concludes that Job’s cries have gone unanswered, not because God is unjust, but because Job is prideful. Elihu points out that Job and men generally do not cry out in worship of God as Creator, Sustainer, or Teacher; instead, they seek to sway God to end their suffering. These cries are empty expressions of pain, not humble prayers of faith. So then, here is Elihu’s council to Job, verse 14,

**Job 35:14** “14 “How much less when you say you do not perceive Him, The case is before Him, and you must wait for Him!”

Job lamented that God could not be found (23:8-9). He demanded God answer him (31:35). Elihu calls Job to patiently and submissively wait for God.

#### iv. Elihu’s Acquittal of God (36:1-37:24)

In the final chapters of Elihu’s speech, he argues about the power and rightness of God. Instead of seeing suffering as direct punishment for sin, Elihu asserts that God permits suffering to purify His righteous ones, verse 7,

**Job 36:7–10** “7 “He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous, But with kings on the throne He has seated them forever, and they are exalted. ”8 “And if they are bound in fetters, And are caught in the cords of affliction, ”9 Then He declares to them their work And their transgressions, that they have magnified themselves. ”10 “He opens their ear to instruction, And says that they return from wickedness.”

If God binds righteous kings with the bonds of suffering, how much more will he bind all men? He does so to discipline and instruct, to reveal pride and make plain the path for return – for repentance. Amid trial, there are two responses, vs. 11,

**Job 36:11–12** “11 “If they hear and serve Him, They will end their days in prosperity And their years in pleasures. ”12 “But if they do not hear, they shall pass away by a weapon, And they will breathe their last without knowledge.”

Job will either hear God’s message of his suffering and serve God or refuse to hear and die a fool. Often, pain makes practical atheists who reject blame God for their suffering and then deny Him. But for the righteous, the fire of trial leads to more profound dependence and more fervent faithfulness after musing on the purposes and prerogative of God in allowing the righteous to suffer. Elihu concludes his discourse by arguing that Job has no place to condemn

God when he cannot discern God's plan and purpose. He does so by meditating on the storm, vs. 27,

**Job 36:27–28** “27 “For He draws up the drops of water, They distill rain for His stream, ”28 Which the clouds pour down, They drip upon man abundantly.”

How does the thunderstorm begin? Through the invisible process of evaporation. Elihu plays off of Job’s marvel of God’s control over the water cycle in chapter 27. There, Job merely pondered the power of God. Here, Elihu builds upon Job by creating a metaphor for God’s mysterious ways. The beginning of a storm is invisible to man. But God is the one who causes water to vaporize. God is not to be underestimated. He has control over the smallest of molecules. So what makes Job and his friends know or even begin to grasp the origins and purposes of his trials? If God is so sovereign over the water cycle, as Job already pointed out, is He not worthy of our trust even when we do not understand what He is doing or when He seems far from us? Elihu continues, verse 29,

**Job 36:29–31** “29 “Can anyone discern the spreading of the clouds, The thundering of His pavilion? ”30 “Behold, He spreads His lightning about Him, And He covers the depths of the sea. ”31 “For by these He judges peoples; He gives food in abundance.”

No one can perceive when a storm begins, and no one can discern which cloud of the clouds floating in the sky will be the source of a future thunderstorm. Significant events exist in our lives, but we only understand their impact long after they occur. God has a much more sophisticated plan than we could ever devise or seek to understand fully. His wisdom and control are much greater than we, especially amid suffering, give Him credit for. Think also of thunder. We don’t see the cause of the sounds of thunder until several moments after the massive lightning. Yet God is so intimate with thunder that it is as if He dwells in its midst. How, then, can God be condemned if you don’t fully understand all that you see as the purpose of every life occurrence, let alone that which happens apart from the natural eye of man, i.e., the deals of the spiritual realm? Moreover, God uses thunderstorms to ensure that all streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans’ water levels stay precisely where He desires. Do we have this knowledge? Do we even have the ability to monitor and measure every rainfall in the middle of the ocean? When that thunderstorm comes to land where we can see it, do we know whether God is using it to execute His judgment with a forest fire or flood? Or is he using it to water the fields of men and beasts to provide for their sustenance? How, then, can we with certainty declare the reasons for and purposes of our suffering? Elihu continues his meditation on a storm in chapter 37. Verse 1,

**Job 37:1–5** “1 “At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place. ”2 “Listen closely to the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling that goes out from His mouth. ”3 “Under the whole heaven He lets it loose, And His lightning to the ends of the earth. ”4 “After it, a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, And He does not restrain the lightnings when His voice is heard. ”5 “God thunders with His voice marvelously, Doing great things which we do not know.”

Elihu recognizes that God’s might is unmeasurable. His purposes within the thunderstorm might be a mystery, but His glory, greatness, and power are with every thunderclap and every

lightning strike. How, then, could we think we could control Him? With these very storms, He affects our everyday lives, vs. 6,

**Job 37:6–8** “6 “For to the snow He says, ‘Fall on the earth,’ And to the downpour of rain and the downpour of rains, ‘Be strong.’ ”7 “He seals the hand of every man, That all men may know His work. ”8 “Then the beast goes into its lair And dwells in its den.”

He can affect a region's workdays and economic situation with just one storm. If the storm is too intense, people and beasts cannot be in the field, markets must close, and restaurants go empty. Elihu builds on this thought in verse 12,

**Job 37:12–13** “12 “It changes direction, turning around by His guidance, That it may do whatever He commands it On the face of the inhabited earth. ”13 “Whether for correction, or for His world, Or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen.”

If God can use one thunderstorm in one location to do everything He desires it to do, whether for judgment, correction, lovingkindness, or whatever else He desires and if He does this across the entire created order, why should Job think there is no meaning in his suffering? Why should they think that God is so simple that their actions can control God and that God's actions can be distilled down to a human worldview? Trust Him. His plans are great. His wisdom is immense. He is worthy of our worship, fear, and obedience, even when we are in pain and do not understand why He has allowed our pain to happen. This Elihu's conclusion, beginning in verse 21,

**Job 37:21–24** “19 “Make us know what we shall say to Him; We cannot arrange our case because of darkness. ”20 “Shall it be recounted to Him that I would speak? If a man says a word, will He indeed be swallowed up? ”21 “So now men do not see the light which is bright in the skies; But the wind has passed and cleared them. ”22 “Out of the north comes golden splendor; Around God is fearsome majesty. ”23 “The Almighty—we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power And He will not afflict justice and abundant righteousness. ”24 “Therefore men fear Him; He does not regard any who are wise of heart.”

Job might think he knows what he will say to God if he ever gets to defend his rightness. Yet this thought is equal to thinking he could stare at the sun's splendor or perceive the wind's direction before it blows. It is impossible. How could Job think to confront God when standing before His wondrous glory and fearsome majesty? The irony of this is that in the following five chapters, this very thing happens. Elihu is right, which is why God rebukes Job and his older friends but does not rebuke Elihu. The only proper course of action for God's creatures is to fear Him.