

Job 33

By Joel Wood

Bible Text: Job 33

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Last time we touched on Job 33, this time we will be looking at it in its entirety and think of a couple things as we start today. One, I know there were a lot of comfort foods at lunch today and a couple of you have asked me since lunch, "How do you do it? How do you get up and--" I don't think they said "have coherent thoughts," I think they thought that might be a stretch but, you know, "how do you do it?" And I know that the afternoon service can be difficult so if I preach loudly I'm not mad, I'm just trying to wake somebody up and and it can be difficult. I'll tell you what I used to tell Sterling. Sterling, we had afternoon services for a good time that we were there, before that it was like at 6:00 in the evening. That can be even harder, you go home, you doze a little bit, you come back, it's hard so.. if you fall asleep I'll keep preaching. If I fall asleep just leave quietly and shut the lights off as you go and I'll drive home when I come to. The other thing I'm reminded of is a conversation I had recently with Dr. Peter Lee who teaches at RTS Washington and he said, "You know, I've not been brave enough to preach through Job yet, the Hebrew is so hard." And I said, "Well, that's why we're not like spelunking through Job, we're kind of taking--" and my friend Danny Hyde, he did Job in, I think, 6 or 8 weeks, something, maybe you're jealous of our United Reformed brethren out in Oceanside but-- I said, "I'm not doing the 30,000 foot view, we're doing the 10 to 15, we gain altitude, we lose altitude, sometimes we fly into the mountain but we pull up just in time." And so I hope that as we're now reaching this home stretch, we're within months of being done with Job, this is exciting, but we've come so far and I hope it continues to be an encouragement to you. And as we preached last time on Elihu being a gospel preacher, one of you pointed out some of you might have the Reformation Heritage Study Bible in your lap. Dr. [Joel] Beeke and his faculty at Puritan Reformed put that together. You quickly see, whether you have that study Bible or any number of study works on Job, that a lot of folks don't really know what to do with Elihu, that there are contrasting and what somebody brought to my attention after last time was "boy, what you're saying really doesn't jive with some of what they're saying in the Reformation Heritage Study Bible, they- they even say that he might be a-- he might be considered like a demonic messenger." Well, then I went back and read those notes, they're presenting the full spectrum of how some people have viewed Elihu over the years. But remember that- that we have, you know, very clear statements from Elihu and the most vindicating thing is that in the end the Lord rebukes the three friends but He does not rebuke Elihu. And so we are reminded again that Elihu is not coming as what the world would consider to be a wise man, he doesn't come full of gray hair and ancient of days. He comes as a prophet, he comes seeking to speak the truth of God to Job and as you know your preacher you know that not all preachers get every message exactly right all the time but he does uphold the Word of the Lord in this text.

So we come to Job 33 and I will read it as we make our way through it. And so the first section is verses 1 through 7 which say, "Therefore, Job, I pray, hear my speeches, and listen to all my words.

Behold, now I have opened my mouth; my tongue has spoken in my mouth. My words will be from the uprightness of my heart, and my lips will utter knowledge clearly. The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life. If you can answer me, set your words in order before me; stand up. Surely I am before God like you; I also am formed out of the clay. Indeed, no dread of me will make you afraid, nor will my hand be heavy upon you."

Firstly, we see Elihu's personal touch, Elihu's personal touch. This happens more often than it should in ministry when the message itself overtakes how the message is communicated. That's one of the great debates isn't- isn't it, in our media age and now social media, that the method of communication many times impacts the message of the communication, it is what you are saying and how you communicate really speaks louder than what you communicate. As one famous preacher says, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" and that might be trite but I have found that to be true in my own life and ministry. And here Elihu, in a sense, acts in a godly way and he, as a counselor and as a preacher, condescends to Job. We will see how our Lord condescends here in a moment but Elihu has this personal touch, primarily starting with speaking to Job by name. He uses Job's name and there is an intimacy there that is not had by Job's other counselors. And there is something about knowing someone's name. You maybe have had these moments where someone comes up and greets you by name and you look at them and you say, "Hey you, how are you doing?" You know, all the while "please let me remember their name, please let me remember their name." There is something about using someone's named. Probably the most striking moment in my mind is a mind that-- is a moment emblazoned in my mind was when LJ was born. I don't mean to embarrass you, son but-- we knew early on that we would be calling him LJ and lot of people say, "what does LJ stand for?" Well, it used to stand for "Little Joel" so we're- we're taking nominations for new names for him as he's outgrown Big Joel at this point. But so, early on in utero I would talk to him, sing to him, probably tell him some dumb dad jokes on occasion, but I was always talking to LJ. LJ, how are you, LJ? And I remember the night he was born, there was no consolation on the earth for this kid. He was throwing what his Papaw would call a wall eyed fit. He was screaming, they gave him to mama, that was not comforting him. Nothing was comforting him and I got right down in his face and I said, "LJ," and he stopped and he strained to look and see. Oh son, that you would listen now when I say your name. Right, buddy? That's right. But there is something about knowing someone's name and saying their name at an appropriate time. You can minister so much care and concern for someone by just saying their name at the right time. It lets them know that they are known, that they are loved, that they are cared for, that you have concern for them. And that is the touch that Elihu puts on HIS message to Job. "Job, I know you. I care for you. We're a lot alike, we're both formed out of the clay. We've both been shaped by the hand of God. There's nothing about me that can scare you, so I'm going to speak the truth to you."

Secondly is, as Elihu carries on we see how Job and God take a look at each other. And this is through Elihu's words but he's- he's summarizing what Job has said and God's response. [vs 8-11] "Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the sound of your words, saying, 'I am clean, without transgression; I am innocent, nor is there iniquity in me. Behold, He finds occasions against me, He counts me for His enemy; He puts my feet in the stocks, He watches all my paths.'" We see how Job summarizes himself and how Job has summarized what God is seeming to say to him, in Job's opinion. Brothers and sisters, it's good to stop and take account in our lives, whether that be individually, in our family, in our church, or in our nation, to stop and say, "is there something God is trying to tell us and teach us in this moment?" It's good to seek the face of the Lord. It's good to seek to understand what He might be telling us in circumstances that would drive us to His Word to find His clear message to us. Again, if you want to hear God speaking, read the Bible. If you want to hear God speaking out loud, read the Bible out loud, right? His voice is there, it is the very breathe of God, like that little one telling

us a secret as their breathe seems to bounce off our ear drum and gross us out. That- that is us in the pages of Scripture, it is the breath of God washing over us, it is Him speaking to us in the circumstances of our life. It should cause us to consider "where am I in relation to God and where is God in relation to me? Let me get in His Word and let me seek His face."

Thirdly, in verses 12 to 18 we see the transcendent God condescends to man. "Look, in this you are not just. I will answer you, that God is greater than man. Why do you strive against Him? For He does not give an accounting for any of His words. For God speaks once, yes twice, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, in slumber on their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He might turn aside man from his purpose, and conceal pride from man. He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword." Here we see how Elihu is acknowledging to Job God does condescend to man even though God is greater than man. God is not just one of us, but indeed He became one of us, He revealed Himself to us, first in dreams and in visions but then ultimately in Jesus Christ, ultimately in the God man, our Savior and Lord. And so God reveals Himself.

He reveals Himself in dreams, He reveals Himself through suffering and Elihu goes on to expound that even more in verses 19 to 28 where fourthly, we see massive pain and mediatorial promise. Elihu goes on [vs 19-20] "He is also chastened with pain on his bed, and with strong pain in many of his bones, so that his life abhors bread, and his soul dainty food." Now, we've seen this in our brother Michael. We've- we've perhaps known others that the pain becomes so great they just-- they can't even eat. They can't even enjoy the things that we would enjoy. Verse 21, "His flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yes, his soul draws near to the grave, and his life to the executioners. If there is a messenger for him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show to man what is right for him, then He is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.' His flesh will be fresher than a child's; he will return to the days of his youth; he will pray to God, and He will be favorable unto him, and he will see His face with joy, for He will render unto a man-- unto man His righteousness. Then he looks at men and says, 'I have sinned and perverted what was right, and it did not profit me.' He will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, and his life will see the light."

This section is this whole conflagration of Job and Jesus and Job's suffering and pain and the ransom of Christ paid for us. When we are physically and painfully oppressed we should not waste that, we should, in that moment, remember the sufferings that we deserve for our sins, the sufferings taken upon Christ for us, and we should in those moments not whine, not complain as intense as the pain might be, but we should remember that whatever the suffering is, it is but a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of what we deserve. And I'm not good at math but I think it might even be less than that because we have yet to even begin to experience what we deserve because of our rebellion against our holy God. I don't say that to be mean or to be a threat in any way. Neither do I mean that if someone is suffering physically that they necessarily, on that level, deserve it, but we live in a fallen world. A world so deeply impacted by our sinful rebellion that we can't avoid the consequences of that. As is being experienced right now. But here we even hear some of the promise to Job that he will be restored, his flesh will be fresher than a child's, he will return to the days of his youth, he will pray to God and He will be favorable unto him, and he will see His face with joy for He will render unto man His righteousness. Job could not even begin to imagine, let alone comprehend, what it would be like to hear the crying of children in his home again, to hear the pitter patter of little feet, to walk his beautiful, just obnoxiously stellar, daughters down the aisle again, to have his fortunes restored, to be in good health again, to have the boils gone. He could not even imagine. As Elihu said these things, Job had to be thinking, "Wow, that guy-- man, that guy is so lucky (in a providential way, of course) I wish that could

be me." What's interesting about this section is that all of God's blessing, all of God's restoration, all of His deliverance, all of His ransoming our souls from death, all of the blessing comes before the man looks at other men and says, "I have sinned and I have perverted what was right." Let us always remember that it is not our faith and repentance that saves but, because we are being saved, God grants us faith and repentance to walk with Him. And ultimately verse 28, "He will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, and his life will see the light." Hell canceled. Heaven guaranteed. Because of Christ.

Sixthly, we see that for the Christian AND for Christ, we learn obedience through suffering. Verse 29, "Behold, God works all these things, twice, three times with man," verse 30, "to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." Hebrews 5 reminds us [vs 7-9], "In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death. He was heard because of His godly fear. Though He was a Son, He learned obedience through the things that He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him." Now, we know our theology, we know all of the teaching of Scripture and so we are not saying that Christ was a mere mortal who reached some type of ubermensch status in some type of obedience that no one else has been able to attain to, but He, merely by pulling Himself up by His own sandal straps, was able to do this thing and so therefore He is our example. He IS our example, but He was also the perfect God-man, but He still had to walk through this life. Yes, He covenanted with the Father and, yes, He came, but there was this experiential living that had to take place, He had to be made perfect in obedience for our sakes. He couldn't-- we couldn't be saved on the potentiality of Christ's obedience, we had to be saved by the actuality of Christ's obedience. And so He suffered many things learning that obedience so that that obedient, as verse 26 says, "For He will render unto man His righteousness.." That righteousness is given over to US and we learn obedience but, unlike our Savior, we continue to fail once, twice, three times a failure, that's us again and again and yet the righteousness of Christ and His perfect obedience is given over to us in our account.

Now to close, verses 31 to 33. "Pay attention, Job, listen to me; hold your peace, and I will speak. If you have anything to say, answer me; speak, for I desire to justify you. If not, listen to me; hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom." Seventhly, we see Elihu's personal touch, again. Yes, Elihu was a gospel preacher but he was also a gospel counselor. He was willing to hear Job out but he was also willing to speak truth to Job and he was willing to enter into that dialogue. He was willing to remind him of the gospel. Our minds should be cast forward to Revelation 3 where Christ Himself says [vs 20], "Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me." Brothers and sisters, that is written to the church and when we are cast down and when we are in massive pain and struggling to remember the mediatorial promise of Christ, when we are suffering and when the days are dark God uses our name, Christ calls our name and reminds us "I am standing here, I am at the door, I am knocking. Let me in." Believers are not immune to saying, "I will handle this myself." Elihu reminds Job that he needs to speak, there are things he needs to say, but until he is ready Elihu will keep giving him the gospel, will keep giving him Christ, keep giving him the good news. And again, Elihu calls him by name, he call him by name. After all of the rigmarole of all the other counselors, it's refreshing to come to this guy who's not old but he is a prophet. Who isn't wise as the world would have seen wisdom in age, in years but brings the wisdom of God to bare upon the life of Job. May you be encouraged and in Christ's personal touch with us, in pausing to take account of your life, being reminded that the transcendent God condescends to us, that in the midst of massive pain there is mediatorial promise by Jesus that we, like Christ, are learning obedience through suffering and that Christ again, at the end of the day, He brings His personal touch

to bare, calling us by name and reminding us that He's here for fellowship and encouragement. May we be so blessed.

Stand with me as we pray.