

## Job 33

### Deliverance from the Pit

*Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom – v. 24*

Elihu is thought by many to be the most perplexing character in the book of Job. He sees how inadequate the counsel of Job's friends has been so he steps forward when the debate between Job and his friends comes to a draw. *He hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches* he says in 32:14.

But does he then answer Job with the same arguments as Job's friends? It cannot be denied that much of what Elihu says can be cross-referenced to what Job's friends have said. But while this is true there are also many statements that Elihu makes that cannot be cross referenced to Job's three friends. And especially is this true in the chapter we've just read.

There is much throughout the book of Job that can remind the reader through Job's sufferings of the sufferings of Christ. Indeed I think understanding the sufferings of Christ is essential to a right understanding of Job's sufferings and hence your own sufferings as a Christian. In chp. 33, however, I see much in the character of Elihu that can remind the reader of Christ, especially Christ in his mediatorial office as a prophet.

Job 33:4 *The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life* Elihu says in v. 4. And while this is true of men in general it serves to remind us that it's no less true of Christ. *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God* (Heb. 10:5-7).

*Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead,* Elihu says in v. 6 *I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.* Isn't that true of Christ? He came to represent God. He came to speak for God. He, too was formed (at least his humanity) out of the clay and when he spoke it was not with the thunderous voice that was heard at Mt. Sinai, but it was a man's voice that was heard, a man who had no form nor comeliness so as to be regarded as terrifying.

*Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak,* Elihu says in v. 31 *If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee.* Here, perhaps, is where the greatest contrast is seen between Elihu and Job's friends. Elihu desires to justify Job. Job's friends desired to condemn him. And isn't it this same desire that Christ has manifested toward sinners. He desires not to condemn them but to justify them. What a marvel of grace. And these communion elements are designed to show us that Christ accomplished that desire by becoming a man and shedding his blood.

This morning I want to draw your attention to a unique statement made by Elihu found in vv. 23,24: *If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to*

*shew unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.*

Some English versions translate the word *messenger* by the word *angel*. They also translate the word *interpreter* by the word *mediator*. An angel is a messenger and in his mediatorial office as our prophet Christ is an interpreter. What I want to focus on this morning, though, is the declaration of this messenger or interpreter. Look at what this interpreter says: *Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom*. The word *ransom* is the same word sometimes translated *atonement*.

The gospel message in this declaration is too clear to miss. As sinners our need is for deliverance. We're headed for the pit and we're helpless and hopeless to do anything about it. But before the sentence can be executed there comes the declaration that there can be and there is deliverance and this deliverance is grounded in a ransom.

This morning, in preparation for our time around the Lord's table, I want to focus on this theme of:

## Deliverance From the Pit

Let's begin by looking at the pit itself:

### I. The Realm of Our Deliverance

*Deliver him from going down to the pit*. The term *pit* is used in a number of ways in Scripture. It can refer to something as simple as a hole or a ditch in which animals may fall or are trapped. It can also refer to the grave which can be a form of a pit.

It has obvious metaphorical meaning which is apparent by its use in our text here in Job 33. *Deliver him from going down to the pit*. The picture that comes readily to view is the one given to us in Numbers 16 where you have the contest between Moses and Korah and his sons and allies. Korah and his allies became jealous of Moses authority and took issue with Moses and sought to set themselves on an equal footing with Moses and thus led a rebellion against Moses.

This led to Moses demonstrating his authority and being vindicated by God. So we read in Num. 16:28: *And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. 29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. 30 But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. 31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: 32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. 33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed*

*upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.* It is in all likelihood from this literal event that hell itself came to be recognized as a place in the center of the earth. The point I'm simply making now is that the term *pit* can signify death and hell itself.

Add to this text Isa 14:15 which makes the connection to the pit and hell even plainer when we read: *Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.* But death and hell are not the only usages we find behind the phrase *the pit*. It can also refer to the time of your corruption in sin before you were saved. So we draw the application from Ps 40:2 *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, [and] established my goings.*

The term can also refer to the depths of despair. Ps 88:6 *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.* It is in this sense especially that I think the term would be applied to Job. He certainly viewed himself as having sunk to the lowest pit of darkness, cut off from God and wallowing in a condition of physical and spiritual corruption.

When you recognize, then, the scope of meaning and applications that can be drawn from this phrase *the pit* it certainly magnifies the greatness of our deliverance by the grace of God. When the gospel makes the announcement that the sinner is to be *delivered from going down to the pit* it can find its application in every usage that's assigned to the word. Your deliverance is from the pit of hell and your deliverance is from death and your deliverance is from the depths of discouragement and despair.

I was looking at Psalm 130 while preparing this message. That's a Psalm you could say that finds the Psalmist beginning in the pit when he says in v. 1 *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.* And we're not left wondering as to what those depths are. The Psalmist is feeling the weight of his sin and the burden of his guilt. And so he goes on to say in vv. 2,3 *Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* And then comes that wonderful statement in v. 4 *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

And before the Psalmist is through in that Psalm we find him taken up with what is called *plenteous redemption*. Ps 130:7 *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD [there is] mercy, and with him [is] plenteous redemption.* I love the direction or the progression of this Psalm. It begins from the depths and ends with the heights of plenteous redemption.

This is what our time of communion is designed to accomplish in our hearts. The remembrance of Christ is the remembrance of your deliverance. The bread and the cup proclaim the message *Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.* Deliver that believer from everlasting condemnation in the pit of hell; deliver that believer from death which in its essence is separation from God; deliver him from depths of despair in which he may find himself on account of his sins or his wanderings. May you hear the message of deliverance today as you partake of these elements. May you remember your ultimate deliverance and see it as an accomplished act and may you know present

deliverance from all that would pull you down and discourage you. This is the realm of our deliverance, then – we’re delivered from the pit. Would you consider next:

## II. The Grounds for This Deliverance

This above all else sets Elihu apart from Job’s friends. You cannot cross reference the statement of v. 24 to anything Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar say. *Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.*

What a rich and telling statement of gospel truth. It indicates to us that deliverance cannot simply take place out of a desire for God to be gracious. He must be true to himself. He must be true to the covenant he established originally with man. He cannot simply say *forget the terms of that covenant. I’ve changed my mind and even though I spelled it out very clearly that there would be a penalty for disobedience to the covenant I am simply going to dismiss my word to man that he would die if he disobeyed me.* Such a thing would make God as fickle and unreliable as sinful men. And our salvation would be grounded in a whim; a whim that could as easily be replaced with another whim that would say something like – *I’ve changed my mind again and have decided to condemn men after all.*

The message of our text declares that there is a solid reason for this deliverance to take place. It can take place because God has found a ransom. These communion elements tell us of that ransom. *Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.* It couldn’t be just any ransom. It would have to be a qualified ransom. No mere man could pay it for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. How could a mere man pay for the sins of someone else when he must spend eternity paying for his own sins?

I love the reminder of this text that this a *found* ransom. I think the drama of a found ransom is the very thing that’s set forth in the book of Revelation when the question is put forth in heaven by the strong angel in Rev. 5:2 *Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?* You remember John’s reaction to the strong angel’s question? Re 5:4 *And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.*

It’s as if a search was conducted that spanned all time and all men and no one could step forward to advance the cause of redemption, which I think is what the sealed scroll symbolizes. But what a change of emotion that takes place when you go on to read in Re 5:5 *And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.*

And when a Lamb, as it had been slain, steps forward to take the scroll and to loose its seals there follows the celebration of heavenly worship and what does this worship amount to but praise for a found ransom. Re 5:9,10 *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

Let these communion elements preach to you this morning the glorious truth that a ransom has been found. There is One who is qualified to be that ransom. It's the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He can pay that ransom because he's sinless. He can pay that ransom because he's not only man but God. He alone can satisfy the claims of violated justice.

Look again at the words of Elihu in v. 32 *If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee.* Those words really are remarkable. Job had sinned against God. The previous chapter in Job makes that plain. 32:1 *So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.* Job 32:2 *Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.*

Why would Elihu want to justify a man who had become righteous in his own eyes? Why would he want to justify a man that justified himself rather than God? We may well ask the question with regard to our own lives. Why would God want to justify those who rebel against him? Why would God want to justify those that both break his laws and fail to measure up to his laws?

The reason behind God's desire to justify pertains not to us as sinners but pertains to the gracious and glorious truth that a ransom has been found. A ransom, who himself would be *God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.* Our shorter catechism expresses it well when, in answer to Question #25 it says: *Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.* Intercession, I might add, that is grounded in that sacrifice that satisfied divine justice.

So we've seen the realm of our deliverance. We're delivered from the pit. And we've seen the grounds for our deliverance – *Deliver him from the pit: I have found a ransom.* It remains for us to see:

### III. The Message of Deliverance

Look at v. 23 and the beginning of v. 24 *If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: 24 Then he is gracious unto him...*

I pointed out earlier that the term *interpreter* is translated in some versions by the word *mediator*. I rather like the AV translation because it broadens the scope of the application of the verse. There is and ever will be but one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. But you would hope that there could be many interpreters that could show men the right thing for them to do or to show them God's uprightness.

You get the impression, however, in the context of this chapter that there were not very many good interpreters on the scene of Job's day. His friends, while understanding certain basic things about God, were certainly not good interpreters in the sense that they could

interpret God's dealings with Job. And unfortunately when you scan the annals of church history it reflects a sad tendency to drift away from a sound interpretation and application of the truth of the gospel. In Wylie's History of Protestantism, the author traces the rise of Romanism to the inability of men to enlarge their hearts to the truth of salvation by God's free grace. The gospel is simply too magnanimous for men to adequately deal with.

One of the reasons, I believe, for the institution of the Lord's table is to keep us in the realm of good interpretation and application of the gospel of Christ. In my days long ago as a Baptist I can remember a lot of things about that church that in retrospect seemed to lose focus on the truths of the gospel. There was an emphasis on the family, there was at times an emphasis on dispensational prophecy, and there was an emphasis on Christian duty.

But there was also at times a spirit of oppression and discouragement as well as unworthiness and inadequacy when it came to doing Christian duty. And I think the reason for that was a loss of focus or an unhealthy balance. By way of contrast, I've never forgotten the communion services of that church. They stand out as indelible memories from my college days. Christ was exalted and the gospel of Christ was preached and hearts were stirred like never before.

Communion calls us back to the kind of focus that we find all too easy to lose. The communion service itself becomes one of a thousand to help us never forget the person and work of Christ. So as you partake of these elements this morning let them remind you of the realm of your deliverance.

Isa 51:1 *Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock [whence] ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit [whence] ye are digged.* Remember where you've come from. The NT version of this verse would be the words of Paul in Eph. 2:10-12 *Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.*

But make sure you also hear them proclaim *Deliver him from going down to the pit.* And don't miss the reason or the basis for this deliverance: *Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.* May the Spirit of God Himself say these things to your soul as you remember the broken body and shed blood of Christ today.