***Job: A Study in Suffering…And Faith***

**Answers to Study Questions**

Lesson Eleven: Elihu’s Speeches and Conclusion

Text: Job 32:1 – 37:24

Lesson Objective: Be able to describe Elihu’s explanation for human suffering.

1. **Why had Elihu waited to enter the discussion of Job and his friends?**

It is interesting that we know about the three friends, but Elihu had apparently been present for the dialogue between Job and the friends and yet no indication of his presence during the entire conversation!

Elihu showed his respect for those older than himself by waiting until they were done speaking before he entered the discussion (32:4 [comment of the author], 6-7 [Elihu’s comment]).

**Job 32:4 (ESV)**

**4** Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he.

**Job 32:6–7 (ESV)**

**6** And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said: “I am young in years, and you are aged; therefore I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you. **7** I said, ‘Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom.’

Note the principle of respect for age as described by Job (29:7-10).

**Job 29:7–10 (ESV)**

**7** When I went out to the gate of the city, when I prepared my seat in the square, **8** the young men saw me and withdrew, and the aged rose and stood; **9** the princes refrained from talking and laid their hand on their mouth; **10** the voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth.

Application for us? 1 Peter 5:5?

**1 Peter 5:5 (ESV)**

**5** Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

1. **Why was Elihu angry with Job? With the friends?**

Elihu was angry with Job because he justified himself rather than God (32:2; 33:8-11; 34:17). Job didn’t understand how God’s behavior toward him could be described as justice; as a result, he continued to affirm his own innocence while suggesting that God was responsible for injustice on earth (see especially 9:21-24).

**Job 9:21–24 (ESV)**

**21** I am blameless; I regard not myself; I loathe my life. **22** It is all one; therefore I say, ‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.’ **23** When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent. **24** The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the faces of its judges— if it is not he, who then is it?

Elihu was angry with the friends because they condemned Job and yet they “had found no answer” (to Job’s questions, e.g., “Why do the wicked prosper?” – see especially 21:4-34) [13:7-10; 32:3, 9, 12, 15-16]. The friends, of course, thought that they had the answer to why Job was suffering and had been pressing their view in the discourse with Job.

1. **What figure did Elihu use to describe his eagerness to speak his piece?**

He compared himself to wine that is contained in wineskins and un-vented. As it ferments, it produces gas and will burst its container if the gas which builds up is not relieved (32:18-20).

**Job 32:18–20 (ESV)**

**18** For I am full of words; the spirit within me constrains me. **19** Behold, my belly is like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins ready to burst. **20** I must speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer.

Interestingly, Elihu spoke of new wineskins bursting, and yet new wineskins are the ones in which new wine is stored – they have the capacity to stretch and thus not break! Was this a way to express how much “gas” had built up within Elihu?

See Matthew 9:17. Folks don’t put new wine in old wineskins or else the wineskins break and are ruined.

**Matthew 9:17 (ESV)**

**17** Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

1. **Elihu quoted Job four times in chapters 33-34 (33:9-11, 13; 34:5-6, 9). What point was Elihu trying to answer in each case?**

**First quotation** (33:8-11): He was answering Job’s complaint that God is unjust. Basically his response was that God doesn’t owe man an answer for all His actions (33:12-13).

**Job 33:8–11 (ESV)**

**8** “Surely you have spoken in my ears, and I have heard the sound of your words. **9** You say, ‘I am pure, without transgression; I am clean, and there is no iniquity in me. **10** Behold, he finds occasions against me, he counts me as his enemy, **11** he puts my feet in the stocks and watches all my paths.’

**Second quotation** (33:13): He quoted Job’s complaint that God would not respond to his words, his arguments (see Job 23:8-9). Elihu’s answer is that God does indeed speak to man (vv. 14-28).

**Job 33:13 (ESV)**

**13** Why do you contend against him, saying, ‘He will answer none of man’s words’?

**Job 33:13 (NKJV)**

**13** Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words.

**Third quotation** (34:5-6): He was answering Job’s complaint that he was being treated unfairly. Elihu answered Job’s complaint by challenging Job’s affirmation of innocence.

**Job 34:5–6 (ESV)**

**5** For Job has said, ‘I am in the right, and God has taken away my right; **6** in spite of my right I am counted a liar; my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.’

**Fourth quotation** (34:9): Verse 9 doesn’t seem to be a direct quote, but merely a summary of what he (Elihu) perceived Job’s attitude to be. In response, Elihu affirmed that God is the Almighty--He has nothing to gain by wickedness. He can destroy the world and all life if He chooses to do so (vv. 10-15).

**Job 34:9–15 (ESV)**

**9** For he has said, ‘It profits a man nothing that he should take delight in God.’ **10** “Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding: far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong. **11** For according to the work of a man he will repay him, and according to his ways he will make it befall him. **12** Of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice. **13** Who gave him charge over the earth, and who laid on him the whole world? **14** If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, **15** all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.

Elihu challenged Job to present his argument before him (Elihu). Elihu was a man just like Job (9:32-35; 33:6-7).

**Job 9:32–35 (ESV)**

**32** For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. **33** There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both. **34** Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me. **35** Then I would speak without fear of him, for I am not so in myself.

**Job 33:6–7 (ESV)**

**6** Behold, I am toward God as you are; I too was pinched off from a piece of clay. **7** Behold, no fear of me need terrify you; my pressure will not be heavy upon you.

1. **With what sin did Elihu charge Job in the end of his second speech (34:36-37)? Was he right? Had Job sinned in that way?**

He claimed that Job had spoken like the wicked men (34:36). Job had “added rebellion to his sin,” according to Elihu, and acted disrespectfully toward God (34:31-32, 37) by “multiplying his words against Him.” Clapping the hands at someone was a sign of derision (Gibson, p. 148).

Job’s words had indeed been rash toward God (7:17-20; 9:21-24; 10:16-17; 13:25-27; 16:11-14; 19:6-12).

**Job 7:17–20 (ESV)**

**17** What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him, **18** visit him every morning and test him every moment? **19** How long will you not look away from me, nor leave me alone till I swallow my spit? **20** If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind? Why have you made me your mark? Why have I become a burden to you?

**Job 9:21–24 (ESV)**

**21** I am blameless; I regard not myself; I loathe my life. **22** It is all one; therefore I say, ‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.’ **23** When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent. **24** The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the faces of its judges— if it is not he, who then is it?

**Job 10:16–17 (ESV)**

**16** And were my head lifted up, you would hunt me like a lion and again work wonders against me. **17** You renew your witnesses against me and increase your vexation toward me; you bring fresh troops against me.

**Job 13:25–27 (ESV)**

**25** Will you frighten a driven leaf and pursue dry chaff? **26** For you write bitter things against me and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth. **27** You put my feet in the stocks and watch all my paths; you set a limit for the soles of my feet.

**Job 16:11–14 (ESV)**

**11** God gives me up to the ungodly and casts me into the hands of the wicked. **12** I was at ease, and he broke me apart; he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces; he set me up as his target; **13** his archers surround me. He slashes open my kidneys and does not spare; he pours out my gall on the ground. **14** He breaks me with breach upon breach; he runs upon me like a warrior.

**Job 19:6–12 (ESV)**

**6** know then that God has put me in the wrong and closed his net about me. **7** Behold, I cry out, ‘Violence!’ but I am not answered; I call for help, but there is no justice. **8** He has walled up my way, so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths. **9** He has stripped from me my glory and taken the crown from my head. **10** He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone, and my hope has he pulled up like a tree. **11** He has kindled his wrath against me and counts me as his adversary. **12** His troops come on together; they have cast up their siege ramp against me and encamp around my tent.

1. **What complaint of Job did Elihu quote in 35:3?**

**Job 35:2–3 (ESV)**

**2** “Do you think this to be just? Do you say, ‘It is my right before God,’ **3** that you ask, ‘What advantage have I? How am I better off than if I had sinned?’

**Job 35:2–3 (NKJV)**

**2** “Do you think this is right? Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s’? **3** For you say, ‘What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than *if* I had sinned?’

Elihu quoted Job as saying that there was no profit in being righteous. Of course, Job DID say something to this effect in 21:15…quoting the wicked! Job made it plain that he did not share that view in the very next verse (21:16)!

**Job 21:15–16 (ESV)**

**15** What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?’ **16** Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me.

Note Job’s words in 9:28-31 – **28** I become afraid of all my suffering, for I know you will not hold me innocent. **29** I shall be condemned; why then do I labor in vain? **30** If I wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands with lye, **31** yet you will plunge me into a pit, and my own clothes will abhor me.

1. **What did Elihu think was the reason that God did not relieve the suffering of some men despite their cries?**

Elihu argued that they cried out because of suffering and yet did not recognize the sovereignty or wisdom of their Maker (35:9-13). They thus failed to glorify God. Essentially, Elihu was saying that the “crying out” of some is just empty complaining and not the expression of true religious trust and the invoking of God’s aid.

**Job 35:9–13 (ESV)**

**9** “Because of the multitude of oppressions people cry out; they call for help because of the arm of the mighty. **10** But none says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs 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. **13** Surely God does not hear an empty cry, nor does the Almighty regard it.

1. **What seems to be Elihu’s point in 36:26-37:13?**

God is great - man is unable to measure up against God in knowledge, power or ability (36:26, 29; 37:5).

**Job 36:26 (ESV)**

**26** Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable.

**Job 36:29 (ESV)**

**29** Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion?

**Job 37:5 (ESV)**

**5** God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend.

1. **Discuss Elihu’s answer to Job’s suffering as compared to the doctrine of the friends. Is his explanation any different? Is Elihu, in your opinion, any closer to the truth?**

Note the following statement from Roy Zuck (as quoted by Wayne Jackson, p. 69):

“Whereas Elihu's three elders had recommended that Job repent of willful sin committed prior to his calamities, Elihu recommended (1) that Job repent of pride that developed because of his suffering, and (2) that Job exalt God’s work (36:24), consider His works (37:14), and fear Him (37:24). The three counselors had claimed that Job was suffering because he was sinning, but Elihu explained that he was sinning because he was suffering! His suffering led to an attitude of pride before God and a questioning of God’s ways. The triad's diagnosis pertained to sinful actions in Job’s past experience, whereas Elihu’s diagnosis dealt with sinful attitudes in Job’s present life.”

Friends’ view: Suffering is God’s punishment of sinners (although they hold out hope in repentance)