

# Job 32

By Joel Wood

**Bible Text:** Job 32

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Job 32, I'll be reading from the Modern English Version, please hear and heed God's precious Word to us. "So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then the wrath of Elihu the son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused; his wrath was aroused against Job because he justified himself rather than God. His wrath was aroused also against his three friends because they had found no answer and yet had condemned Job. Now Elihu had waited until Job had spoken because they were older than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was aroused. Elihu the son of Barakel the Buzite answered: I am young, and you are very old; therefore I was afraid and dared not show you my opinion. I said, 'Age should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.' But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding. Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand judgment. Therefore I say, 'Listen to me; I will also declare my opinion.' Indeed, I waited for your words; I listened to your reasons, while you search out what you-- what to say. Yes, I paid attention to you; and surely none of you convince Job or answered to his words. Lest you say, 'We have found wisdom'; God will subdue him, not man. Now he has not directed his words against me, so I will not answer him with your speeches. "They are amazed; they answer no more; they cease speaking. And I have waited, (for they did not speak, but stood still and answered no more). I said, 'I also will answer my part; I too will show my opinion.' For I am full of words; the spirit within me compels me. See, my belly is like wine that has no vent; it is ready to burst like new wineskins. I will speak, that I may be refreshed; I will open my lips and answer. Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone, nor let me give flattering titles to man. For I do not know how to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." The grass withers and the flower fades but the Word of our God stands forever.

Well, now for something totally different, as one commentator said. Elihu has been so quiet this whole time it's like the narrator forgot he was there. We have not heard one peep out of Elihu until this moment and now he has plenty to say. Of course there are some who look at this text and say, "I don't think that was originally part of Job or- or maybe it was-- it was originally divided up and in different parts of the book." And I say this because the style of the of this- this speech, the vocabulary and the content of it. Of course, there are those who would say that, of course, there are those who would question. I think simply the style: Elihu is younger, he's angrier. His vocabulary: there are words here that aren't in the rest of Job or the rest of the Old Testament, some are Aramaic in origin. And I would say, you know, look at our congregation. We've all ended up at the same place, at the same time here, but we're from different parts of the country. Some of us are preparing to do something, some of us are getting ready to do something, some of us are fixing to do something, because of where we're from and where our background is. Remember Job was a very well known and influential man. He'd had a lot of dealings with a lot of people in a lot of places. So it not really weird that there's one guy who shows up

who's not in the same age category, perhaps not in the same friend group, but has a little different vocabulary than the rest of the men there. And then the content: well, Elihu is handling the same material but from a different perspective. Perhaps the right perspective, we'll see. Some view this section, Elihu's speech, as the comic relief, like in Shakespeare's tragedies, and they- they think, well somebody stuck this in here so that the reader could rest from the previous speeches, that it had a lot to process, a lot of accusation, a lot of fighting, a lot of back and forth, and now for something totally different. Here comes Elihu, the angry young man, to provide some type of clowning for us to chuckle at, as sometimes we do at angry young people. But this is forced, these perspectives. This is-- this does violence to the text. It's how Jones says, in his study commentary on Job, "to claim that these chapters were inserted for the sake of the reader would mean that they can be disconnected from the threat of the narrative without any loss to it or to Job. That is not so. It must not be done and it should not even be thought of." I'd agree with him, I would agree with him. God has given us Elihu's speech so that we might learn from it. 'course all of God's people can learn from it, but, young people, I would point out to you the opportunity to learn particularly from his speech, as he is a young man, irritated and frustrated by the older people around him. I know none of you can identify with that, I know this seems totally foreign. But on the off chance that you, as a young person, might be really upset at some point with someone that, I don't know, lives with you or birthed you and they're older than you and you're irritated with them, you might be able to learn a few things from Elihu and how he approaches his elders.

There are four points that I would emphasize here. One, that Elihu is riled up. He is riled up. "So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes." You know, you know who you're thinking of right now. You know that person that you might as well, as my mom used to say, save your breath to cool your coffee, because they're not going to listen to what you have to say. We've all probably been there. But as Elihu has set back very silently and watched this, he's- he's watched these men, he's watched Job, and he is very frustrated. One- one commentator said-- he said, Elihu likes to tout how patient he's been. But four times or five times in just a few verses, we hear about how angry he is. Maybe he's not as patient as he thinks he is. Silence does not equate patience. They're a lot of equations, or non-equations, like that in this chapter. That silence does not equate patience. Sometimes it's better to break with relational convention and speak up before you're driven by your anger, when you can speak more clearly to a situation. Elihu was mad at Job, he was mad- mad at his three friends. Job was righteous in his own eyes, his friends condemned him before they really understood the case, they had ultimately no answer for him-- for him. Elihu is riled up.

Secondly, Elihu looked up to them but spoke up. This is one thing I appreciate about our session here at Trinity is encouraging people: come talk to us. That's a phrase I hear regularly. There should not be, in God's house, this sense of well, they're the elders, or they're older, or they're advanced in years. What are the phrases here? Young people, I don't know if I'd started conversation with "I know you have a multitude of years." Might not put you on the best foot with some folk. But- but in God's house there should not be this mentality of: well, I can't speak to that, I'm just a church member. No, there's no such thing as JUST a church member. You are part of the family, you are part of the body. We NEED you. If we didn't NEED you, you wouldn't be here. He waited until Job and his friends were done because they were older than he was. When he saw that there was no answer in their mouths, his wrath was aroused. He was sitting there with his box of popcorn just eating, waiting for the resolution and it never came. It never happened. And so he was angered and spoke up. "I am young, and you are very old; therefore I was afraid and dared not show you my opinion. I said, 'Age should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.'" Yes, that- that is true, but remember age does not always equate wisdom. As one pastor has said, there are a lot of older Christians who don't have 40 or 50 years of Christian experience. They have one year 40 or 50 times. They haven't grown, they haven't learned, they haven't

matured. They just keep living that same year over and over again. And we look and we see the grey hairs, the silver hairs, the white hairs and we think there must be wisdom. And that is the ideal. That is what we hope for and want, but it is not necessarily the case that age equates wisdom. Neither does youth and anger equal rightness on the situation, on a topic.

Elihu looked up to them, he had the appropriate respect and decorum with his elders, but he still spoke up and said what he believed needed to be said in the moment. And how did he show them that respect? Well, Elihu listened up, he listened up. "Therefore I say, 'Listen to me; I will also declare my opinion.' Indeed, I WAITED for your words; I LISTENED to your reasons, while you searched out what to say." That's probably a great summary of all the chapters that we have been working our way through. "... while you searched out what to say." I try not to be one of those pastors that they speak of that preaches until he thinks of something to say. Perhaps you've met someone like that who starts talking and eventually they get to their point. And that's what Elihu experiences, they were -- he sat and listened. Okay, he's making this point now. Okay, Job's responding. Now this guy's chiming in. Okay, now what's- what- what's the banter here, what's the argument, what's the counter argument, what's going on? They searched out what to say, they made their arguments. "Yes," Elihu says, "I paid attention to you; and surely none of you convince Job or answered his words. Lest you say, 'We have found wisdom'; God will subdue him, not man.'" You've not done your friend any good. Isn't that the conclusion that we've been arriving at? Being a friend doesn't necessarily mean you have the answers for that person that you care about. Ultimately it's up to God to turn the heart, to grant wisdom, to grant acceptance of that wisdom. And so now Elihu feels, having listened to this whole thing, he said at no point has Job talked to me. He's mad at all of you so now I'm going to speak up. "... I will not answer him with your speeches," I won't follow your script, I'm not going to say the dumb things that you've said, I'm going to branch out on my own here.

And fourthly, Elihu showed up, he showed up. "They are amazed; they answer no more; they cease speaking. And I have waited..." And the text here points out that they're just reached a lull in the conversation. And it was long enough of a lull-- and remember this is, you know, when you take two years to make your way through a book of the Bible, you can start to think, well this must have taken two years. No remember, Job lost everything a week ago and this conversation started and now we're probably a few hours into it. There's been a lot of talking in a short amount of time. But now the- the pause was long enough Elihu figured out everybody's given up, everybody's done, and so now it's time for me. He said I-- "I said, 'I also will answer my part; I too will show my opinion.' For I am full of words..." Yes, young people, you are full of words. You are full of words, you're full of ideas, and your spirit within you compels you. Verse 19, "See, my belly is like wine that has no vent..." It doesn't mean he was bloated, it means that just all of this had built up in him and it just- the pressure needed to be released. I have to say this, I have to get this out. "I will speak, that I may be refreshed; I will open my lips and answer. Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone, nor let me give flattering titles to man. For I do not know how to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." Brothers and sisters, Elihu, in this moment where he begins to speak, he stands up and he, in a sense, fills the moment. Yes, he is young, yes he is impassioned, yes he may not say everything exactly the way that an older person and, quote unquote, wiser person would say it, but let us remember that, as we look forward to chapter 42, we see that God's wrath is kindled against Job's three friends but not against Elihu. Sometimes it is out of the mouth of babes (and by that I mean younger people) that wisdom flows forth. Sometimes our young people in the church will give a reason or an answer to things that leaves the rest of us saying, "okay, whatever, go back and help in the kitchen. How did they know that, how did THEY figure that out?" Why? Because wisdom comes from the Lord. That is the source of wisdom. Let us not be a people who rest on the human understanding of wisdom, that it comes with X amount of years or X amount of- of gray hairs. That it comes from X multitudes of years, but that it

comes from God. Yes he was young, yes he was impassioned, yes he's going to say some things that and a ways that he maybe shouldn't have, but wisdom does not come from Elihu, it comes from the Lord. And he will say some things that nobody else was either willing or smart enough to say. And we must understand that even in that moment, it's the wisdom of God that counts and it's the wisdom of God that should be listened to. I have spent my life in the church and far too many times I have seen people routed out or- or- or heart broken, broken down because they're too young and they haven't paid their dues so we're not going to listen to you. Let us not be a church family that acts in such a way, let us be a church family that recognizes the wisdom of God and hears the wisdom of God and follows the wisdom of God. Whether the lips that speak it be 20 years old or 200 years old, that we know the mouth, we know the voice of our Shepherd and as His sheep we follow Him.

Stand with me as we pray.