

Does God Speak To Us?

Job 33:1-33

Introduction

We continue with Elihu's monologue. It began in chapter 32. Elihu began his speech expressing his anger (32:1-15); and saying that Job should listen to him (vv.16-22) and now Elihu will make the claim that Job can trust him (vv.1-7). Elihu is convinced that Job is wrong; Job has complained that he is innocent; Job has complained that God doesn't seem to be listening; Elihu argues that God is listening and does speak through dreams and visions and through pain and sickness; but most people simply do not understand what God is trying to say (vv.8-22). Elihu asserts that God listens and answers prayers of those who have a mediator who shows that they are righteous (worth listening to and responding to; vv. 23-30). Elihu then basically says that Job should shut up and listen; to consider or ponder the wisdom that Elihu claims he can impart (vv.31-33).

In chapter 32 Elihu makes the claim that he has earned the right to speak; because the others have ceased talking (v.1); because he was angry about the direction of the conversation (vv.2-3); because he had respected his elders (vv.4-7); and that he was inspired and given direction by God's Spirit (vv.8-10); because the other three friends had been unable to refute Job (vv.11-15); and that he felt compelled (vv. 16-20); and that he would not show favoritism or embrace flattery (vv.21-22).

But now Elihu argues that God speaks in suffering to save people and to motivate them to repent from sin and turn to Him (vv.14-30). That God may speak to us in dreams and visions (vv.14-18); or that God may speak to us with discipline or pain (vv.19-22); or that God may speak to us through the agency of mediators; whether they be man or angels or supernatural beings (vv.23-25). Is it possible that God speaks to us with answered prayer (vv.26-28); that God speaks to us at many times and in many ways (v. 29).

A Fervent Plea To Hear The Truth (vv.1-7)

Job 33:1–33 (NKJV) 1 “But please, Job, hear my speech, And listen to all my words.

2 Now, I open my mouth; My tongue speaks in my mouth.

3 My words come from my upright heart; My lips utter pure knowledge.

4 The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Elihu claims that he is a man—created by the Spirit—just like Job—both were given life by the same God.

5 If you can answer me, Set your words in order before me; Take your stand.

6 Truly I am as your spokesman before God; I also have been formed out of clay.

7 Surely no fear of me will terrify you, Nor will my hand be heavy on you.

Elihu makes the claim that he will be gentle, he will go easy on Job; or that he would try to strike fear—in Job; no turn or burn sermons here!

Does God Speak To Us?

Job 33:1-33

Clearly Job is drained, emotionally spent, spiritually raw. But if Job relaxes for even a moment, if Job is given a time out—it is short-lived.

A Filthy Charge Against Job (vv.8-13)

8“Surely you have spoken in my hearing, And I have heard the sound of your words, saying,

9‘I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent, and there is no iniquity in me.

In a sense Elihu is making the claim; “I was listening when you said; “I am innocent.” Job has asserted his innocence (vv.8-9); and that God’s persecution is either harsh or unjust (vv.10-11); and that God’s failure to speak—or refusal to respond—was a sign of God’s apathy or indifference (vv.12-13).

The problem of course is that Job never claimed to be sinless. That was Zophar’s interpretation—not Job’s declaration (see Wiersbe p. 125).

Elihu’s charge is false; he misquoted and misrepresented Job’s words or claims. Job never claimed to be pure or completely without sin or absent guilt. Job’s insistence on innocence was based on the absence of know sin or deliberate sin. This may sound trivial or inconsequential; but Job’s innocence is a particular kind of innocence. Job did not think he was pure in the sense of no sin nature as all humans have. He was not free of every kind of sin. Job admitted the universal nature of sin; that all humans fall short of God’s glory; we are corrupt, we inherit a sinful nature (Rom. 3:23; 5:12).

Just in case you forgot (Job 9:2-3); “I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand”.

Job 9:14-15; “How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him?

Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge”.

Job 9:20; “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse”.

Job 13:23; “How many are my (Job’s) iniquities and sins? make me know my transgression and my sin”.

Job did say that he did not lie (6:30); and that he was not wicked (10:7). That he was just and upright (12:4); but he never said he was sinless.

Job did claim that his prayer was pure—in the sense that his heart and intentions were pure. It was not a claim of sinless perfection or moral perfection. It may be that Elihu misunderstood Job’s meaning; “Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure” (Job 16:17).

Did Job claim to be innocent of all sin? No. Did Job claim to be innocent of known sin or deliberate sin; calculated sin? Yes. As far as Job knew, he had already confessed and repented of every sin he had committed. Job believed and shared the same sinful nature common to all

Does God Speak To Us?

Job 33:1-33

human beings. And Job firmly believed he had done nothing to deserve the terrible punishment he was suffering.

Job 23:11-12; “My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. 12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips: I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food”.

Job 27:6; “My righteousness (integrity) I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live”.

Why was Elihu’s argument weak? He believed Zophar’s interpretation of Job’s words. He did not know God’s estimation of Job’s character and conduct.

Job has a clear conscience. He believed in God with his whole heart. He had purposed to obey Him. He lived a righteous life as a strong testimony to the Lordship of God.

We have repeated God’s testimony; (Job 1:8); “Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and shuns evil?”

10 Yet He finds occasions against me, He counts me as His enemy;

This charge is true. In Job’s speeches he repeatedly asked why God was treating him like an enemy; why God attacked him or why God wouldn’t give him a fair trial.

11 He puts my feet in the stocks, He watches all my paths.’

Job’s exact words (Job 13:27); “Thou puttest my feet also in stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou wettest a print upon the heels of my feet”.

Job believed God was treating him—not as friend but as enemy. Not as loyal subject—but prisoner who was closely guarded. Elihu rebuked Job for this attitude. He told Job bluntly that it was wrong; God is great, furthermore human beings do not have the right to find fault with God; or to accuse God of being unjust or unkind or unfair by allowing suffering.

12 “Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, For God is greater than man.

Make no mistake about it; Elihu is a gifted young man—and a persuasive speaker. Job 33 is a model in speech—and persuasion. He states his thesis in verses 12-14; God is greater than man and speaks to human beings in ways that we don’t always recognize. He then describes three ways that God might speak to us; in dreams and visions (vv.15-18); in suffering (vv.19-22); and in the ministry of mediating angel (vv.23-33).

Does God Speak To Us?

Job 33:1-33

13Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words.

Elihu believes he has something important to say. He was sure that Job—a fellow believer needed correction. He sincerely believed that Job had sinned in his attitude and sinfully responded to his condition of suffering.

Was Elihu right on some things? Perhaps. Was he wrong on other things? Perhaps. What does the Scripture teach? We are to confront, instruct, encourage, correct and even rebuke one another when needed.

Galatians 6:1; “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

1 Thessalonians 5:14; “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

A Focused Response That God Does Speak (vv.14-30)

14For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it.

15In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, While slumbering on their beds,

16Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction.

17In order to turn man from his deed, And conceal pride from man,

18He keeps back his soul from the Pit, And his life from perishing by the sword.

Does God speak in many different ways? I think the answer is yes. Can God speak through dreams and visions? I think the answer is yes. Is it possible in dreams that God whispers in our ears? I think the answer is yes. God can give strong warnings. In verse 16; “He opens the ears of men”—And seals their instruction—means to reveal something of a critical nature; something vital. Elihu offers four reasons or purposes for God speaking in dreams;

- * To Warn People
- * To Turn People From Sin, from wrong plans; from harm
- * To Keep People From Pride
- * To Save People and keep them from perishing

Job admitted (7:14) that God had terrified him with dreams and visions.

Does God Speak To Us?

Job 33:1-33

What is God's main motive in speaking? It is to save men's souls. To keep people from the pit (*sheol—grave—portal to the next world*). *What warning—what terror—what pain—will serve as a sufficient warning?*

19 *“Man is also chastened with pain on his bed, And with strong pain in many of his bones,*

20 *So that his life abhors bread, And his soul succulent food.*

21 *His flesh wastes away from sight, And his bones stick out which once were not seen.*

Does pain and suffering serve some purpose? Elihu offers insight that the other speakers have failed to provide. Does God speak to us in our suffering? Does God allow some to find food repulsive and allow others to waste away to almost nothing—to get our attention? Does God sometimes allow some to come to the very threshold of death so that they will cry out to God? And consider His claims? Do some draw near to God and find out the truth about the gospel?

The insight is remarkable. Job's friends argued that Job's sufferings was evidence that God was punishing him for his sins. Now Elihu will suggest there may be another reason. God sometimes permits us to suffer *to keep us from sin*. “In other words, suffering may be preventive and not punitive” (see Warren Wiersbe; “Be Patient” Commentary on Job; p. 125).

Is this a picture of Job? Is Elihu describing Job at that very moment? Job's flesh is wasting away. Job's bones are sticking out! Job looks like a man who has spent years in a Nazi concentration camp. Is Job suffering because God wants to get his attention and prevent him from breaking God's law?

In his book; “The Problem of Pain” C.S. Lewis famously says; “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” Does God use pain and suffering to warn us, or to humble us or to motivate us to assume the place of submission to His will?

We would be making a mistake if we believe that all pain and suffering comes from God. We know that sometimes we suffer because we have made mistakes. We have learned in Job that Satan may cause suffering (Job 1-2); we know that suffering can be caused by ungodly men (2 Tim.4:14); or this world's broken system (2 Peter 2:8) or our own sinful choices (Rom. 7:14-23); or carnal believers (Phil. 1:15-16; 2 Timothy 4:10).

22 *Yes, his soul draws near the Pit, And his life to the executioners.*

23 *“If there is a messenger for him, A mediator, one among a thousand, To show man His uprightness,*

Does God Speak To Us?

Job 33:1-33

24 Then He is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom';

Elihu expands the theme—suffering may in fact be a way of God communicating with us. Our central nervous system has been wired to alert us to the presence of danger. We have pain receptors to warn us of injury. And to prevent further injury. God has done everything to warn us—to cease from sin—to not go into the Pit of death—without understanding or accepting God's message of mercy and grace.

What is that message? "I have found a ransom"—the angel's message. A ransom is the purchase price to satisfy a debt. We have as our Mediator Jesus Christ who gives his life a ransom for sinners (1 Tim.2:5; Mark 10:45). Jesus is the Angel of the Lord; the Son of God; brings special messages and accomplishes important tasks; Elihu—hints at an Angel who is a Mediator between God and man and the Provider of the Ransom for sinners. This is the heavenly Mediator that Job has asked for—begged for throughout the debate. Job wants an umpire to bring him and God together for a trial (9:33). A heavenly witness to argue his case before God (16:19); a redeemer who would vindicate him even after death (19:25). The ministry of the Angel is purely an act of God's grace (33:24). I have found a ransom for him. This sounds like our Lord Jesus Christ who is both our Mediator and our Ransom (1 Tim. 2:5-6)" (See again Wiersbe's *Be Patient* p. 129—for further discussion.

Wiersbe: "The concept of 'the ransom' is woven into the fabric of biblical theology. The Hebrew word means "to atone for sin by the offering of a substitute." The condemned sinner can't be set free by the paying of some cheap price such as money (Ps. 49:7-9), good works or good intentions. It must be a ransom that God will accept, and God asks for the shedding of blood (Lev.16-17). Job didn't ask his three friends to ransom him because he knew they couldn't (Job 6:21-23). Only God can provide the ransom, and He did. If God has provided a ransom for lost sinners about to go down into the pit, how foolish if them not to receive it" (see again *Be Patient* pp. 129-130).

The book of Job mentions angels in the beginning (chapters 1-2;); Eliphaz mentions angels (4:18; and maybe 5:1); and angels are mentioned 38:7 at the creation of the world.

25 His flesh shall be young like a child's, He shall return to the days of his youth.

Elihu promises a new birth (you must become like a child)

26 He shall pray to God, and He will delight in him, He shall see His face with joy, For He restores to man His righteousness.

Job is promised that he will enjoy prayer and fellowship with God

Does God Speak To Us?

Job 33:1-33

27Then he looks at men and says, 'I have sinned, and perverted what was right, And it did not profit me.'

28He will redeem his soul from going down to the Pit, And his life shall see the light.

29'Behold, God works all these things, Twice, in fact, three times with a man,

30To bring back his soul from the Pit, That he may be enlightened with the light of life.

Elihu uses the word “pit” five times in verses 14-30. God’s purpose in discipline is to save people from death (see James 5:19-20); by crushing pride; and bringing us back to the place of obedience (vv.17-18); the Lord God seeks to keep us from the Pit (v.18); but rebellious sinners draw near to the pit (v.22); then they go down to the pit (v.24); and into the pit (v.28); when it is almost too late—the Mediator brings them back from the Pit (from the jaws of death?v.30); and they are rescued! “God does all these things to a man—twice, even three times—to turn his soul from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him” (vv.29-30 NIV).

God is “not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9).

So much for the sad argument that God creates people simply to send them to hell.

An Invitation To Respond—Repent And Be Justified (vv.31-33)

31'Give ear, Job, listen to me; Hold your peace, and I will speak.

Which is it? Hold your peace or speak? Elihu wants to keep speaking!

What is the truth? Job doesn’t speak. He is waiting for God to speak. It could be that Job thinks that what Elihu has to say doesn’t matter all that much.

32If you have anything to say, answer me; Speak, for I desire to justify you.

33If not, listen to me; Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom.”

In the end Job will wait. When Elihu is through—God speaks.

Conclusion

A.W. Tozer said, “The voice of God is a friendly voice. No one need fear to listen to it unless he has already made up his mind to resist it.”

What is God’s main source of speech or speaking? God spoke in different times and different ways in the past but he has in these last days spoken to us by Jesus (Heb. 1:1-2). Has God spoken to people in dreams and visions? The answer is yes. But today the Holy Spirit speaks primarily through His Word.

Do sinners sometimes have frightening dreams and terrifying visions?

Does God Speak To Us?

Job 33:1-33

Wiersbe tells the story of a man who stopped a stranger on the street and said, “Can you share a dream with me? I’m on my way to visit my psychiatrist, and I haven’t slept for a week. I desperately need a dream to tell him!”

We are not in the business of dream analysis or dream interpretation. Not all dreams are from the Lord. But every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God is profitable for instruction, reproof, correction in all righteousness.