Eli-who?

Text: Job 32–37
Theme: God must and will be glorified even in our suffering

Introduction — Another big chunk of Scripture in Job

- easy to take ch. 1 & 2 individually; even ch. 3
- but unless preach like Joseph Carlyle, puritan minister, never get through
- Carlyle has one of most thorough commentaries
- based on over 40 years of preaching through Job!
- John Calvin preached 159 sermons on Job
- not my plan or design
- so, last week, took ch. 4–31 as whole
- today, look a slightly smaller section: ch. 32–37

Job 32.2 introduces new character

- seen God & Satan and Job in ch. 1-2 and 3
- friends present end of ch. 3
- then introduced in ch. 4
- as we saw, ch. 4–25, it's back and forth with Job
- then, beginning ch. 26, Job brings final arguments
- **Job 32.1**
- **So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.**

Then, v. 2 brings in Elihu

- **Job 32.2**
- **Then Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram**
- **Job 32.6**
- **And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said:**

First off, we need to consider…

I. WHO IS ELIHU?

- learn a couple of things about him right away

1. Young but full of wisdom

- **"I am young in years,**
  and you are aged;
  therefore I was timid and afraid
  to declare my opinion to you.
- goes on, vv. 7–12
- **I said, 'Let days speak,**
  and many years teach wisdom.'
  But it is the spirit in man,
  the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand.
  It is not the old who are wise,
  nor the aged who understand what is right.
  Therefore I say, 'Listen to me;
  let me also declare my opinion.'
  "Behold, I waited for your words,

I listened for your wise sayings,
while you searched out what to say.
I gave you my attention,
and, behold, there was none among you who refuted Job
or who answered his words.

- as we listen to him in these chapters, he does offer wisdom
- sometimes seems harsh, but that's how reproof works

2. An angry young man

- but let's come back to his introduction
- not just his family lineage and location
- but we hear that he is angry, that it burned within him
- speaks like some prophets of old
- preparing way for Job to hear from God Himself
- his focus upon justice of God, in spite of what Job has said
- so Elihu's anger is a righteous anger, a godly indignation

But we must consider…

II. WHY IS HE SO ANGRY?

- don't let "anger" turn your minds in negative way against him
- as listen to him, realize we need to view him in positive manner
- but why this kind of anger?

1. At Job's three friends

- right away, in v. 1, we realize Job's friends have failed
- failed to give answer to Job
- therefore, they are indeed worthless comforters
- Elihu recognizes they have spoken wrongly of God
- God confirms this in 42.7
- **After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.**
- so, Elihu justified in his anger here

2. At Job himself

- but not simply mad at friends, but also Job

1) Job's self-vindication

- **He burned with anger at Job because he justified himself rather than God.**
- how can mortal man claim to be in the right in a way that suggests God is in the wrong?
- this is what is bothering Elihu so exceedingly deeply

2) Job's errors

- and this is where Job went astray
- after so much patience with friends, he made accusations about God
- Job didn't commit an act as much as questioning God's goodness and justice
- here is man demanding answers! Of Almighty God Himself
- Job honored God, but also spoke out of heart of hurt & pain
- Job 13.24

- **Why do you hide your face**
  and count me as your enemy?
- Job 23.3–4
- **Oh, that I knew where I might find him,**
  that I might come even to his seat!
  I would lay my case before him
  and fill my mouth with arguments.
- as we'll see, Job repents in ch. 42
- but before that, Elihu takes him to task for attitudes towards God

So, now, in broad, sweeping terms, we'll consider…

III. What Elihu Has To Say

- unless you want about 25 sermons on this, let me summarize what he says
- he emphasizes God's sovereignty and justice
- Elihu asserts, what Job on any other given day would have affirmed, that God's ways beyond understanding of mere mortals
- instead, out of hurt and torment of friends, Job has sought to vindicate his righteousness
- Elihu seems to know what Hebrews 12 tells us: God disciplines those He loves
- Peter, apostle, would also teach that some suffering is meant simply to purify our faith in God
- so, for few moments, let me give the Cliff Notes on Elihu's speeches

1. Speech #1: Elihu affirms…

- God does speak, He is not silent
- speaks through prophecies, in our conscience, and in suffering
- we know He also speaks through His Word
- this is part of His working out justice for the righteous who trust in Him
- so, Elihu, like a prophet, reminding us that God is <u>never</u> <u>always</u> silent
- his words carry authority, not necessarily based upon his age & years of gathered wisdom
- **Job 32.6-7**
- **"I am young in years,**
  and you are aged;
  therefore I was timid and afraid
  to declare my opinion to you.
  I said, 'Let days speak,
  and many years teach wisdom.'
- goes on to say prophecy not only possible, but necessary in 32.11–16
- at times prophecy is urgent, simply must come out, 32.17–22
- when philosophy and human wisdom fail, God's words must win the day
- in 33.1–7, Elihu seems to claim God's words breathed out to him
- if Job will listen, he will find comfort & solace there
- but Job's errors must be addressed, also a function of prophecy
- 33.15–18 tells us God speaks to our hearts & consciences
- 33.19–28, we hear God speaking through suffering
- but overall conclusion in this first speech is this: God does speak
- so don't say that He does not; in this Job was wrong
- when He speaks, He speaks in order to save

2. Speech #2 presented in ch. 34

- Elihu moves to defend God's justice, something which Job seems to disagree, if even for moment
- may be a bit of time before Job heeds this, but for now, he listens and stores up in heart
- deeply theological argument here
- God must be just because He is God
- deny God's justice, God ceases to be God
- Job 34.5–9 contain Job's serious accusation
- **For Job has said, 'I am in the right,**
  and God has taken away my right;
in spite of my right I am counted a liar;
  my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.'
What man is like Job,
  who drinks up scoffing like water,
who travels in company with evildoers
  and walks with wicked men?
For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing
  that he should take delight in God.'
- Elihu is arguing for God's good and fair governing of world in every aspect
- how can this be so?
- Job 34.12–15
- **Of a truth, God will not do wickedly,**
  and the Almighty will not pervert justice.
Who gave him charge over the earth,
  and who laid on him the whole world?
If he should set his heart to it
  and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,
all flesh would perish together,
  and man would return to dust.
- God cannot do wrong & Job seems to accuse God of this
- God's justice has no uncertainty
- it is never based upon ignorance for God knows all things
- there is no secrecy; God will be judged publicly, vv. 26–28
- God's timing is perfect; sometimes His judgment is delayed for His own reasons
- Elihu brings this speech to a close by calling Job to repent

3. Speech #3: God & justice cannot be reduced to formula, ch. 35

- "If I am good, will God bless me?"—asks property gospel
- answer: "Yes, He will; always!"
- Job has found that vacuous, of no help whatsoever
- Elihu now speaks directly to Job
- challenges the typical prosperity gospel premise: do right, get blessed…a lot!
- this is where Job's friends missed it entirely
- Elihu is very God-centered
- God is God and will be God
- our righteousness does not affect His acts of justice
- what profit in being pious, righteous? Wrong question. Vv. 5–8
- keep this up & God does not listen, vv. 9–16
- reveals self-centered approach to God
- so, once again, repent; cease saying outrageous things about God

• harsh; yes
• Proverbs 27.6
• **Faithful are the wounds of a friend;**

4. Speech #4: ch. 36, 37
• in his final speech, Elihu highlights God's majesty in creation
• starts to set us up to hear God speak when He does beginning in ch. 38
• also focuses upon need & importance of recognizing God's power & wisdom
• helps Job to use his mind, but also his heart & affections
• Job 36.1–4
• **And Elihu continued, and said:**
"Bear with me a little, and I will show you,
for I have yet something to say on God's behalf.
I will get my knowledge from afar
and ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
For truly my words are not false;
one who is perfect in knowledge is with you.
• feel the majestic cosmic power of God, vv. 5–7
• reflect that this type of power can be trusted to work God's justice
• bow in humble adoration before majesty of God
• two responses to God in this
• Job 36.11–15
• **If they listen and serve him,**
they complete their days in prosperity,
and their years in pleasantness.
But if they do not listen, they perish by the sword
and die without knowledge.
"The godless in heart cherish anger;
they do not cry for help when he binds them.
They die in youth,
and their life ends among the cult prostitutes.
He delivers the afflicted by their affliction
and opens their ear by adversity.
• what follows is Elihu's appeal to Job to respond well & listen
• he reveals how God acts powerful on the world He created
• He does this for both blessing and judgment, 36.26–37.13
• another appeal to Job comes in 37.14–29
• **Hear this, O Job;**
stop and consider the wondrous works of God
• Elihu wraps up by declaring that God is overwhelmingly glorious
• Job 37.21–24
• **"And now no one looks on the light**
when it is bright in the skies,
when the wind has passed and cleared them.
Out of the north comes golden splendor;
God is clothed with awesome majesty.
The Almighty—we cannot find him;
he is great in power;
justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate.

Therefore men fear him;
he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit."

Conclusion – Getting Ready to Hear From God

- in this, Elihu is a faithful prophet of God
- he speaks God's words to others so they might hear & heed them
- this is another way this book points us to Jesus
- Jesus, the Great Sufferer, spoke God's words only in order to do Father's will
- **John 4.34**
- **Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.**
- Elihu is a type of Christ, speaking God's words about God's glory & majesty
- God is just & the justifier of the sinner
- God is just; He must punish sin, but Job's sins have already been covered
- this is because God is also the justifier: His promised deliverance was reckoned as righteousness to Job
- He did this through Jesus, Only Begotten Son of God, promised One to come
- remember, Job is upright, blameless, fears God, and turns from evil
- yes, he sins in his self-vindication, but eve that sin is already dealt with
- this is true for every believer; and can be true for you, even today
- so, no matter if we suffer or if we find ourselves in comfort: look to Christ
- we must, and always look to Jesus' righteousness for us