

JOB: Man Of God
September 18, 2005
Message 7
Scripture reading Job 32:1-9

INTRO: In this series on Job we have looked at Job's trials. First were his trials by circumstances in which he lost his possessions and all his children. Then came his testings by man. Three self appointed comforters came to help him see that he is a great sinner and that all he needs to do to be restored is to do things their way. They have the answer. He is a sinner and if he repents, everything will be OK. Job, on the other hand, has defended his righteousness. And he has called into question God's justice in allowing him to suffer all these things when he has done nothing wrong.

And so we read 32:1, "So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes." In the message this morning we will be speaking about pride. If there is pride in Job, there is plenty in these three friends as well. Lou Sutera, quoting someone else, defined pride like this, "Pride is my attempt to bring others to my terms." Since Job would not come to the terms of these three friends, they gave up.

A hockey game ends after three rounds. A ball game ends after nine innings, unless of course there is a tie. An argument ends when one party has silenced the other. Job has silenced all three of his friends and the argument would have been over, had not a new person entered the scene.

In 32:2 we are now introduced to this new person, a man whom we have not met before. It appears he has been there all the while but he did not come with the other three. He came on his own. His name is Elihu, and verse 2 tells us that he is the son of Barachel, the Buzite, of the family of Ram. Now it appears that Buz is the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother. If this is so, then Buz is Abraham's nephew (See Gen. 22).

So we will now give our attention to the first of the four speeches of Elihu, the newcomer.

4. Elihu: 32-37

Elihu will give four speeches. The first in 32-33, the second in 34, the third in 35 and the fourth in 36-37. In the first speech Elihu will spell out to Job why he believes Job is suffering. In the next three speeches he will show God's righteous character and that God will never be unjust as Job has indicated. In this series we are only going to look at the first of these four speeches. You may wish to study the others as well.

In the first speech, in chapter 32, this newcomer, Elihu, informs Job and his three friends why he has not said anything up until now (read 32:1-9). So Elihu has said I kept silent because it was not appropriate for a younger man to speak before the older men had spoken. In 32:9 he says, "Great men are not always wise, and the aged do not always understand justice." And he is right about that, as he is about a good many other things.

So having pointed out in chapter 32 why he has not spoken until now, he will now turn to Job's problem and answer why Job is suffering. (Read 33:8-11.) Here is how Elihu explains what Job has said so far, "I am pure and yet God finds occasion against me. He counts me as an enemy; He puts my feet in the stocks, He watches all my paths."

Elihu then says, "Look, in this you are not righteous. You claim to be righteous. In this bit of thinking you are not righteous. You are wrong. God is not your enemy." Then in verse 13 Elihu says, "Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words to anyone. Are you so great that God has to come give account to you for what He is doing? Definitely not!" So Elihu reasons from this, that Job is not righteous in his thinking.

According to 32:14 God may speak in one way or another. To Job, He has spoken through trials. And Elihu continues that God may speak and man may not perceive so He speaks in yet another way. Then God may speak in a dream or a vision, and open men's ears and seal to them their instructions.

We find this on numerous occasions in the OT. Examples of this are Abimelech in Genesis 20, and

Laban in Genesis 31. You will recall that Abraham went to sojourn in Gerar. And he told the king of that place, Abimelech, that Sarah was his sister. She was pretty and he thought Abimelech might kill him to get her. Turn to Genesis 20 (1-3). On another occasion, Jacob had fled from Laban, his father-in-law, who had cheated him on a number of occasions. When Laban found out Jacob was gone he pursued him but God met him in a dream and warned him to leave Jacob alone (Genesis 31). And so Elihu reasons that on some occasions God speaks to men in dreams or visions and instructs them through these means.

Now you may say, "Why does God then not instruct me in dreams and visions?" The answer to that is found in Hebrews 1:1-2 (read). We now have the entire Scriptures and it is through these that God speaks to us. That does not mean that on occasion God may not give us a meaningful dream or vision, but His primary way of instructing us is through the completed, written Word, the Bible. However, in the days of Job, it is most likely that there was as yet no written Scripture at all. So Elihu says that on occasion God opens men's ears in dreams or visions.

And why does God do this? Well, we find the answer in verses 15-18. So let me first explain something about the punctuation of verses 15-18. The NKJV has verses 15 and 16 as one sentence, and 17-18 as another. The KJV has verses 15-17 in one sentence and verse 18 as a separate sentence. Darby's version agrees as does YLT. The NIV has all four verses as one sentence. I have no doubt that the KJV, the YLT and Darby are right. The meaning of these verses is drastically altered if one follows the NKJV here. Let me say this though, that the NKJV is by and large among the very finest of translations. If you are interested in the subject of versions let me recommend that you get the messages I did on this topic some years ago.

The change in how the sentences are structured creates this difference. Either God opens man's ears by God in order to turn him from his deed and hide pride from him, or God keeps back man's soul from hell in order to turn him from his deed and hide pride from him. I do not see how the latter can be possible, and it is the former that is right.

Why does God reveal His will to man? It is in order to turn man from his deed and to conceal pride from man. I see verse 17 as one of the key verses of Job. Here is Job. He is a godly man who fears God and shuns evil. And yet, it seems, he is heading into dangerous waters. Something is growing in his life that will destroy him. And God, in order to keep him from this deed, has allowed him to lose all his possessions, his children and his friends.

And what deed was it that Job was in danger of committing? It was something that would come through one of the most despicable sins there is in the eyes of God. Job was a righteous man. He was a good man. But something was growing in him that if God let it go, Job would end up doing wrong. Just as Abimelech would have done wrong by Sarah, had not God spoken to Him and revealed His will to him in a dream, so Job, without God's intervention, might well have ended up doing wrong. And what wrong was God graciously seeking to keep him from? P-R-I-D-E.

Here is the mother of all sins, pride. Pride will grow in any conditions. Pride will flourish in any soul. If a man is very spiritual, there pride will thrive in false humility. If one is a spiritual and godly person, then it will seek to grow in those areas. You see, Elihu said God opens men's ears to turn man from his deed and to conceal pride from him.

We said earlier that suffering may be for various reasons. It may be as chastisement for wrongdoing and so to turn man back to God. It may simply be for the glory of God. And in Job, it seems to be to keep man from something he would fall into if God did not allow him to suffer. This is what I have called earlier, "Preventive Maintenance."

Here I believe is revealed the key purpose of the book of Job. It is to reveal pride as the key sin of mankind. Why is Job the oldest book in the Bible? Because it deals with the oldest, deadliest, most despicable and universal sin, the sin of pride. And if a righteous man like Job stands in danger of the pit because of this sin, where do you and I stand? We all stand in desperate need to have this sin revealed

to us! Someone asked me after the last message, "How do the failures you have pointed out about Job later in the book line up with the statement by God early in the book that says this, 'Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?'"

Was he blameless and upright? Was there no one else like him on earth? Yes. God said so! But there was something growing out of all his goodness and uprightness, and it was that which would turn into spiritual pride and could ultimately cost him everything. And so God was doing preventive maintenance. He was performing surgery on something that if He did not remove it now, it would become harmful and possibly deadly.

Some time ago something we would call bad happened to a man of our community and he was upset at God because of it. He said to me, "Why does God do all this to me?" I said, "Have you not seen the hand of God in this? Do you not see that if God had not allowed this, you might in a short time have lost your life? Instead of being upset at God, you should thank Him?" That, in a nutshell, is the message of the book of Job as I interpret it.

How many of us know how many "bad" things have happened to us, and God allowed it because without it we would have completed the direction we were going and we would have suffered much worse or we even might not be here right now? How many times has God been charged as unjust or at fault for some bad thing, when in actual fact, if it were not for that thing, something much worse would have happened? Who are we to charge God? Do any of us know what would have been?

Now look at verse 18, "He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword." You see, it is through affliction that our life may often be spared. It is in affliction that we may be turned from going the wrong direction.

Now in verse 17 we a huge revelation, and that is that God seeks to conceal pride from man. How do you

conceal pride from man? Well, you humble him. We will yet see how huge God's task is in humbling man. How much energy does it take to make a man humble? We will see later in Job that it takes as much or more energy to humble man than it does to save him! Now let me remind you that humbling a man is not the same as crushing a man. You can crush a man and yet not humble him. When you crush a man, you have destroyed him. When you humble a man, you have remade him. He is renewed. He has become that which he ought to be. When you break him you have destroyed him so that he can never be what he ought to be.

In the OT the word for humble is *anaw* and for humility it is *anawa*. The root idea of this word is *affliction*. The reason humility is connected with the word affliction is that humility is the result of affliction. TWOT says, "*anaw* expresses the intended outcome of affliction: humility." Why is life filled with difficulties? Why was Job suffering? I do not know that there is any other way to humble man, than by afflicting him. Jamieson, Faucet and Brown comment on this verse like this, "Even the godly need to learn the lesson which trials teach, to *humble* themselves under the mighty hand of God." That is why way back in the Garden of Eden God said, "Cursed is the ground for your sake!" Through affliction, man would be brought to that which God desired.

Now I believe, and have the support of good solid Bible versions, that verse 18 in Job 33 is a new sentence. God speaks to men in order to turn man from his deed and to conceal pride from him. And what does that accomplish? Verse 18 tells us. By doing this "He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword." In other words, let Job continue in the direction he was heading, and his soul could have ended in the pit and he could have perished by the sword!

Job said, "I am innocent and there is no iniquity in me, yet he finds occasion against me, He counts me as His enemy..." But he could not been farther off the mark. It was not as an enemy, but as a friend whom He loves that God allowed him to experience affliction and humbling. And so Elihu is right in saying, "Look, in this bit of reasoning you are dead wrong."

Now you might say, "What makes you think Elihu is right?" Well, when Elihu is done Job is silent. That indicates Elihu had revealed something to Job that Job accepts as right. Furthermore, when all is said and done, God reproves the other three friends and tells them they are wrong, but He does not say one word to Elihu (42:7-9). And furthermore, when God speaks to Job, He deals with the same thing that Elihu does: pride. Someone has said pride is like bad breath: everybody except the person who has it knows he has it. Another has said, "Don't be like the rooster who thought the sun rose each morning to hear him crow. Every morning the rooster got the urge to crow and sure enough, shortly after, the sun rose. And so he got to think that the sun rose to hear him crow. Little did he realize that the urge to crow did not come from himself. God had made him so.

We have looked at the first of four speeches by Elihu. You may wish to study the other three in which Elihu shows the righteous character of God and that God would never withhold justice as Job has said. Elihu exalts the character of God and shows that He is far above man, any man, even Job.

Pride is the ugliest sin of all. It is the mother of all sins. Lou Sutera points out that you cannot spell pride without having the big "I" right in the middle of it. Nor can you spell sin without the big "I" right in the middle.

Some time ago when my wife and I spent some time with Lou Sutera in revival meetings he did a message on pride. I will mention more of that message in later sermons in Job. But he said they were called by a certain pastor to come have meetings. And before they came, the pastor said to his wife, "Honey, I am going off by myself to spend a day with God and to have Him show me any area that is not right in my life." So he went and when he was back his wife asked how the day went. He said, "Guess what honey? The Lord never showed me a single thing." The meetings began and the Lord began to speak to this proud pastor. He found one area of pride after another, and when God had discovered to him his pride, he too was revived! As we go through the rest of Job, do not say, "Wow this

would be good for so and so." If you do, you will miss where it might be good for you.

Maybe you say, "Thank goodness I do not have much trouble with pride." Chances are we are so proud God has not yet been able to reveal it to us. Oh, may each of us let God speak to our hearts in these messages. Lou Suter tells of another man who came to testify and he said, "I have good news and I have bad news. Let me give you the good news first: None of you has as much pride as I have. The bad news is, you all have plenty yourselves."

Now I want us to consider for a moment where pride came from (read Ez. 28:14-17; Is. 14:12-14). Sometimes we are asked, "Why did God create the devil?" The answer is, "He didn't." What God created was an anointed cherub. A cherub is an angel of high rank. And this cherub was called "Lucifer, son of the morning." He was perfect in beauty. He was THE angel until the day he thought so too, and then pride found its way into his heart and he wanted to be like God. Pride was the very first sin, and it still is the very first sin.

The self, which is the I, and the flesh and pride are inseparable buddies. Pride and the self and the flesh will learn to thrive anywhere. Listen to LEM, "The flesh has infinite forms. It may not always appear devilish, deceitful, and hateful; on the contrary, it may be cultured, educated, refined, and religious. In fact it may so play possum as to lead you to think that it is dead. It thrives in any soil, and under the shades of earthly sorrow as well as in the sunshine of prosperity. Whatever its behavior, however, it is still changeless flesh, 'unimprovable, incorrigible, incurable...There remains then, no remedy but that which God has provided-condemnation, crucifixion, death with Christ' (Mantle). The only trademark becoming to the flesh is the death mark of the cross." Later he says, "Self is the last idol to fall."

I wonder this morning, do you notice any pride in your life? Do you say with the pastor, "Guess what honey. God never showed me a thing wrong with me."

Might I challenge you this morning to say, "Lord, reveal my heart to me"?

CONCL: And so, in conclusion, what has Elihu said was the reason why Job was suffering? In my understanding he has said, "Job, you are not God's enemy. God is graciously speaking to you in order to keep you from that which you are headed towards. He is seeking to hide pride from you by humbling you in your afflictions in order to keep you from the pit and from death. He is your friend. He is doing this, not because you are a wicked sinner, but because at the present rate, you are headed for destruction."

It is appropriate that the first letter of Christ is a bent I. It is furthermore interesting that the I does not play centre stage. And it is also interesting that the t at the end of the name is the form of a cross. Someone has said the t is the "I" crossed out.

How about for one week you and I try to keep track of our own lives. Let us see when we talk how much revolves around what I know, what I do, what I have seen, what I want, what I have experienced, how do I look, what will others think of me etc... Then let us see how much of our talk or how many of our thoughts are critical, thinking or speaking negatively about others. Then let us see how much time we spend speaking positively of others; saying encouraging, edifying things about others. Then let us see how much of our thinking and speaking and visiting is about Christ, about the Scriptures, about that which centers in God.