

April 3

Scriptures: Read Job 35 & 36

Key Verse: “He [God] also opens their ears to instruction, and commands that they turn from iniquity.” (Job 36:10)

Overview

Wise young Elihu confirmed that Job’s attitude was one of self-righteousness. Job had criticized God’s dealings with him, a righteous man, but he had no grounds to judge God, since he could never be more righteous than God. Elihu reworded Job’s sentiments that it made no difference to God whether he had been a sinner or a pious man, and he showed Job this was a wrong view of God’s transcendence. Truly, the Lord is higher than our comprehension, and Elihu directed the attention of Job and his friends upward to the heavens which attest to God’s majesty and glory. There is nothing that a mere man does (whether wickedness or righteousness) that can change God’s most high and glorious position. Therefore, in his administration of justice, God is absolutely impartial and could never have any ulterior motives. A man’s wickedness or righteousness, however, does effect the behaviour of one’s fellow man (whether negatively or positively, 35:8). For the sake of others, especially our children, we need to be good examples; this greatly pleases God.

Job had questioned God’s interest in His creation, since he, a righteous man, felt his prayers went unanswered, while some wicked people were healthy, prosperous, and seemed to go unpunished. Elihu answered by giving reasons why God might not answer prayer. It was certainly not because He is disinterested; on the contrary, He is watchful and hears every cry for help. When one does not receive an immediate answer, it should not make him question God’s love and concern or His very existence. Elihu illustrated our Maker’s love for us in that He gave us intelligence and wisdom far greater than the animals, and He gave mankind the talent to sing and create music (35:10-11).

The problem of unanswered prayer was not with God but with man. When men are full of pride and “empty talk”, God will not regard their pleas (35:12-13). “Empty talk” is selfishly motivated and does not spring from the repentant heart of one desiring to grow more in the knowledge of the Lord. Job’s main desire and request to God was for relief from pain, restored wealth, and justice; but the justice Job sought was for God to prove to everyone that he was innocent of any sinful deed, rather than a desire to deepen his relationship and love for God. Elihu assured Job that God would indeed bring justice and thus answer his prayer, but Job must wait patiently, rather than jump to vain conclusions.

Elihu politely requested the continued attention of his audience, since he felt God had given him further truths to teach. Elihu magnified the Almighty God who is truly righteous, just, and all-knowing (36:5). He does punish the wicked and bring justice to the oppressed, as well as continually watch the righteous and exalt them. But if his righteous people suffer affliction, they are to learn from it. If they seek the Lord, He will instruct them and show them where they have fallen short. They may need to be humbled before the Lord, so they might not fall due to pride but rather obey and serve Him as they should. If they do this, the Lord will prosper them; if they

do not, they will perish, not having learned from their experience of affliction given to them as a gracious act of the Lord, that they might learn from it and draw closer to Him (36:11-12). These words of Elihu were directed at Job in response to the debated dilemma of his suffering. This knowledge in itself justified Job, for it revealed the purpose of God in allowing his suffering and disproved the argument of Job's three friends that suffering was solely the result of sin.

If Job had responded to God in the way he should have, his suffering would not have been prolonged and God would have restored him sooner; but Job was filled with complaints and demands for justice, which Elihu called "iniquity". Elihu warned Job that it is better to endure affliction than to turn to iniquity (36:21), for iniquity stirs up God's wrath. Elihu's further words of wisdom reminded Job that God was all-powerful, sovereign, and perfect; no one can accuse Him of wrongdoing. Even in his suffering, Job was reminded to magnify and praise God for all He has done (36:24), even though much of it was a mystery and beyond understanding (36:26). We as believers today must trust God in this way and praise Him despite our circumstances. Though we don't always understand things, we can rest assured that God is in control and has a purpose.

Prayer

Father, 'You are altogether righteous and just, yet at the same time, merciful and kind. Your love constantly amazes us and delights us. We cast the whole of our cares on You this day, trusting You to lead and direct us in Your good way.