

**Job 32: 1-22 – “Elihu’s Wisdom & Discernment”, Sermon # 38 in the series –
“Remember to Magnify His Work”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
February 4th, 2024, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We have come to a turning point in this great discussion of Job’s trial. His three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, have ceased answering him. Because, it says in verse 1, they perceived that he was righteous in his own eyes. But amazingly, there was a younger man named Elihu who was there. And he had been listening carefully the whole time. And it was at this very time that he rose to speak to them all, and to Job.

Elihu, as we shall see in coming chapters, was a very spiritually wise and discerning young man. And in this message I will attempt to introduce him to you, and show you why he was wiser and more discerning than Job’s three friends. It was because he had right spirit within him. Let me explain this to you with 3 observations from the text.

1st of all – He was more wise and discerning because he could be angry and not sin. 2nd – He was more wise and discerning because the breath of the Almighty had given him understanding. And 3rd – He was more wise and discerning because he had New Covenant grace at work in his heart and mind compelling him to speak.

All of these good qualities of wisdom and discernment came to him because, even as an Old Testament believer, He knew the Lord. And so, as we prepare to take the Lord’s Supper, it is my purpose to help you to understand that it is from Jesus Christ our Lord, that all wisdom, grace, and discernment come to us, to help us to speak to the glory of God.

1st of all – He was more wise and discerning because he could be angry and not sin.

(verses 2-6)

In verse 2 it says – “Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Now because they were years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was aroused.” So we find here that Elihu was an angry man at this time. He was angry with both Job and his three friends. And the reason was – Because Job had justified himself and not God. And he was angry with the three friends because they had found no answer to as to why this was happening to Job, and yet they had condemned him.

Now, I want you to see that Elihu’s was a righteous anger. We do need to understand that not all anger is sinful. Not all wrath is unrighteous. If it was, our God Himself would be unrighteous. And this, He most certainly, is not! In the Bible, at many places, we are told that our great God is a Just Judge. For instance, in Psalm 7, verse 11, we are told that He is angry with the wicked every day. And yet we know, that in His holding that anger, and exhibiting that anger, He does not ever sin once. He does not ever sin at any time. God’s continual anger against sin is based upon the fact that He is holy, righteous, and just in His essential Being.

Our God is a God of Justice and Judgment just as much as He is a Loving and a Good God. His attributes in His infinitely Great, and Wise, and Holy Being, are held in perfect equipoise. There is no conflict between them. He can and He does demonstrate His love and His wrath together at the same time, if He purposes to do so. This He did at the cross of Calvary. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us. He had a hatred for sin that was so great, that He poured out His wrath upon His own beloved Son in our place.

He did this so that we could be forgiven of all of our sins, and be set free from sin’s bondage, and its dominating power. He did this so that we might be given the gift of eternal life. Elihu was angry here, because his spirit was right within him. He was now motivated to speak up, and to faithfully represent God in his addresses to Job and to his three friends. He wanted to do this because He knew that it was not right for Job to justify himself more than God, and it made him angry. By the way, when anyone

goes about to justify themselves more than God in relation to any trial that they are going through, it is simply a wrong thing to do. It ought never to be done. Because we ought always to believe that God is perfect in all His ways. He is perfect in what He does, in all that He ordains, and all that He permits. It ought therefore, to make us angry as well when we someone try to justify themselves more than God.

In this case, Elihu's anger built up over time as he listened to all the conversation that went on before. His wrath was aroused, it says in verse 3, because Job's three friends had not found the answer. So Elihu was concerned in His anger to bring conviction of sin to these men, all of them, by the power of the Holy Spirit. He wanted to see conviction come to everyone who had participated in the conversations thus far. He wanted to convince them all of God's righteously ordaining all these things that had happened to Job. He did not want to condemn Job or use the same arguments that his three friends had used. This is something that we ought always to be concerned about as well, in our attempts to help anyone who is going through a trial; to tell them of the Perfections of God. How can we do this?

Well, we should tell them the truth of Deuteronomy 32, verses 1-6. "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the raindrops on the tender herb, as showers on the grass. For I proclaim the name of the Lord: ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He. They have corrupted themselves; they are not His children, because of their blemish: a perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus deal with the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?"

So these words were spoken by Moses to the children of Israel, these words of his swan song to them. These would be the last words that Moses spoke to them. And they would be given to them so that they would have a right view of God and a right view of themselves. Their view of God ought to be that they always ought to ascribe greatness to God, and they ought always to think of themselves as having been foolish and unwise, in terms of how poor their own response to God's goodness and kindness to them, had been. Because God is the Rock.

He is the One who made them and He would establish them if they would be wise. But they had not been wise. And so in regard to many of them, God was still angry with them. We ought always to say to ourselves, our children, and other people, God is our Rock, and His work is perfect. And all of His ways are justice. He is a God of truth and without injustice, and righteous and upright is He. It is we who by nature are sinners. And it is only when God comes to us mercifully through the gospel, that we find that our native foolishness, blindness, and pursuit of sin, is taken away.

We justify God when we understand that we deserved to be under His wrath, and we would deserve to be punished in hell during that time when we continued in sin and did not want to repent. We justify God in the extreme measures that He had to take, in His sending His Son to fulfill all righteousness in our place. We justify God when we truly believe in our hearts that Jesus had to suffer and die as a substitute in our place, on the cross. For we know that this was the only way that God could then show us mercy and give us grace, and His anger and wrath removed from us.

We can then justify God showing us His love and blessing us so greatly in the full and free salvation that we receive when we trust in Christ. This comes, I am saying, when we justify God. We see and we own that He was the only One who could buy us back from sin and establish us in Christ's righteousness. He is the only One who can teach us all that we will need to learn about His ways, and bring us to a better understanding of ourselves and Him. And in this way we will learn to glorify Him in the various situations of our life, and the trials that we go through.

This is what Job needed to learn better. And Elihu, who was a younger man, had waited until this point to say what he will say to him. When he speaks it will take him 6 chapters to bring him to the conclusion of his message. There will be much for Job, his three friends to learn. And there will be much for us to learn as well. In Ephesians chapter 4, verses 25 and 26 Paul says – "Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your anger."

Oh, that even now each of us might think about this. Have we been angry with someone in particular? Is ours a righteous anger? If so, you will speak truth with your neighbor, and you will not let the sun go down on your anger. This is the difference between ourselves and God. He is perfectly just and holy. He is able to be perfectly righteous in His wrath. There will be times that we will not. But we can learn from our God the right way to be angry and yet not sin.

2nd – Elihu was more wise and discerning because the breath of the Almighty had given him understanding. (verses 6-14)

So we see that Elihu had a right spirit. He was angry and yet he did not sin. He was even humble in his anger. He said – I am young in years, and you are very old; therefore I was afraid, and dared not declare my opinion to you. I said, Age should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. He said in verse 8 – But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding. Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice.” Now, I think that we need to see here that not all Christian persons are alike in their ability to minister to one another. They are not all equal in their discernment of spiritual truth; even the truth of the Bible. Why is this? Well, it is true that we have gifts which differ according to the Spirit’s assignment of them to every Christian person.

But there are other reasons too. Perhaps certain Christians have not improved on the truth that they have been given. They have not studied and meditated upon the word in the way that they should have. And as a result they may have allowed some misconceptions of truth to develop in their minds, to the point where they, as Job’s three friends did. They did not see that their own strong observations and conclusions on what God is like, and what God was doing in Job’s case, were completely wrong. They had some truth. They were strong on God’s justice, but they were weak in relation to mercy and love. But they needed to better know what God was looking for from them in this situation. This was the case with Job’s three friends. Eventually they would learn.

And this is also why great men are not always wise. We all need to think more carefully and deeply about how God has revealed Himself in His word. And then, we also need to see that God does give certain Christian people understanding by His Spirit working together with their spirit, to allow them to become wise counselors to others. Elihu was one of these men. The thing that was distinctively different about Elihu was that he was filled with wisdom and understanding by the Spirit of God Himself. He says in verse 8 – “But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.

What Elihu is talking about here is the kind of wisdom that comes to a man who knows God, when he prays and cries out to God, and asks for wisdom. This does not come automatically to you when you are a Christian. It is something that must be sought and asked for in submission to God’s will as revealed in His word. James chapter 1, verse 2 – “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who give to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given.”

I believe that as Elihu watched this conversation between Job and his three friends take place, that he was perplexed by the way the whole thing went. He was angry that these men had not given Job the answer to his predicament. Elihu knew that he needed wisdom, and so he asked God for it. And it was given to him. Now I hope that you see from this that God does give to people wisdom when they ask Him. On the other hand, I also want you to see that God has very definite purposes that He wants to accomplish through the person that He gives this wisdom to.

The purpose is, that He Himself will be glorified through that person in a very definite and wonderful way. He will establish that man’s words and counsel, because the Holy Spirit is working with his spirit to bless their counsel with irrefutable power. This is how it was with Elihu. His words will be received, and those who heard it will be given the wisdom and understanding that they so much needed. Thus Elihu’s counsel will be a blessing to all of God’s people who would receive it. What I hope you will

see is that the giving of this kind of wisdom, and the power to speak in the way Elihu did, is given according to God's sovereign wise bestowment.

3rd – Elihu was more wise and discerning than Job's three friends because he had New Covenant grace at work in his heart and mind compelling him to speak.

Verses 18-22 say: "For I am full of words; the spirit within me compels me. Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; it is ready to burst like new wineskins. I will speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer. Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone; nor let me flatter any man." "For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away." Now, as we have come to the Lord's Table, I would like us think about the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ died and rose again in order that we would not only be saved, but that we would find grace and help in time of need.

The man who would minister grace through his words to Job, in this, his time of need, was this man Elihu. He would be able to do this, I believe, because he had New Covenant grace at work in his heart and mind compelling him to speak. You see, even though these men, Job and Elihu, lived in Old Testament times, they still had faith in God. And they believed in the promise of the coming Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ. Job said – I know that my Redeemer lives, in chapter 19, verse 25. Even in Old Testament times, men found New Covenant grace being given to them based upon the future redemptive work of Christ.

It was Christ's New Covenant grace that gave Elihu the ability to speak in the way that he did, to help Job; to see God's ways more clearly, and his own mistakes more clearly. Elihu's doing this was putting new wine into new wineskins. When Elihu says – Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent, he is speaking of his mind and his heart being filled with the Spirit and Christ's grace to such an extent, that he absolutely felt that he must speak the words to all those gathered which would represent the mind of God. He was being compelled to speak in this way, about these things, because of the great working of the Holy Spirit within him.

Our Lord's teaching was like this during the time of His earthly ministry. He says in Matthew 9: 17 – "Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined." "But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." What this means is that Christ came into the world to bring to men who would receive Him, the new wine of His grace. Grace to pardon, and grace to cleanse within. Grace to enlighten darkened minds so that they would understand the way of salvation.

Those who believe in the promises of God concerning Christ, they will receive the new wine of Christ's love. They will drink deeply of the wine of His grace. And they will find a righteousness better than their own! This is what Job needed to see at this time. God through Christ was going to give Job grace so that he would finally triumph over the schemes of the Devil against him. That is what Christ had to come into the world to do. He had to live the perfect life of obedience to all of God's commandments. And He then had to go the cross. His redemption would be applied to Job by way of anticipation. Christ's death and resurrection was that certain in the mind of God.

And so, Elihu faithfully represents the Lord Jesus to Job, and to his three friends, in the way that he speaks here. The new wine must be put into new wineskins. Grace must be poured into hearts made new by Christ's grace. In this way it will be preserved in every believer's heart and mind. The reason that Job's three friends had such a hard time helping Job was that they were focused on Job's supposed sin and his supposed unrighteousness. I am not saying that they did not know the Lord. But they needed a greater and better understanding of grace, and how to minister to those who are afflicted.

New wine cannot be poured into old wineskins. That is, the wine of the gospel will not be received by those who are ultimately self righteous or trusting in their own righteousness. Perhaps Job needed Elihu's words that he will speak here, more than all of his friends who misunderstood him. But he will hear Elihu's words. And he will receive them, because they were new wine being poured into the new wineskin of his heart.

