

Job 34

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Bible Text: Job 34

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Job chapter 34. So, we have witnessed the volley of conversation between Job and his friends and the responses and counter responses and counter counter responses that have gone on and now we have come to this portion where Elihu stands to speak and to, in a sense, bring some sanity and greater biblical thought to the situation, today. And as- as Elihu speaks, it's-- takes up a number of chapters and he is waxing along and eloquently and biblically about Job's situation. And so as we come to this, I'll read the text as we move through this- this time together in the Word. There are little breaks in Elihu's speech that mark change in audience and as we-- as we started chapter 32, "... Elihu the son of Barakel the Buzite answered..." and so he begins. And in chapter 33 says, "Therefore, Job, I pray, hear my speeches..." So in chapter 33 he's speaking to Job, and then chapter 34 it breaks "Furthermore Elihu answered and said..." and he's speaking now to Job's friends. And so that is the audience as Elihu speaks. And what he does is he reminds us of God's perfect justice which causes Him to correct His children, not condemn them. You've heard me say many times that the suffering and struggle of our lives reminds us-- should remind us-- of God's love for us. And that's if we're seeking to walk in faith and to trust the Lord. There are times when our feet wander and stray, when our hearts are turned away from truth and from right, what we know to be good. And those are times when God's corrective hand can come upon us, His chastising hand, even though our hearts are tempted to interpret it as condemnation and hatred, it is love and it is correcting so that we might enjoy the fellowship of the Lord and the blessing of the Lord. So God corrects His children, He does not condemn them. And Elihu reminds us of this and that this is rooted in God's perfect justice. He's not going to condemn His children whose sins are already covered by the blood of Jesus, but He will nudge us and spank us if need be.

So we have four pairings here. The first is reputation and reality. Reputation and reality. Chapter 34 says [vs 1-9], "Furthermore Elihu answered and said: 'Hear my words, O you wise men; and give ear unto me, you that have knowledge. For the ear tests words, as the mouth tastes food. Let us choose justice for ourselves; let us know among ourselves what is good. For Job has said, 'I am righteous, but God has taken away my judgment. Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.' What man is like you, Job, who drinks scorn like water, who goes in company with the workers of iniquity and walks with wicked men? For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should delight himself in God.'" Reputation and reality. Job's friends have a reputation for being wise, for being knowledgeable, and knowing how to apply that knowledge. It's often said that knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. You know the rest of that, right? Wisdom is knowing that you don't put tomatoes in fruit salad. It's not just knowledge, wisdom is applied knowledge and these men were known for being wise. But the reality is they're foolishly pressing Job to confess sin that isn't there. When all of this began, none of this happened because Job was a sinner

on a one to one ratio. What happened because God was allowing him to be tested and tried. Reputation and reality. Job has a reputation for being righteous when the reality is, what Elihu exposes here, is his beginning to flare up into sin and beginning to claim too much for his own out of this issue of righteousness. See, Job is still responsible for his actions but his friends are not making it easy. They're not making it easy.

Secondly, we see equity and evaporation. Equity and evaporation. The chapter goes on [vs 10-20] "Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: Far be it from God that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that He should commit iniquity. He will repay a man for his work, and cause every man to find what is according to his ways. Yes, surely God will not do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert judgment. Who has given Him charge over the earth? Or who has set in order the whole world? If He sets His heart on man, if He gathers unto Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh will perish together, and man will turn again to dust. If now you have understanding, hear this; listen to the voice of my words: Should he who hates justice govern? And will you condemn Him who is most just? Is it fitting to say to a king, 'You are wicked'? And to princes, 'You are ungodly'? Yet He is not partial to princes, nor does He regard the rich more than the poor. For they all are the work of His hands. In a moment they will die, and the people will be troubled at midnight and pass away, and the mighty will be taken away without a hand." God judges all equally. As Christians, we confess the image of God in humanity. We know that all are created by His hand, that all hold the image of God. We know that the most important things are God's Word, prayer, the spiritual disciplines, the life and activity of the church. We know these things to be of utmost priority and yet, many times as American Christians, it's hard to break away from the thought that money is really important. And we can easily become beholden to the same principles that live and thrive around us in the culture and society in which we live. And we begin to equate God's blessing with finances and being smart with finances and being successful with finances. So much of people of our time and yet not really, it's kind of in every generation. That's a hard concept to overcome. You can imagine, even more so in this day and age where Job lived, the thrones and the kingdoms and the power and the opulence. See, we live in-- in a-- generations become so cynical, we-- we think at least that we see through all of that and the royalty side of things.

But see, Elihu reminds us that God judges ALL equally. And nothing shows this better than the fact that we are all evaporating. We are but a breath. We are a mist, that is all. Who is going to question God? Who is going to tell Him He's not doing it right? Who's going to set God straight on what the real priorities and important things are? These are the questions Elihu is asking in this text. He's saying that the fact that God is God means He is ultimately concerned with ultimate justice. Things that we get so concerned with about human leadership, it is, of course, with God. "Will they care about justice, will they want to set things right? Will they really care for the poor and the oppressed? Will they-- will they do all these things?" Of course God will. That's why God is God. That's why He's the ultimate Ruler, the ultimate King. Who's going to question Him? He is not partial. He's "... not partial to princes nor does He regard the rich more than the poor..." This is quite a statement here: verse 20, "In a moment they will die, and the people will be troubled at midnight and pass away, and the mighty will be taken away without a hand." Probably the most secure person that we could think of in the United States would be whoever is in the office of President. No matter what their party, no matter what their affiliation, there are men and women trained to guard them and protect them at all costs, to take the bullet, if need be. That is-- in my mind I can't think of somebody-- unless they are part of the Illuminati or something, you know, but-- I- I can't think of somebody that we know of who's more securely protected and taken care of. And yet, at midnight tonight, if God were to so choose to take President Trump's life, no amount of Secret Service could stop that from happening. If he is, the text says, is troubled at midnight and passes away, he's taken away without a hand, there is nothing that we can do

to stop providence. All the security in the world can't keep our God from taking back HIS breath and HIS life from those who have borrowed it for a brief time on this planet. In God there is a perfect justice because from the White House to those living under a bridge in Baltimore, any who die now or tonight are known perfectly by the Heavenly Father. They might die in absolute obscurity, they might die in complete fame and opulence but when they stand before Him, they're all equal and all answer to the standard of Christ.

So we've seen reputation and reality, equity and evaporation. Thirdly, we see righteousness and repentance. [vs 21-33] "For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He sees all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. For He will not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God. He will break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their place. Therefore He knows their works, and He overturns them in the night so that they are destroyed. He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others, because they turned back from Him and would not consider any of His ways, so that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto Him; and He hears the cry of the afflicted. When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble? And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him, whether it is done against a nation or against a man only? That the hypocrite should not reign, lest the people be ensnared. Should anyone say to God, 'I have borne chastisement, I will offend no more; teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more'? Should it be according to your mind? He will repay it, whether you refuse or whether you choose, and not I; therefore speak what you know." Two things from this section. Righteousness first. God's judgments are righteous. He is always and only righteous and there is no where for sin or sinners to hide. No where. There is no safe place. And no matter what is going on geopolitically, God is the true King and Ruler. His judgments are righteous.

You can imagine what it was-- I've- I've met some who grew up in Nazi Germany and Hitler was so ubiquitous, I mean, just his image was everywhere, the banners were everywhere. They thought, "This is it, his power, his presence." But brothers and sisters, look at this text. It is God who sets them up and tears them down and puts someone else in their place. Since Hitler ruled Germany, people have been born and they have died of old age. Hitler did not last, Mussolini did not last, Stalin who was exponentially worse than those guys did not last, and they can begin to believe their own propaganda, that they will be there forever, and God says, "No, I will take you down like a knick knock off a shelf and I will put someone up back-- someone else back in your place." He is the King and Judge and He is absolutely righteous. And then we need to remember from the section that, ideally, the difficult providences dealt to us by this righteous King and Judge, that those would developed deeper repentance in us. Remember in the Gospel of Luke "Well, Jesus, what- what about these people who died while they were worshiping? Wha- what about these people who had that tower fall on them? I guess they were pretty simple, huh? They had to be pretty simple for those things to happen." And what is Jesus' response? "Oh, you think they were worse sinners than you are? Repent." Repent. And that's a word to us as individuals, as families, as a church, as the presbytery, as a synod, and as a state, as a nation. Edgar will be preaching next Lord's Day and he'll be preaching on social covenanting. I think this is an interesting statement here, verse 29, "... And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him, whether it is done against a nation or against a man only?" There is a corporate responsibility and reality that we have to seek the face of God, not just as a congregation, not just as a church, but as a nation, to seek after the Lord.

So reputation and reality, equity and evaporation, righteousness and repentance, and, lastly, accusation and agitation. Accusation and agitation. [vs 34-37] "Let men of understanding say to me, wise men who listen to me: 'Job has spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom.' My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end, because he answers like wicked men. For he adds rebellion unto

his sin; he claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God." Elihu didn't believe that Job was wicked but he believed that he was starting to act wickedly. And what we see here is the reality of what Job's friends were doing, how it was beginning to impact Job. Job's friends accusations caused him to come back swinging harder than he needed to. This led him to say more than he should, this was beginning to lead him toward sin. We say again, Job is still responsible for his actions. I am responsible for my actions. You are responsible for your actions. But brothers and sisters, let us not make one another be responsible for things that we wouldn't normally do if it weren't for the inappropriate pressure of friends. Let us create that environment of accountability AND grace, of truth AND mercy. Let us learn to walk together, as we said today, not punching one another in the face but walking, putting our arms around one another, facing our sin together, facing our trials together, facing our difficult providences together, and we stop saying things like, "who sinned, you or your parents?" and we start saying, "let's get you a dog, let's get you a cane, let's get you glasses. let's do what we can to help, and let's do what we can to encourage one another toward Christ." Elihu reminds us here that God is perfectly just and in that justice He will correct His children, not condemn us. He corrects us. He encourages us. He chastises us. And while it can be hard, while it is definitely not easy, it is easier than facing eternity without Him.

Stand with me as we pray.