

JOB

Chapter 35

Elihu Condemns Job

And Elihu answered and said: 2 “**D**o you think this to be just? **D**o you say, ‘It is my right before God,’ 3 that you ask, ‘What advantage have I? How am I better off than if I had sinned?’ 4 I will answer you and your friends with you. 5 Look at the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds, which are higher than you. 6 If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against him? And if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him? 7 If you are righteous, what do you give to him? Or what does he receive from your hand? 8 Your wickedness concerns a man like yourself, and your righteousness a son of man. 9 “Because of the multitude of oppressions people cry out; they call for help because of the arm of the mighty. 10 But none says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, 11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’ 12 There they cry out, but he does not answer, because of the pride of evil men. 13 Surely God does not hear an empty cry, nor does the Almighty regard it. 14 How much less when you say that you do not see him, that the case is before him, and you are waiting for him! 15 And now, because his anger does not punish, and he does not take much note of transgression, 16 Job opens his mouth in empty talk; he multiplies words without knowledge.”

35:1–16 Elihu’s third speech, addressed to Job. (CSB)

35:1 *answered.* Elihu’s third speech follows, continuing until v 16. (TLSB)

35:2 *this.* Seemingly contradictory statement and questions made by Job, which Elihu will now address. (TLSB)

just. Word commonly used by Job in his claim to be “right, innocent, not guilty of wrongdoing.” (TLSB)

it is my right. The Hebrew for this word is translated “vindicated” in Job’s statement in 13:18. Elihu thinks that it is unjust and inconsistent for Job to expect vindication from God and at the same time imply that God does not care whether we are righteous (see v. 3). But allowance must be made for a person to express his feelings. The psalmist who thirsted for God (Ps 42:1–2) also questioned why God had forgotten him (Ps 42:9) and rejected him (Ps 43:2). (CSB)

35:3 *How am I better off.* Second point made by Job, that it apparently makes no difference to God whether one sins or does not sin. Elihu maintains that it is inconsistent to expect vindication because of innocence and at the same time maintain that God does not care how a person acts. Elihu here overreacts and fails to allow Job to express his feelings, as did the psalmist in Ps 42; 43. (TLSB)

35:4 *friends.* Those who share Job’s ideas, some of whom are probably present and listening to Elihu’s speech. But Job is foremost on his mind, and Elihu is confident that he will be able to help him. (TLSB)

35:5 *Look up at the heavens and see.* Elihu asserts that God is so far above man that there is really nothing man can do, good or bad, that will affect God’s essential nature (see v. 6). (CSB)

Like Zophar in 11:7–8, Eliphaz in 22:12, and even Job in 9:8–9, and in the spirit of Ps 8:3, Elihu appeals to creation beyond the reach of human beings to support his answer that follows. (TLSB)

Neither the sins of men nor their good deeds have any effect upon the blessedness of the great god. That does not mean that God is indifferent to the conduct of men. Indeed, he regards every sin as a serious violation of his holy will. Nevertheless, God's own person is not affected by the good or the evil that Job or Elihu or you and I do. (PBC)

35:6 *accomplish against Him ... do to Him?* Elihu asserts that God is so far above people that there is nothing, good or bad, that they can do to affect His essential nature. (TLSB)

35:7 *give to Him ... receive from your hand?* While moral behavior has consequences on earth, it cannot be used to compel or persuade God. (TLSB)

35:8 *wickedness ... righteousness.* Elihu grants that moral behavior works to the good or ill of others and therefore has significance, but it does not affect the heavenly realm. (TLSB)

35:9 *people cry out ... they call for help.* Elihu states that those like Job who pray for help when suffering innocently never seem to get around to trusting the justice and goodness of their Maker, who is also the author of wisdom and joy (see vv. 10–11). Such failure is a sign of arrogance (see v. 12), so Job's complaint against God's justice and about God's silence is meaningless talk (see vv. 13–16). (CSB)

Job has charged that God lets oppressions go unrequited and that His silence only serves to encourage the wicked (24:1–12). (TLSB)

Elihu attempts to explain why God sometimes delays in delivering people from their suffering and affliction. One of the common sayings during the Second World War was, “There are no atheists in foxholes.” When people are in great danger they will cry out to God for help even though they scarcely if ever do so otherwise. (PBC)

35:10–11 *gives songs ... teaches ... makes us wiser.* God chooses to condescend, to reach out to man in love. (CSB)

This expression refers to the joy that a believer can have even in the deepest affliction, for he knows that God is with him, protects him, and will deliver him. (PBC)

35:10 *none says.* Elihu charges that while people like Job pray for help, they often are so turned in on themselves and their troubles that they fail fully to trust the justice and goodness of their Maker and turn to Him. (TLSB)

gives songs in the night. Elihu argues that the cries of the people often are not properly focused into earnest petitions for God's help, which would enable them to sing even in darkest times. In OT times, and still today, God's people sustain themselves by singing psalms (cf Ps 30:4–5; 143:7–10), expressing their disappointment in a broken world, and fostering hope that God will deliver them. (TLSB)

35:11 *teaches us more.* In 12:7–8, Job said that the beasts and birds could teach his friends. Here, Elihu states that there is more to be learned by turning to God Himself. (TLSB)

35:12 *they.* “People” of v 9. They are “evil men” because of their failure to call upon God, who has so much help to give. (TLSB)

Is it because of the arrogance of the wicked that men are crying out? A comma after the first line would change the meaning and make more sense of the verse in context: Since men are arrogant, God does not listen (see v. 13). Job himself might not be wicked, but he shares their arrogance. He too receives no answer, because he does not ask rightly (see v. 14). (CSB)

35:13 *does not hear an empty cry.* According to Elihu, the emptiness of the cry can cause God not to answer. Cries addressed to no one are fruitless. (TLSB)

35:14 *How much less.* Serious blow to Job. Elihu does not give gentle advice. If God does not hear the cries of the oppressed when they are mistakenly directed, it is even less likely that He will hear the cries of Job, who is so mistaken in his ideas and attitude. (TLSB)

35:15 *He does not take much note of transgression.* Cf v 3. Job was convinced that God judges independently of people’s conduct. This adds another reason why God does not hear his cries. Job’s false notions number him with the “pride of evil men” in v 12. (TLSB)

35:16 The reference here to Job in the third person does not necessarily mean that someone other than Job is being addressed (see note on vv. 1–16). (CSB)

without knowledge. Job echoes the Lord’s words. God states that Job’s complaining and raging against him are unjustified and proceed from limited understanding.) (CSB)

Lit, “wind,” “whiff of air.” Job’s many words lack substance. (TLSB)

multiplies words. Against God (see 34:37). (CSB)

God doesn’t exercise justice in accordance with our way of thinking. (PBC)

Ch 35 Elihu believes that Job has added unbelief to his sin by complaining so bitterly. In doing so, Elihu fails to consider some understandable human emotion on Job’s part. Not all lamenting represents unbelief. Yet our own complaints about the conditions of our lives, though humanly understandable, can betray a weakness of faith. God may use affliction to strengthen our faith and to refocus our lives on the affliction endured by His Son for our salvation. • Gracious Lord, grant that the varying circumstances of our lives will always serve to strengthen us in faith and life. Amen. (TLSB)