

# ELIHU'S APPEAL TO JOB TO LISTEN: A FERVENT PLEA TO HEAR THE TRUTH JOB 33:01–07

## *Introduction*

One of the most puzzling questions in all of life is this: Why is there so much suffering in the world? Why would God allow you, me or anyone else to go through so many crises during life, crises such as...

- tragic accidents
- abusive relationships
- crippling diseases
- broken relationships
- terminal illnesses
- betrayal by trusted family or friends
- loss of employment
- the untimely death of loved ones
- savage wars
- devastating financial losses

The list of possibilities is endless. And on any given day, most people around the world are probably facing some sort of trial, ranging from a minor mishap to a major catastrophe. Again, the question is, Why would God allow so much suffering? To be more specific, Why would God allow this to happen to me?

This was the question Job was asking throughout his painful experience. This dear believer could not understand why God would allow him to suffer so much tragedy: the loss of all his children, his entire estate and his means of livelihood — all on the same day. Then a brief time later, without warning, Job was afflicted with a shocking and terribly painful disease that seemed to be terminal. Making matters even more bewildering was the fact that Job had been living a righteous life before the LORD. He loved God with all of his heart and simply could not understand why God would tolerate or permit so many disasters to strike him.

While Job and his three friends were discussing his suffering, a young man named Elihu stood by in the crowd. As he listened to the discussion of Job's case, he became convinced that he understood the reason for Job's affliction. He believed he knew precisely why Job, and sometimes others, had to endure such agony and pain. In the present Scripture, Elihu gave two reasons God allows suffering. This is, *Elihu's First Speech: God Uses Suffering to Turn People Away from Sin and Stir Them to Repentance*, Job 32:1-33:33.

- I. Elihu claimed the right to speak: a charge of self-righteousness (vv. 32:1-22).
  - II. Elihu appealed for Job to listen: a fervent plea to hear the truth (vv. 33:1-7).
  - III. Elihu laid out three charges against Job: a need to correct error (vv. 33:8-13).
  - IV. Elihu declared that God does speak: a picture of God's using suffering to save people and arouse them to repentance (vv. 33:14-31).
  - V. Elihu's invited Job to reason: A charge to listen — repent and be justified (vv. 33:31-33)
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***Job 33:01–07 Elihu Appealed to Job to Listen:  
A Ferocious Plea to Hear the Truth.***

Elihu next appealed to Job directly and asked that he listen. He spoke gently, sensing how painful Job's suffering was. But he also spoke boldly in order to gain Job's full attention. And unlike the friends — who had been oppressive and heavy-handed — he promised to be more encouraging and uplifting. Perhaps because of his youth, Elihu felt obligated to defend what he was about to say. Once more, for whatever reasons, he spent a long time getting to his point.

1. Elihu felt compelled to say what was on his mind (vv. 1-2).

Elihu addressed Job in an urgent, almost breathless tone, essentially saying: "Hear me! Listen carefully to everything I say!" His words were ready to spill out. As he had already mentioned, he felt absolutely compelled to speak.

2. Elihu spoke the truth from a sincere heart (v. 3).

Elihu assured Job that he was speaking from an upright heart and that his words were sincere. Each of these statements implied that he would speak the truth and only the truth. They might also have implied that the three friends were not sincere and that their words had been shallow or useless. In any event, Elihu was totally confident that what he had to say was the truth about Job's suffering and of great value to Job.

3. Elihu was a man created by the Spirit of God just like Job (v. 4).

To reassure Job and to give more weight to his words, Elihu claimed again that his words came from the Spirit of God — the same Spirit who had made him and Job (see also v. 6). At the very least, he was expressing a bit of humility and harmony with Job: they had both been given life by the Almighty.

4. Elihu needed Job to consider and answer his points if he could (v. 5).

These next words were the most forceful of Elihu's introduction. "Answer me if you can" seems to suggest that Elihu thought his argument would be indisputable. If it was so, he wanted Job to acknowledge the fact or at least to give some reply. He was confident that in either case, his argument would be worthy of a response from Job. In fact, it would demand an answer: Prepare yourself and confront me; set your words in order and stand up. In one short verse, Elihu went from being humble and harmonious to confrontational and challenging.

5. Elihu and Job were equal before God despite his young age: God made both of clay (v. 6).

*How did Elihu have a right to speak when he was younger than Job?* As if Job might have been wondering, Elihu headed off this potential objection right from the start. He declared he had the right to speak because he and Job were equal before God. God had made them both, and both were made of clay; that is, both were mere men, mortal human beings.

6. Elihu was not going to be callous with Job or try to strike fear in him (v. 7).

As a last bit of introduction, Elihu promised that he would not be heavy-handed with Job. Nor would he try to strike the fear of God in Job unless he repented — as the three friends had done. These may have been reassuring words if Job believed him, and if Job was ready to hear from anyone else at all. By this point, this dear believer was surely drained physically and emotionally, so Elihu's assurance should have relieved some of the tension Job was feeling from the constant bombardment by his friends. But whatever relief Job felt, if any, would be short-lived, for Elihu would begin his argument immediately thereafter.

**Thought 1.** It is a serious claim to declare that we have heard from the LORD or that the Spirit of God has spoken to us. Elihu, as well as the three friends, had declared this; or, in the case of Bildad and Zophar, they had at least implied it. They all presumed to speak for the LORD. If anyone could lay claim to such inspiration, perhaps it was Elihu; but even he spoke rashly and probably presumed to know too much. Scripture clearly teaches that God's Word is sacred. Both God's written Word and the words He whispers in the hearts of believers through the Holy Spirit are holy; therefore, they are not to be trifled with nor thrown around carelessly. If we claim to speak a word from the *LORD*, or to offer another person counsel, we must be absolutely sure that we are basing what we say on God's Holy Word. We must never speak falsely in the Name of the LORD but, instead, recognize the awesome responsibility of giving counsel based on His Holy Word:

**2 Cor 4:2** *We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

**2 Pet 3:16** *He [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

**Rev 22:19** *And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

**Deut 4:2** *Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.*

**Deut 12:32** *See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.*

**Deut 18:20** *But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.*

**Prov 6:23** *For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life.*

**Prov 30:6** *Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar. ■*

# ELIHU'S DECLARATION ABOUT GOD'S NATURE: GOD IS JUST AND FAIR

## JOB 34: 10–30

### *Introduction*

Most of us as believers know family or friends who are not walking closely with the LORD. They are living in sin, engaging in things that are known to be wrong. What is our role, our responsibility, to these individuals? If we sincerely believe that these fellow believer are engaging in sin, should we confront them? According to God's Word, yes. It may not be easy, but it is what God's Word instructs us to do. We must correct others when correction is needed; however, we must always be sure that it is needed and we must do it in the right spirit. This is not to say we are always the right ones to approach them. Perhaps a closer family member, another friend or a minister might be a better choice in some instances. The point is that someone needs to address the issue with the individuals.

In this passage, Elihu is again the one doing the correcting. He thought — just as the three friends had — that Job was guilty of sin. With that in mind, Elihu zealously called on Job to repent in order to be reconciled to God.

For a third time, Elihu respectfully asked his audience to listen to him. Job had apparently been silent after Elihu's first speech, so Elihu continued. He again picked up on Job's former words and sought to refute Job's accusation that God was unjust. In an attempt to defend the LORD, Elihu focused on God's perfect justice, mercy and wisdom. Note how there was still a touch of pride in his voice. He assumed that once his arguments were heard, everyone would agree that he was right. This is, *Elihu's Second Speech: God Uses Suffering to Convict People of Sin and Turn Them Away from Their Rebellion*, Job 34:1-37:

- I. Elihu's charges against Job: a need for discernment and humility (vv. 34:1-9).
- II. Elihu's declaration about God's nature: God is just and fair (vv. 34:10-30).
- III. Elihu's appeal for Job to confess and repent of his sinful rebellion (vv. 34:31-37).

### ***Job 34: 10–30 Elihu's Declaration About God's Nature: God is Just and Fair***

Just as before, Elihu directed his remarks to all four men, this time calling them *men of understanding*. He then launched into his defence of God, declaring that the LORD executes perfect justice on earth and never perverts it according to Elihu. This can be seen in creation itself and even in death. Moreover, although God hears the cries of those who suffer and desires to save them, he always judges the wicked for their sins. In this part of his speech, Elihu was far from original; the friends had already expressed the very same views. Elihu offered four defences of God's justice and fairness.

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1. God does no evil or wrong — absolutely none (vv. 10-15).

The LORD executes perfect justice on earth, repaying exactly what is due to a person, nothing more and nothing less. In other words, people reap what they sow. They get exactly what is coming to them, what their conduct deserves. In fact, it is simply unthinkable that God could pervert justice and do wrong. Such would be completely contrary to God's character and thus an impossibility. God alone is LORD of the universe and no man can displace Him or thwart His execution of perfect justice. It is also God alone who sustains the human race by His love and care. If He were to withdraw His Spirit (breath), all life would perish. As Almighty God, the God of all creation, God would never do any evil or wrong, — absolutely none. God is perfectly just and fair in all that He does, even in allowing Job and others to suffer.

2. God shows no prejudice: A fact that must be heard and understood (vv. 16-20).

After again reminding his audience to pay attention, Elihu asked two thought-provoking questions: *Can anyone govern who hates or perverts justice?* And, *Who can condemn the just and mighty One?* The answers were implied in the questions themselves. Of course, God cannot hate or pervert justice because His very nature is perfect. He is perfect in justice and righteousness, which is proven by His treatment of mankind. God shows no partiality or favouritism...

- to kings or nobles
- to princes
- to the rich over the poor

All people were created by Him and are therefore equal before Him. Moreover, all are judged according to their conduct (see vv. 10-11). Death itself testifies to man's equality and God's impartiality, that is, all men die. None are spared no matter their status in life. Therefore, Job's suffering could not be blamed on God for God treats all people equally. God held no prejudice against Job whatsoever.

3. God exposes all evildoers and punishes them (vv. 21-27).

God sees all a person does and knows every place the wicked try to hide. For that reason, God has no need to investigate or scrutinize people in order to judge them; He already knows they are all guilty. God even topples rulers and entire governments, replacing them when their deeds are evil. God does this because such rulers turn away from Him and reject His ways. One specific way they do this is by oppressing the poor.

The implication is clear: God's exposure of all evil doers and His subsequent punishment is strong evidence that God is just and fair in His treatment of everyone. In light of this fact, Job was wrong in questioning whether God's treatment of him was fair and just. Job needed to repent of his complaining against God, his thinking that God was treating him harshly and unreasonably.

4. God hears the cry of the needy (vv. 28b-30).

When the needy cry out to God, He definitely hears them. The LORD may seem to be silent for a while but, even if He is, no one should ever be critical of God. Even if God is holding back His justice for awhile, He is still overseeing both individuals and nations. He will not allow the godless to rule indefinitely, but will, in His time, deliver the oppressed by His mighty power. He will keep the godless from continually laying snares for their generation.

**Thought 1.** God can do no wrong. He impartially judges every person according to his or her deeds. God punishes the wicked while hearing the cries of the oppressed and delivering them by His mercy. Therefore, all believers should take this truth to heart and be greatly encouraged. Even in our darkest days, our most severe suffering, God is looking after us. He may seem silent, a long way off or unconcerned, and we may not fully understand His allowing us to suffer. Nevertheless, God is always listening to our cries for help. And at exactly the right moment, He will act and work all things out for our good, and for the good of all His dear believers.

**Mat 7:7-8** *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”*

**John 15:7** *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

**Job 36:15** *But those who suffer he delivers in their suffering; he speaks to them in their affliction.*

**Psa 9:18** *But God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish.*

**Psa 12:5** *“Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise,” says the LORD. “I will protect them from those who malign them.”*

**Psa 35:10** *My whole being will exclaim, “Who is like you, LORD? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them.”*

**Psa 91:15** *He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.*

**Prov 22:23** *For the LORD will take up their case and will exact life for life.*

**Isa 41:17** *“The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the LORD will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.” ■*