

19a JOB

This is Friday, the 22nd of September 2006. We continue our study in the book of Job. We're in chapter 34.

We'll take a moment here to organize our thoughts and direct our concentration and attention to our time of study in God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship and in the study of your Word. We ask that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us and enable us to rightly divide your Word so that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We're in this very interesting final human dialogue section, if you will.

It's actually more of a monologue from Elihu. You well know the structure of the first part of Job. And then we had this dividing line where we once again had a narrative framework at the beginning of chapter 32.

Then Elihu, the son of Barakel the Buzite, answered and said. And he gave his first speech, which takes up the rest of chapter 32 and all of chapter 33. That was speech number one.

Then it says in chapter 34, Elihu further answered and said. And so we find ourselves in chapter 34 in the midst of the second speech. These speeches are marked off by the naming of the speaker in classic Hebrew narrative fashion.

We have noted with some interest the similarities between Elihu's viewpoint and statements and the Christ-like nature of his message. He seems to speak and claims to be a mediator made of the same material as Job and yet speaking pure words of wisdom, motivated by the Spirit of God. These are strong clues because other than the Old Testament prophets to the nation of Israel, which don't exist yet, you don't have people filled with the Spirit of God speaking pure wisdom on God's behalf.

This is sort of a unique thing. So we have been examining rather closely what Elihu says to see if this holds up. Now our purpose is twofold.

First of all, we want to understand the book of Job and we want to understand the message that Elihu delivers in these several chapters. We want to understand it as it relates to the theme of the book, as it relates to divine revelation in the Job story, as it prepares the way for God Himself to speak in the final speech section of the book. We are sensitive to the foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ in these speeches.

But at the same time, we want to ask ourselves, having looked at all of that and absorbed all of that, so what? I have been impressed of late with the wide variety of churches and church

experiences that we have in the United States and the church cultures that have sprung up. There are always new, evolving things in regard to Christian culture in the United States. If you look at the last 50 years that some of us have observed and experienced, you see a big shift from the traditional old hymn singing, straight-laced, everybody assembles, you have some announcements and the offering and a prayer and the choir sings and the pastor preaches and then you have the invitation and then the organist plays a tune and everybody walks out.

That was ubiquitous throughout the United States, certainly, as well as a lot of other places for decades. Then in the 60s, with the change of external culture, a lot of things changed in the church. Well, I am not going to go off on a long tangent on that, but you look at what it is that people come to church for, because this is what drives the church culture.

Why do we come to church? Why do we assemble? Now, on paper, ostensibly, in principle, we are cultivating, maintaining, nurturing our two-fold divine commission love. Love for God, love for our fellow believers, love the Lord your God, love your neighbor as yourself, the law and the prophets are summed up in it. A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another.

God is love. We love because he first loved us. All of that permeates the scriptures.

Most normal Christians will readily confess, my spiritual life is basically aimed at loving God, loving my fellow believers, and to a lesser extent, or maybe to the same extent, the rest of the world. So this is what church is all about. How do you accomplish that goal? There are myriads of ways of getting it done.

But this is the point of concern. Why do we go to church? Why do Christians, we can generalize, why do Christians go to church? What are we looking for? What are we getting when we go to church? And I'm talking about we, American Christians, in particular. The reason I bring that up is, Elihu is addressing himself specifically to the theme of this book, which is, what is the nature of relationship with God? The three friends and Job himself have a certain expectation.

This is what you get out of relationship with God. This is what it's for. This is how it works.

And there's a difference in what Eliphaz sees, what Bildad sees, what Zophar sees, and what Job sees. What does Eliphaz lean on? Well, it's a mystical thing. He likes the part where the angel comes in the night and speaks.

The problem is, he can't always discern which angel is which, and what's a good and a bad message. But Eliphaz made much of the spirit that came to him in the night, and disturbed his sleep, and whispered in his ear, and planted these dark thoughts in his head. Which he's now, you know, can a man be more righteous than God, and so on, and planting these seeds of doubt, and that got him all wrapped up.

Bildad is the man of tradition. Go back to the fathers. What did they believe? What did they learn?

What did they know? We should stick with that.

Right down the middle, kind of your 1950s and early 60s American Christianity. Just go with what you know. Sing the same songs with the same arrangements.

Listen to the same sermons with the same amount of money on the plate. We all go home and everybody's happy. Zophar is the practical guy.

It's got to be practical. I read an article this week. It's become very common now for people to express themselves, not so much formally in print and in books, or even in articles in newspapers and magazines, but to just put something up on the web.

It's called a blog, which is short for a web log. There are sites devoted to blogs where people can just opine, and speak their mind. A lot of these are just what you would expect to find in someone's amateur diary or journal, or what you would expect to get in a conversation around the water cooler at work.

But there are other people who are educated, who are erudite, who are articulate, and who make a strong case for things. One such article I was reading by a lady who is a progressive, feminist, liberal type. Atheist, almost, of course.

This is what she had to say. Here's my whole point. I'm kind of meandering my way down to the point.

She says, you know what fundamentalist Christianity is? You know what conservative Christianity is, especially in America? It is a club where people gain an advantage. It has an evolutionary advantage. It's a group, a minority group, that gives its members things that they can't get on the outside.

And that's what she's saying. She's answering the question I'm posing by saying, the reason people come to church is because they get built-in friends, they get forgiveness, so that they don't have to worry about their conscience, they get sort of a catharsis and a cleansing and an expurgation of whatever guilt they may have accumulated. They get support if they're in trouble.

Someone will bring meals if they're sick, help them out with a car if their car goes out, or if they're unemployed. It's a support system, it's a support group. And it thrives because it has an us-versus-them mentality.

Well, it's us, we're the persecuted Christians, and here's the big bad liberal world out there, and so what you can't get from the outside, we'll give you here. And so this lady's perception and her belief and her argument is, the reason we Christians go to church is for what we can get out of it. And she says, you know, the worst thing that could happen for the fundees, for the conservative Christians, is to actually become the majority and actually have everybody join church because this perceived benefit would diminish and dwindle away because everybody would have that

benefit.

You wouldn't be a clique member. You wouldn't be in the inside track. Everybody would have it, and so then church would no longer be popular.

Which is logical, if ignorant, because it is only looking at one small aspect of church membership, which is probably true. There are a lot of people who probably go to church because there are perceived social and even material benefits. But this is a very warped and narrow view.

Those of us who've been in church know that this is not a simple matter of, I'm going to join this little group. I mean, you can join the Rotarians or the Elks Club or the local society for the preservation of the Pink Petunia or something and get a built-in circle of friends or a little association. This is true of schools.

The first girl who tried to get enrolled at the Citadel, her entire argument was, I want the benefits of being in that little group. You get a network. You have job offers, and you wear the ring, and you've got the little secret sign you exchange, and in a certain part of the South, this is a big advantage for your future career.

And she wanted that, and that was her reason for going. But that's certainly not the reason everybody goes. Well, this may seem like a long and rambling introduction, but here's the thing.

Think about the speeches that we've heard from the first three friends. They are sort of putting relationship with God into that kind of box. Well, here's the way relationship with God works.

If you do what you're supposed to do, here are the benefits. You'll prosper, and you'll thrive, and the wicked will fall by the wayside, etc. Job disagreed, and he said no.

And, of course, they drew the conclusion that you must be on the negative side of this because you're suffering, and therefore you've screwed up the arrangement in some fashion. You've messed up your relationship with God, and that's why you're suffering. Job says, no, I have not.

I have not messed up my relationship with God. I don't have unconfessed sin. I am pure.

I am upright, just like he should have told his friends to go back and read chapter one. He's perfect and upright in all of his ways. That's not it.

At the same time, though, Job has questioned God. Where are you? Why are you so far from helping me? Why have you forsaken me? Is this justice? What is the point to my life now that you have departed from me? And these show Job's struggle to understand what is happening to him. It's outside anybody's experience.

His friends can't explain it. He can't explain it. He has not lost his faith in God, and he has certainly not lost his desire for God.

But he is stymied trying to explain his current situation. Now we come to these chapters, chapter 32, 33, 34, and we have Elihu speaking. And how did he begin? He introduced himself and talked about what the others had said and what Job had said.

And he says, I'm not going to show partiality. I'm not going to flatter anybody. Here I go.

And now we come to chapter 33. And then in your Bible it says, Elihu contradicts Job. But we straightened this out last time because in verse 12 when he says, Look, in this you are not righteous, he's not referring back to Job saying, You've spoken in my hearing saying I am pure without transgression.

I am innocent and there's no iniquity in me. He's not going back to that saying you're not right about that. Elihu doesn't make the mistake that Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar all made in imputing unrighteousness to Job.

What he says, in this you are not righteous, is what follows. What follows? God is greater than man, and yet you are contending with him. You're questioning him.

You haven't lost your faith in God, but you've lost your faith in his justice. You've lost your faith in his wisdom. You're questioning those.

You're not confidently holding to your earlier comment, Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. I mean, Job is trusting God. And he says, I'm going to stand someday.

If God could hear my case, I would come out vindicated and so on. But Job, in his remarks up to this point, has been more or less challenging God. I don't understand why you've done what you've done.

I haven't done anything wrong. And you're far from me. I see no future and no point to my life.

So let me just check out. Hide me in a hollow somewhere until your wrath has passed, and then bring me out so that I can see you from my flesh. That was Job's argument.

Elihu is addressing this. Now, I'm going to try to wed together these two points that I've made so far. First of all, we are people who claim to have, who want to have, who cultivate and desire to have a relationship with God.

We want to understand that relationship. We want to enjoy and live within that relationship to a maximum extent. It's important for us to understand how it works, just as it was important to these men.

Some of the earliest believers recorded in the Bible, certainly the most detailed account of anyone's thoughts in the early days, is here in the book of Job. We are in the very latter days. Why do people go to church? Why do you and I come to Bible class? Why do we study the Word

of God? What are we really looking for? Well, what are the alternatives? What are the options that have been presented here in these first 30-odd chapters of Job? Is it a good luck charm? Is it a means of finding the path of peace and prosperity? Is that really our goal, to find that peace and prosperity? For a lot of believers, it is.

And this is why, if peace and prosperity go away, because of a tragic loss, because of a setback, because of a downturn or a catastrophe, like Hurricane Katrina, like the loss of a child, like a tsunami, like the departure of a trusted loved one into addiction or infidelity or whatever it may be, many people, many Christians, lose their faith. It totally disrupts their walk and their interest in the things of God. Some of them are driven clear out of the faith and claim that they are now atheists and want to have no more to do with Christianity or Christ or the Bible because they have been disappointed by the people who are in that faith or that they have been associated with in their family or whatever.

Why is that? Their faith, their Christian faith, was on a false foundation. It had a false goal. It was being pursued for the wrong reasons.

We have to ask ourselves, why are we pursuing our Christian walk and our Christian faith? Are we really, in our subconscious mind, in the back of our mind, really saying, I want those blessings and I want that prosperity and I want to try to avoid having anything bad ever happen to me and this is the way to do it. It's not a matter of believing or not believing in God, believing or not believing in Christ. We're Christians and that's not in dispute or in question.

The question is, what are we looking for out of our growth and our pursuit of that relationship with God? That's the subject of this book. This is exactly what Elihu is now addressing. I think misunderstanding this point has led many commentators on the book of Job.

I'm not trying to set myself above them, but you can't believe the things that are said about this section of Job. I'm going to read you some of them. There's a man named Hwedbe, W-H-E-D-B-E-E.

His idea, when he interprets the book of Job, his name is William Hwedbe, and he interprets the book as a comedy. Now, I don't mean ha-ha comedy, comedy in the classic sense. If you know what comic is in the classical literary sense, there are features of a comedy such as incongruous situations, things that just don't match up.

There's generally sort of a U-shaped plot where things start in a position and go through a lot of changes and almost come full circle. It comes back to where it began. There's a lot of irony.

There's a lot of often humor, and we've come to associate the word comedy with humor, but humor is only one element in comedic literature, and it's often not the main element. It's sometimes not present at all, or it's just a byproduct. Repetition, archetypal characters.

Here's the classic maid who knows more than the people who live in the house. Here's the befuddled father. Here's the harried and frantic and hen-pecking wife.

Here's the smart aleck daughter. Here's the son who's looking for something else. Not all daughters are sarcastic.

But these are archetypal characters. They're characters that reoccur in all different kinds of literature. Well, comedy partakes of these.

Well, Wenby says Job is such a story that it's a comedy, and that Elihu is a comic character who speaks banal words. He's sort of the buffoon. He comes in just when you're expecting God to come in and straighten everything out and sort of rants and twists Job's words and twists Eliphaz's words, quotes them out of context, and gets it all messed up.

Elihu, he says, appears as a Johnny-come-lately from nowhere. The author caricatures the friends of Job as wise counselors. Job's discursive rambling has no orderly progression.

He is a master of parodies. He parodies the complaint formula. When Job says things like his wisdom is profound and his power is vast, Wenby says he's being sarcastic.

Oh, yeah, his wisdom is really vast. His power is just awesome. And Job is being sarcastic.

Well, this is a published and well-read interpretation of the Book of Job. Way back a hundred years ago, the articles that were included in the Kaelin Delitzsch commentary on Job summarized many of these comments, many of these ideas. So there are some who say that Elihu is a young upstart, that he is proud, that he is an arrogant sort of fool who comes in, and that he's actually a liar, and so on and so forth.

What we have seen is here is a wise young man who is speaking the truth of God in the power of the Spirit, who is straightening out much of what has been said in the earlier speeches, is revisiting some of the subjects and saying, here's what you got right and here's what you got wrong. You were right, Job, when you said that you had not sinned, but you were wrong when you called God's justice into question. Eliphaz, you were right to say that God communicates in the night and opens the ears of men and gives them wisdom, but you were wrong to get off with this dark spirit whispering in your ear and telling you that no one can be righteous before God.

And so he's going through, and he's actually a prototype of Christ. And I think it's so tragic that in so many of these commentaries by erudite, well-read scholars and interpreters, Elihu is dismissed as extraneous, as a later addition. It shouldn't even be there.

It's not original. He's a comic buffoon. He's an arrogant upstart.

He's a caricature, and so forth. It's, I think, Satan's way of deflecting the power of these words and understanding the power of these words is important. Here's my whole point in this first

section.

Understanding Elihu's points in these speeches is important because this is the answer to the question, Why go to church? Why pursue relationship with God? It's not what the lady says in her article, that we're just networking and finding sort of a little good old boys club where we can help each other out. It's not for the elimination of some sense of guilt. It's not for a cathartic sort of cleansing.

It's not, or should not be, for any of these reasons. Now, this is rampant in the church. Why do you think people go to giant cathedrals with stained glass windows and smoke and old medieval music and guys staggering around in robes and waving pots of this and the other and sprinkling stuff and muttering in Latin? Why do you think people go for that? By the millions.

Why do you think there are millions of Catholics? Is it because it draws them closer to God and because they understand the Lord Jesus Christ and enter into the fulfillment of loving God with all the heart, soul and strength and loving their neighbor as himself? Is that what mystical, ritualistic denominations and cultic practices do? No, they don't. And yet millions of people, that's what they go for, that's what they get. Is it a social club? Many of the churches I've had reason for on various occasions to go and look at the websites of current churches and kind of get a sense of what kind of a church is it? What do they do? And now it's really popular to be a wonderful gathering of enthusiastic, kite-flying, miniature golf-playing, hand-waving, guitar-strumming, excited people who go out and do all kinds of fun stuff.

And it's just, wow, it's exciting. We're all going to get together and do these exciting things. Now don't get me wrong, I'm as guitar-strumming as the next guy.

And I enjoy all kinds of good, fun activities, especially with believers of like mind. It's a lot like the argument of the book of Job. It isn't that that is wrong, but what is the context in which it is being applied? The arguments, many of the statements of Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar are perfectly fine if you apply them properly, if you keep them in perspective and keep them in their place.

Same thing with this. It's wonderful to be awed by the majesty of God, by His righteousness and by His justice and by His power. And we all have a cathedral in our soul.

And we can have that same experience of God's glory in our soul. You don't have to go to some man-made edifice that's designed to sort of evoke those feelings. God's word will do it in the soul of any responsive believer who spends time meditating on it.

His ways are past finding out. It's just unutterable. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard.

It can barely enter into our hearts. But that's not the goal. We don't go to God, we don't come to our Christian faith and our Bible study looking for a sense of awe and mysterious glorified presence.

Nor do we come to Christianity looking for a wonderful, exciting, stimulating time of fellowship with a bunch of other people who are all singing Kumbaya. Nothing wrong with all of those things. But they have a place, there is a context.

There are prefabricated homes, they put all the pieces on your driveway, they back the truck up, put it all there, give anything from a storage building to an absolute pre-manufactured home. Then there's a plan, and you've got all these ingredients, and they have to be built. You start at the bottom and you work your way up.

All of those pieces are good, but they have to be assembled in the right place, the right time, in the right order, according to the master design. If you put the chipboard floor at the top, and you put the shingle roof on the bottom, it isn't going to work. Nothing wrong with the shingles, nothing wrong with the chipboard floor, but you've got to get them in the right place.

And it's always a danger when you say, we're not going to sing Kumbaya, and we're not going to swing a pot of smoke, that people are going to say, well, you're just against those things. Not at all. And as you all well know, I think the quality of our Christian fellowship rivals any in the world.

But that's not why we come. That's not our goal. It is a wonderful, blessed by-product.

And outcome, outgrowth, result, it's not the goal. So I want to suggest to you, that as we go through, and we're going to get back to the text here, watch for what Elihu says about relationship with God and its goal. Because this is what sorts out the pieces that have been brought in, all of the pieces of the building that have been forklifted in and set at Job's feet by his three friends, and messed with by Job himself, but they haven't been assembled in the right order, in the right way, into the building that reflects God's plan and purpose.

That's what Elihu is doing. And you have to understand what he's doing to make sense of his statements. In fact, you have to understand what he's doing to translate his statements.

And if you don't understand what Elihu is saying, you cannot, trust me on this, you cannot even begin to get a coherent English translation out of his statements. And this is one of the biggest problem areas of the scripture, outside of Ecclesiastes, for misunderstanding of what the goal is, messing up, in good faith and in good conscience, people just trying to make sense of this, but not understanding the thrust and the point and the purpose of the argument, and having no fixed point of reference on the shore, the boat is just rowing with one paddle in circles. And let me just demonstrate this.

If you look at chapter 34, beginning at verse 10, he has quoted Job in verse 5, Job said, I'm righteous, but God's taken away my justice. And he has already spoken earlier, we just reviewed it, Elihu said, you know, Job, you said that you're righteous and you have not sinned, and that's fine. But when you said God has taken away my justice, that's where you're not right.

Because you're contending with the Almighty, you're questioning His control, you're questioning His justice. And this is a problem. But you remember right after that, in verses 7, 8, and 9, what man is like Job who drinks scorn like water, who goes in company with the workers of iniquity and walks with wicked men? It sounds like Elihu is saying, who's as wicked as Job? I mean, he keeps company with the wicked men.

And if you don't semantically break that statement down, what man is like Job, here he is drinking scorn like water, what man is like that, who is so scorned and reviled at all of the things that Job has told us about, and would walk with wicked men, and has said, it profits a man nothing that he should delight in God. Did Job ever say this? It profits a man nothing that he should delight in God? So we have to understand what the theme is, what the point is, what the goal is of Elihu's statements to make any, if we have any, hope of understanding what he's saying. So we pick up tonight here in the middle of chapter 34, and even if the rest of this gets lost in the shuffle, the question we can always ask ourselves in the light of the command of Scripture that says examine yourself and see if you are in the faith.

It doesn't say examine yourself and see if you're in the group. It doesn't say examine yourself and see if you're getting an awestruck feeling. It doesn't say examine yourself and see if you feel a catharsis.

It doesn't say examine yourself and see if you've got a good network going and a support group. It doesn't say examine yourself and see if you are discipling or being disciplined or mentoring or being mentored. What does it say? Examine yourself and see if you are in the faith.

The faith. And we use the faith and we say, well, that's our Christianity, spirituality. What is the faith? The faith has content, doesn't it? It's not just a black box.

It's not a cross we wear around our neck. If we're going to be in the faith, what does it mean? It gets back to the point that Elihu is making here where he's dissecting the statements made by the three friends. He's parsing the statements made by Job.

And he says, Job, you've assured us that sin is not the issue. And that's fine. Sin is not the issue.

There is no transgression resulting in judgment here. That's a red herring. That's a false lead.

That's a digression and a distraction. What is the issue? What is your faith? Where is your faith? What are you pursuing? What are you believing in and hoping in and trusting in? That's the issue. If Job were a righteous man, he wouldn't be drinking... I mean, if he was a wicked man, he wouldn't be drinking scorn like water.

He would be in the company of wicked men. He would be walking with them. He would be saying, if prophets amend nothing, that he should delight in God.

That's not the issue, Elihu says. Therefore, listen to me. And time after time, we see Elihu saying the same thing the Lord Jesus is going to say later.

He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear. Truly, truly, I say to you, I tell you the truth and I do not lie. Isn't it interesting that Jesus consciously makes that sort of almost superfluous statement? Wouldn't anybody who believes Jesus is the Son of God assume that he was telling the truth? Why does Jesus emphasize it? If Jesus writes a letter to the churches, wouldn't we figure that the church would listen to it? Why does he say, if you have an ear, you better pay attention? Well, this is what Elihu does.

Listen to me, you men of understanding. And notice, he doesn't say, listen to me, you dummies. Listen to me, you ignoramuses.

Listen to me, you totally hopeless buffoons. He says, you people have wisdom and you're smart. You have understanding, so listen to me.

Why? Because understanding, they've got the pieces of knowledge. They've got the pieces of wisdom. They've been talking about it for 30 chapters.

He says, look, let me help you stack this stuff up correctly so that you end up with an edifice that glorifies God and doesn't call his justice into question. Far be it from God, and notice, to do is in italics. It says, far be it from God, and then you have wickedness, and the Almighty to iniquity.

And they've filled in these italicized words. For he repays a man, then according to is in italics. Then you have his work.

He makes man to find a reward according to, and then his is in italics, and you have way. If you took all the words that are in italics out of this section, it would just be a mishmash, wouldn't it? Well, guess what? In Hebrew, if you don't know what Elihu is saying, it's just like that. It's a mishmash.

And interpreters have been all over the map trying to figure it out, and it's an easy thing to just wave your hand and say, well, Elihu, we don't really have to figure out what he's saying because he's a comic buffoon. He's an arrogant young man. He's like the wind.

He's just a diversion to stall for time until God speaks. And what he says isn't really important. And it's hard to find good commentary on these words.

So, with all of that as background, with all of that as motivation, hopefully, let's try to take a look more closely. We're going to slow down and take a close look at these words because if, as we suspect, they foreshadow and reflect the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and revealing the Father and revealing the nature of a relationship with God, then these are some of the most important words in the book of Job. It's central.

It's at the middle. The only thing that can top this is God himself who's up next to speak. So, what is the first point? Let's take this section 10-15.

Listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness and from the Almighty to commit iniquity. He repays man according to his work and makes man to find a reward according to his way.

Surely God will never do wickedly nor will the Almighty pervert justice. Who gave Him charge over the earth? He is the final authority. He is the final and ultimate.

There is no one above Him. There is no one who judges Him. And this is an element that all of the friends have mentioned, isn't it? God is righteous.

If somebody is being punished, they deserve it in some fashion. That's their point. And they claim that this is a function of the justice of God.

Elihu says, you're right. God does repay men according to their deeds. And God is just.

And He is not going to pervert justice. He's not going to do wickedness. Is there anyone to whom you could appeal God's righteousness and justice? And this is an a fortiori argument in the sense that God is the be-all and end-all.

There is nothing above Him. There is nothing higher than Him. If He sets His heart on a thing, if He gathers to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together and man would return to dust.

Everything is enlivened and enabled by God. By two things. His Spirit and His breath.

His Spirit and His breath. Now, what do you suppose these words are in Hebrew? We have Neshama and we have Ruach. His Ruach and His Neshama.

What was it that God breathed into the nostrils of Adam? The Neshama. The breath of life or lives. And if God were to recall and take back His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together.

What is the point here? The rankest, vilest, atheist, liberal, communist, terrorist, most evil person you want to name, every single breath they draw is granted to them by God. If these people perpetrate crimes, if they blow up the World Trade Center, if they blow up ships, if they blow up barracks, if they perpetrate murders and crimes, it has been allowed by God. And it is not wicked for God to allow that.

God has not perverted justice by allowing all flesh to continue to draw breath. God is not responsible for the wickedness accomplished by creatures to whom He gave life. There is a big argument that people like to make that say, well, if there really is a God, then it is His fault

because He does not stop these things.

And Elihu is addressing that very argument. God is righteous and God is just and God is all-powerful. And God is no less righteous and no less just because He does not withdraw the breath that He granted to all creatures.

What is implicit in verses 10-15? Volition. God in giving the Neshama and in giving the Ruach has made an issue out of decisions and He lets the decisions play out. And He is righteous and just to so do.

And it is His will and He does not have to give an account for it to anyone. He is the final, highest, greatest power and authority in the universe. This is what He has chosen to do.

So, in a sense, He is saying, get used to it. Get over yourself. This is what God has chosen to do.

These circumstances, whatever they may be and from wherever they come, are divinely approved in some sense. Well, we are going to stop and take our break and when we come back, we are going to start at verse 16 where He says, if you have understanding, hear this. Just like He does in verse 10.

Listen to me, you men of understanding. If you have understanding, hear this. What is He saying? Take your good building materials, the things that you've got right in these previous dialogues and let's stack them properly and build the right kind of a thing out of them.

If you've got understanding, here's how to stack up what you know and make sense of it. Because so far, nobody has been able to answer Job. Job hasn't been able to answer his own question.

You've got the materials, but you haven't put it together. This is our challenge as believers, to take the Word of God, promises, principles, and doctrines and put it together to get answers and to understand. We are people of understanding and we have to hear the Word of God so that we can make use of that understanding and move forward, cultivate a right relationship with God that's built on a right foundation.

So this is a very central, very exciting section of the book and this is where we'll pick up as soon as we come back from the break.