

18a JOB

This is the 14th of September, 2006. We continue tonight our study in the book of Job, resuming at chapter 33. Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer.

It gives us an opportunity to recognize the importance of the ministry of God's Holy Spirit and the importance of approaching God through His Word with a heart that has been sprinkled from an evil conscience and a life that has been washed with pure water. Shall we pray? Father, we are thankful for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship, to receive the blessings that come from the spiritual gifts that You have distributed amongst us, and to fellowship through the study of Your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding, not only of the content of the passages that we address, but of the import for our personal application in the days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We have turned a corner in the book of Job.

You well remember the structure of the first portion of the book. We have the introduction in chapters 1 and 2, the narrative frame that will reappear at the end of the book, followed by that great set of dialogues, interchanges between Job and Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Three cycles which took us all the way up through chapter 31.

Job capped off that section with a long monologue where he once again answered and contested the points made by those three men and stated his case, made his complaint. Now, beginning in chapter 32 and going through chapter 37, we have entered the second half of the book where in the first half we had the dialogue with God and Satan, and then we had dialogues between Job and his three friends. Now there is the Elihu monologue, there is the divine monologue, and then with a few comments, Job speaks once or twice there very briefly, and then we have the narrative summary and conclusion at the end.

We are now in chapter 33. We covered chapter 32 last time where Elihu introduced himself, some great gray heads of the faith who have studied this in years gone by feel like Elihu was very pompous and sort of self-important in his introduction, but I think this fails to credit the nature of ancient Near Eastern culture. Elihu does not have the traditional leg to stand on, if you will, of age and rank that Eliphaz has, or of the accomplishment and standing as Job's friend that Bildad and Zophar share with Eliphaz.

He is younger. He therefore explains his intrusion, if you will, into the situation. We are told, and this is sort of a narrative interlude as well, we have narrative at the beginning, we have this little explanation in the middle, and then we have narrative at the end, and this really helps us see the two halves of the book of Job.

And right here at the beginning of chapter 32, we saw the narrator reappear for the first time in 30 chapters to tell us things about Elihu that we are not told about anyone else in the book. We are

not told about Job's forebears, what family and so on that he is from. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are identified by their city, and they are evidently great men in that city.

It would be like saying Mayor Daley of Chicago or Rudy Giuliani of New York or something like that, where their fame and their notoriety is associated with the place of their occupancy and their operation, their function. But Elihu is unique in the book because he is introduced through his lineage. He is the son of Barak El, the blessing of God.

His own name, Elihu, he is God, or my God is he. Elie, same thing Jesus cried out on the cross, my God, and who is he. So, he is of the family of Ram, and we don't know anything about this particular family in this region.

There is a later family, as I mentioned, in the tribe of Judah, named Ram, which is in the line of David and ultimately in the line of Christ. This is all in the context of being a Buzzite, and we know about Uz and Buzz, who are nephews of Rebekah, Isaac's wife. So, we see the connection into the line of Abraham.

So, there is the most complete documentation for Elihu of anyone in the book. We are also told why he speaks. We are not given a lot of insight into the thinking of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, other than what comes out in their own words.

The narrator doesn't come in and say, Now, Eliphaz, we have a little bit of information that they had heard about Job and came and sat for seven days, but we are not given any individual information about them. But with Elihu, it tells us that his nose caught fire. Remember that? His nose was inflamed, is what it says in Hebrew.

His nose was afire, that is the literal translation, because he, Job, declared himself righteous from God, and we are still wanting to understand what does this mean. Does it mean apart from God, before God, instead of God? Most of the translations say instead of God, but that is a bit of an interpretive reach, because the word in Hebrew means of or from. Maim is a short form, there is a preposition min in Hebrew, and it means of or from.

So, it could be that he justified himself before God. He said, I stand here before God justified. I have done no wrong.

I am guilty of nothing. Which is true. And there is nothing wrong with that, but why would Elihu's nose catch fire over that? Well, we have got to listen to what he says.

And so, this comment in chapter 32 really piques our interest. I think God the Holy Spirit and the narrator of this book realize that after 30 chapters of dialogue, our ability to concentrate might be flagging a bit. And so, we have this interruption.

We have a whole new thing come in. So, there is this introduction, very extensive, very different

than anyone else in the book, and it tells us three times that his wrath was aroused, that he became inflamed or incensed, with this metaphor of his nose being on fire, also against the three friends. So, Elihu feels like this whole discussion needs to be put on a different footing.

He is not happy with what Job said, evidently, and he is not happy with what the three friends said. And so, even though he is not a recognized speaker, he is not on the program, so to speak, he stands up and speaks. This explains chapter 32.

This explains the long introduction, because he has to establish a footing that doesn't exist. He says, I'm young, you're very old, therefore I was respectful, is a better translation here than afraid, I was respectful. You know, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

This is not abject fear, this is respect, honor. I was full of honor, respect, awe, reserve in your presence. I said age should speak, multitude of years should teach wisdom, but there is a spirit in man.

Now, we went through this last time, I'm not going to review the whole chapter, but you'll remember at the end, what did we conclude? After looking at each of these comments, we saw how apropos they are as a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because there were three witnesses in Israel that had spoken about sin. And they spoke correctly, but it did not address the fundamental problem in Israel, which was not sin.

The fundamental problem in Israel was not understanding the nature of relationship with God. We have this documented for us in Romans, don't we? Paul the apostle says that he wishes that he could himself be accursed in the sense of forfeiting his blessings and his inheritance on behalf of his brothers in Israel. And in chapter 10 he says, I bear them witness, Israel.

They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Do you think that fits what we've seen of the three friends? They obviously have a zeal for God. Their speeches are full of God and His justice and how He treats the righteous and how He treats the wicked and how quickly He will respond if someone repents and how quickly He will judge if someone does not.

They're very focused on God. They have a zeal for God. But Elihu says, your zeal is not according to knowledge.

You haven't really figured out what's going on here in Job's case. So, this is the basis for his speaking. And in the same way, we have in Hebrews chapter 1, God spoke in many parts and in many ways in times past, but in these latter days He has spoken to us by a Son.

And in this latter part of the book of Job, we have a new individual. He's the only one in the book that you can identify as a son because his father's name is given. Job's father's name is not given.

Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar. Elihu is the only son that's given by name in the book. None of Job's 14

sons are named.

And so, he says, I have waited because they did not speak because they stood still and answered no more. There came a point where all of the speaking of the law and the prophets and the writings in Israel did not bring about what was needed in Israel. What was spoken wasn't inaccurate.

It was inapplicable. It didn't go to the root of the problem. And in the same way, Elihu says, I am burning up to speak something here because we haven't gotten to the issue.

Job has a valid question. What is the nature of a relationship with God? It's more than just, I'll be righteous and He will bless me. But I don't understand why God has not spoken.

And you remember there was an interlude after the first dialogue cycles were complete, after the first half of the book was complete, where nobody said anything. Elihu waited. Job didn't say anything.

Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar didn't say anything. There was this period of silence. And so then he spoke up and he said, well, now that you all have quit talking, I've got something to say.

In the same way, you have this period of silence before Jesus comes along for several hundred years in Israel. There is no prophetic word. It's all been said and there is this delay.

And then He speaks. And He says, I'm not going to show partiality. I don't know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away.

And of course Jesus, when He came, that was a big part of His public relations issue with the Pharisees and the Sadducees is He didn't flatter them and they were accustomed to being flattered and they took it ill. Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, brood of vipers, whitewashed tombstones, isn't flattering. Well, now we pick up in chapter 33 tonight.

Elihu says, Please, Job, hear my speech and listen to all my words. I open my mouth. My tongue speaks in my mouth.

My words come from my upright heart. My lips utter pure knowledge. The Spirit of God has made me and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Once again, we talked about this last time. Who, more so than anybody else in the Scripture, could say these words and have them be true? Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit? Who was filled with the Spirit from the very outset? Whose lips uttered pure knowledge all through His life? If you can answer me, set your words in order to take your stand. I am your spokesman before God.

I also have been formed out of clay. And here, Elihu is harking back to what Job said in chapter

19. He said, I wish there was a mediator.

I wish there was somebody who could bridge this gap between myself and God. And Job said, I am afraid because if the Almighty speaks at all, He seems to be speaking to me in dreams and visions and terrors of the night. And it makes me afraid.

And I am almost afraid to hear from God because I get scared in the night. Elihu says, Look, I'll be your mediator. And this is really extraordinary when you think about the actual situation.

He's the youngest of the speakers. He has not dared to speak before this. I say not dared.

He has been respectful and has honored all of his elders and let them speak their peace. But now when he does speak, he makes these claims that are very bold given the audience. The Bible says in a couple of different places, talks about the wisdom of Job and the righteousness of Job.

Remember that in Ezekiel? This man is in the presence of Job and Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar who are recognized for their wisdom. They fall short in this case. But they're no slouches.

They wouldn't be Job's friends. And he speaks up. He's the youngest, least ranking, no credentials other than his lineage are given.

And yet he says, I am going to utter pure knowledge. The Spirit of God is operating in me. I am speaking.

And he says, I will be your mediator. I will mediate between you and God. And you don't have to be afraid of me because I'm made of clay just like you are.

And isn't this what the Lord Jesus did when he came? He said, I have not come to condemn the world, but that the world, the Son of Man through Him, might be saved. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. My yoke is easy.

My burden is light. Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden. I will give you rest.

Jesus didn't come in a threatening, scary mode. He could have showed up on His first day in Jerusalem on top of the Mount of Olives or down there at the temple and turned on the transfiguration glory, harked up a couple of legions of angels on each side and had a trumpet blast, ram's horn, everybody fall on their face and said, hello there, I'm the Son of God and I've got something to tell you. He could have, it's just like the song says, He could have called 10,000 angels to destroy the world and set Him free when He was on the cross.

And He didn't do any of that. He came like a Lamb. Now, there is a day coming.

Remember they've got that Lion and Lamb ministries? Jesus is the Lion and the Lamb. There is a day coming when all of that foregoing description is going to take place. There will be a trumpet blast.

There will be legions of angels and sanctified holy ones, I think including some of us. And there is going to be fear. And there is going to be abject terror.

And a lot of those knees that bow and tongues that confess are going to be doing it because they are sore afraid. You figure that the shepherds saw the angels coming with good news and were sore afraid. What do you think is going to happen when Jesus comes back with the bad news of judgment? But, look at what Elihu says.

He says, Look, I am as your spokesman before God. I have been formed out of clay. No fear of me will terrify you.

You can speak freely because I am the kind of mediator that partakes of your substance. I am made out of the same stuff you are. So I'll be your mediator.

You have spoken in my hearing and I have heard the sound of your word saying I am pure and without transgression. Now, this is really fascinating because Elihu is going to summarize the Job speeches. For example, he says here in verse 9, he quotes Job as saying I am pure and without transgression.

I am innocent and there is no iniquity in me. Where has Job said this? My goodness. Chapter 6, verse 10.

Chapter 9, verse 21. Chapter 10, verse 7. Chapter 12, verse 4. Chapter 16, verse 17. Chapter 31, verse 6. Job has said this over and over again, hasn't he? He has proclaimed and declared his innocence.

That he is not guilty of anything that would bring the wrath of God down in discipline. You have said that God finds fault with me here in verse 10. He counts me as his enemy.

And of course Job has said this back in chapter 10 in verse 6. Why is the Almighty coming after me? I don't understand. He puts my feet in the stocks. He watches all my path.

The shackled feet. You can go back to chapter 13 in verse 27. So this is an accurate portrayal.

Now, what's interesting here is to me that Elihu has been listening through that 30 chapters of dialogue and he's got it all. He has got the information. He has digested it.

I think people before radio, television, the press and all of that when communication was pretty much all oral. Even things that were in writing somebody would stand up and read it because he was one of the few guys that could read. And everybody heard it.

And I think people figured this is my one chance. I can't go get this on the web later. I can't TiVo this and play it back.

I don't know shorthand. I can't write. And so people had to really get it the first time.

And I think we've lost an appreciation for how verbal and what good listeners people were in the ancient world. Because you go down to the synagogue and listen to the scriptures read you better hope you hear it and can retain it because it's not like you can write it down and take it with you or look up that passage later. Well, I'll just write that verse down and I'll look that up later.

Look it up in what? The only copies of the law and the prophets and the writings are down there with the scribes. So people had to retain. And Elihu sitting there some between 2,500 and 3,000 or actually 3,500 and 4,000 years ago listened.

Listened to his elders speak. Recorded it in his mind. And now he has not only listened to it and understood it but he is synthesizing it.

He has comprehended it and he's boiling it down and summarizing. If you ever take a course not that you ever will now most of you but I took a course one time. I took several courses in instructional systems development and in looking at the stages of learning.

What are the processes that constitute learning? And what are the levels of attainment of understanding and knowledge? And there are different measures for this. And there is a certain level you reach and you test for this with your students. One is can you simply by rote memorization give something back? I give you the definition of DNA.

I say well DNA is deoxyribonucleic acid. And you file that away and then later on I ask you that on a test. And you read that back.

That's great. If I explain the double helix nature of the molecule and I talk about the four components the cytosine and the guanine and the thymine and the amine. Thanks.

See three of those four cells were still firing and the other one wasn't. And then ask for that. Now this requires more understanding.

It's not just a rote memorization. But when you can take a thing and synthesize a concept and this is where you get your blue book tests and your essay tests where they say discuss the causes of the 30 years war. Where you can't just verbatim read back chunks of text.

You have to have synthesized the situation as it existed. Where was the power struggle? Where was the dissatisfaction? Why were people at each other's throat? Why did they fight for so long? Why could they not come to an agreement? Well this is the kind of synthesis that Elihu has done. So one thing we learn about him is he's smart.

He's paid close attention. And he has found a deficit in the 30 chapters. I feel like we've been reaching up to try to attain to an understanding of what these great wise men have been saying.

And where they have gone astray and where they have been right. Elihu not only comprehends everything they're saying and sees the shortcomings of it but he's figured out what ought to have been said. And that's why his nose is full of blood.

He's on fire to speak. And he says I'm full of words and I've got to speak or bust. Literally that's what he says.

I've got to speak or bust. And he's ready. He is full of this.

He says the spirit of God is in me. I've got to get this out. You have spoken.

You've said I'm pure without transgression. I'm innocent. These are the essentials.

If we have had trouble digesting and distilling the essence of the arguments in the last 30 chapters Elihu is helping us out here. So if you think back and say well let's see how many times did Job speak and what exactly did he say if you don't want to go back and try to redo those 30 chapters just pay attention to Elihu. He does a beautiful summary job.

This is what Job says. Now remember he's talking to a room full. He's got the other three elderly gentlemen there and their retinue.

All their little hangers on. There are scribes there taking this stuff down. He says here's the Reader's Digest condensed version of Job.

Job says I'm pure. I'm without transgression. I'm innocent.

There's no iniquity in me. Yet God finds occasion against me. He counts me as his enemy.

He puts my feet in the stocks. He watches all my paths. And then Elihu is now going to move forward.

There's a decision you have to make at verse 12. Because Elihu says look in this you are not righteous. I will answer you for God is greater than man.

Now when he says in this you are not righteous. This goes back to the same kind of deal we talked about in Genesis where you get to Elitoladot. These are the generations of.

Well does these refer back or does it refer forward? In the English Bible it's put at the beginning of the chapter. It's like now these are the generations of and then it gives a bunch of stuff. But in the old cuneiform tablets they would put that at the bottom.

They would say here's this. Here's that. Here's the other.

Here's this. Here's that. Here's the other.

It's sort of like putting the title at the bottom. Say okay did you read all that? Well that was the generations of Esau. Or that was the generations of Jacob.

Or basically this it's a footnote. It's a documentation. You know where I got this? Esau.

You know where I got this? Jacob. You know where I got this? Whatever. So when Elihu says in this you are not righteous is he announcing what he's about to say is where Job is not righteous or is he referring back to what he just said? I am going to submit an opinion goes both ways and you're free to have an opinion both ways.

I'm certainly not infallible. I think he is referring ahead. I think he says look here's a summary of what you have said which is an accurate summary.

Now Elihu says now here's where you messed up. This that I'm about to say is where you are not right. And I think right is a better translation than righteous because this is not a forensic issue.

This is not a judgment for punishment or a dissection to try to find sin. I don't think Elihu feels like that's his place to show Job where his sin is. But in the same way in English where our word right has come to mean something other than moral righteousness are you right or not? Tzedek or Tzadik can also mean it's fascinating to think about words our word true you say well is that true? And we think of truth and so on.

But true has its roots in something that's straight. And we talk about when you go down to buy lumber you true it. You look down at it and see if it's straight.

You don't want to get some warpy thing like I was trying to use last night that looks like it's been untied from a knot and try to put it on a flat wall. And you say well now this is true. Or this line is true or this arrow flew true.

It flew straight. It hit the target it was aimed at. And that metaphorically gets used in the non-concrete sense of something that is we say are you giving me the straight scoop? It's true.

Well in the same way right and righteousness work this way in Hebrew. And sometimes it just means Elihu says Job here's where you're not right. Now I'm not saying you're not right when you say you're pure and innocent.

That was the mistake the old guys made. That's why my nose got inflamed. I'm not saying that God hasn't found an occasion to let bad things happen to you.

Here's where you weren't right. I'll answer you. And the answer begins this really ought to be the beginning of verse 13 where it says for God is greater than man.

That ought to be the beginning of the next verse. He says here's where you're not right. I'll set you straight.

I'll give you the answer. God is greater than man. Why do you contend with him? It isn't that you're righteous and innocent.

It isn't that God has allowed your feet to be put into stocks. Where you're not right is in contending with God over it. Raising an issue with God that he did this or let this happen.

Why do you contend with him? He does not give an account of any of his words. God doesn't have to justify himself for his words. Why do you think he has to justify himself for his actions? Remember he summarizes and said this is what God's actions have been.

God is no longer speaking to me Job says. God is allowing or causing bad things. He's putting my feet into stocks.

He's treating me like an enemy. Elihu, his first point of rebuttal he says here's where you're wrong. In making an issue with God do you ask God to explain his words? Do you ask God to explain when he says I'm going to save the world? Do you ask God to explain when he says I'm going to give the land to our cousins over there the Abraham, Isaac, Jacob bunch? In Isaac shall thy seed be called and none of us are descended from Isaac.

Did you question God about his words on that? Did you question why this line of promise that we hear about down there in Egypt or over in Canaan or wherever they are at the time how come we're not in that? Why are we sort of these offshoots from other branches of the Abrahamic line? You didn't question God about his words. Why are you questioning about his actions? God doesn't have to give an account for his decrees his promises his policies as they have been enunciated and communicated. So why are you trying to call into account for his actions? Now this is an interesting point and I don't know if it has occurred to us very often.

We tend to say because we're conservative Christians that the Bible is the infallible word of God what it says goes I stand on the promises I believe this Bible I don't care what science says I am a Bible believing Christian. It is alive and powerful every word inspired by God and we stand on that and we never doubt God's word. We've made the decision I may doubt my understanding of God's word but I don't doubt that it is God's word that God has spoken in it and that it contains God's complete connected revelation of his planned policy and ultimately his son Jesus Christ Everything I need to know from God is in this book.

We believe that and we don't question it. That part of it. We can ask lots of questions but we don't question that God spoke.

But a lot of times we question circumstances. Why did God let this person die? Why did God let that happen? Why did God allow this? Why did God allow that? The point Elihu seems to be making here to me is why do you not have the same confidence in God's dealings in circumstance that you have in God's words? You've made a 30 chapter exchange here about how confident you are of God and how much faith you have in him and his promises. You say

you're going to stand in the last day and you're going to see him from your flesh and even if the worms eat you up you know your redeemer lives.

You believe the word of God. Why do you lack confidence in what he's doing? You're bringing a case. You have a Reeve.

Remember that? R-I-V. It's a court case. And he says this is where you messed up.

This is where you're not right is in questioning God's policy when you don't question God's word. God doesn't have to give an account to you for his word. You've never said, well Lord, how do I know? Job hasn't done the Gideon thing.

Well, let me put a fleece out here and see if you're really going to bless me. Evidently, Job never raised that kind of question. He does not give an accounting of any of his words.

God may speak in one way or in another. Man doesn't perceive it. Does a man that gets a revelation from God in a dream say, Lord, why didn't you speak in a vision? Does a man that gets a revelation from an angel, does he go and say, well Lord, you sent me an angel.

Why didn't you send me a dream? Why did you speak in this way? Men don't question God's communication. Job's whole complaint has been God's not communicating. And so now I'm questioning what he's doing.

And so it's a subtle but very substantive argument. And remember, we have to be reaching up here. I think many times we have the same problem in the commentaries and interpretations of Job that you have in Ecclesiastes where people are sort of looking down on these poor farmers from the past, these old ancient guys who are just grappling with the simplest concepts instead of recognizing that these are some of the wisest men, some of the smartest, most doctrinally knowledgeable men who ever lived in the Old Testament age.

And you have to reach up to understand what they're saying, not look down. If we look down, we're going to miss it. And Elihu's first point to Job when he says, and don't we all want to know? Because at the end of the book we know God says, Job is the only one that spoke rightly of me.

Well, Elihu's first point here is, well Job, here's where you were not right. You have questioned the divine activity and you're inconsistent because you don't question the divine word. God does not give an accounting of any of his words and the implication is here, and we don't expect him to.

Who expects God to come down and explain why he said what he said? We're just grateful that he spoke blessing and spoke promise and hope. Man doesn't perceive. Now he's going to give different ways that God speaks.

He speaks in a dream, in a vision of the night when deep sleep falls upon men while slumbering

on their beds. Remember, we're talking about pre-canon, pre-written law. There's not the first piece of Scripture in existence in Job's day.

There is no Law of Moses. There is no historical section. There is no poetry.

There is no prophetic writing, major prophets, minor prophets. Genesis doesn't exist, at least in the form that we have it, because some of those parties haven't even finished up living yet. This is just a few generations down from Abraham.

So, how did these men get this vast quantity of knowledge about God? Where did it come from if they have no Bible? Well, this is where it comes from. Deep sleep falls on men while slumbering on their beds. He opens the ears of men and seals their instruction in order to turn man from his deed and conceal pride from man.

In other words, remove pride. Get pride out of the way. Now, this is fascinating because even before you had the written word of God, you had the spoken revelation, you had the word as it was communicated by angels and by dreams and visions and what we would call supernatural forms.

And what is its purpose? Why did God speak in those days? It's the very same reason He speaks to us through the canon of Scripture today. To instruct. To turn men from their deeds.

What do we learn in Hebrews? The very foundation that we don't want to have to lay all over again is change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God. John the Baptist came preaching a baptism of change of mind. Change your minds.

Cleanse your hearts. Cleanse your hands. God has always spoken with a view toward changing our minds.

To turn man from his deed and conceal pride from man. If he opens the ears to receive instruction, what happens? Humility instead of pride. To learn to receive instruction, Proverbs chapter 2, you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, yea, every good path.

When knowledge is pleasant to you, when understanding is the object of your crying out and your seeking and your digging and your searching, then God will preserve your way. He keeps back his soul from the pit and his life from perishing by the sword. The pit gets mentioned.

If you want an interesting exercise, circle pit every time it appears. People say, oh there was no hell in the Old Testament and so on. What's the pit? Most commentators will say, well it's the grave.

There's a perfectly good Hebrew word for grave. This is not the word for grave. This is the word for pit.

It's the pit. And the pit means a lot more than physical death. The grave is physical death.

The pit is hopeless, useless, spiritual deadness. This is what's pictured in the New Testament by Paul as the dead branch. It doesn't mean that you're not alive or that you don't have salvation.

It means you are spiritually fruitless. And those are the branches that are broken out so that other branches can be grafted in. Those branches that do produce are pruned.

Those portions of the branch that aren't producing are pruned away so that you can bear much fruit. Abide in me, Jesus says. Abide in the vine.

I'm the vine. You're the branches. Abide in me.

You'll bear much fruit. This is my Father's will that you bear much fruit. And the branches that don't bear fruit are broken out, chopped off, gathered into bundles, and burned.

And this is the fruit of the life. Well, it's been this way throughout human history. So, to keep back a man's soul from the pit, you can't do anything in the pit.

Think about the ancient world. Where is the place where you are totally neutralized and you can't do anything? What happened when Joseph's brothers threw him in a pit? He can't do anything. He's useless.

He's fruitless. His existence is pointless until he can get out of the pit. So, this is a metaphor for spiritual neutralization.

You are spiritually dead. Not in the salvation sense, but in the fruitfulness, production, functional sense. Why does God open the ears of men and seal their instruction, speaking to them in dreams and visions of the night, to turn them from their deeds, to remove them from pride, to get pride out of the picture.

You're not even looking at pride anymore. To keep back your soul from the pit, from being spiritually useless. And keep his life from perishing by the sword.

Now, there is your sin unto death. If you spend a lot of time, in the biblical days especially, spiritually dead, God would communicate that fact to others by taking you out. This is Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the ground opening and swallowing people up, the fire coming down from heaven and consuming, or fire coming out from the altar actually, and consuming the disobedient priests and so on.

Your life could perish by the sword. This was the promise that God would give the nation of Israel later on, wasn't it? You will suffer military defeat if you become spiritually fruitless. If you as a nation go into the pit, then you're going to lose your physical lives.

The whole book of Ezekiel, in the first portion, talks about the sword coming in and chopping Israel up, chopping Judah up specifically, for disobedience and spiritual apathy and indifference. Well, Elihu is talking about how God speaks. And his point here is established at the beginning.

Why do you contend with God? He doesn't give an account for all of these ways in which He speaks. When He speaks, He's got a purpose. Look at all of the purposes when God speaks.

And we don't ask Him why He's speaking. He doesn't give an account to us for that. He chooses when He speaks.

He chooses how He speaks. And He chooses what He speaks. God does all of that, and He's accountable to no one.

Now, if God decides what's going to happen to us, when it's going to happen to us, and how it's going to happen to us circumstantially, why should there be any bringing of a case against God for that, when we don't bring a case against God for what He says? So this is the, I think, this is the root of the argument that Elihu is advancing here. We're going to pause here and take our break. We'll pick up in verse 19 and see him advance this argument through the rest of this chapter and into chapter 34.