

JOB

Chapter 36

Elihu Extols God's Greatness

And Elihu continued, and said: 2 “Bear with me a little, and I will show you, for I have yet something to say on God's behalf. 3 I will get my knowledge from afar and ascribe righteousness to my Maker. 4 For truly my words are not false; one who is perfect in knowledge is with you. 5 “Behold, God is mighty, and does not despise any; he is mighty in strength of understanding. 6 He does not keep the wicked alive, but gives the afflicted their right. 7 He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne he sets them forever, and they are exalted. 8 And if they are bound in chains and caught in the cords of affliction, 9 then he declares to them their work and their transgressions, that they are behaving arrogantly. 10 He opens their ears to instruction and commands that they return from iniquity. 11 If they listen and serve him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness. 12 But if they do not listen, they perish by the sword and die without knowledge. 13 “The godless in heart cherish anger; they do not cry for help when he binds them. 14 They die in youth, and their life ends among the cult prostitutes. 15 He delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ear by adversity. 16 He also allured you out of distress into a broad place where there was no cramping, and what was set on your table was full of fatness. 17 “But you are full of the judgment on the wicked; judgment and justice seize you. 18 Beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing, and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside. 19 Will your cry for help avail to keep you from distress, or all the force of your strength? 20 Do not long for the night, when peoples vanish in their place. 21 Take care; do not turn to iniquity, for this you have chosen rather than affliction. 22 Behold, God is exalted in his power; who is a teacher like him? 23 Who has prescribed for him his way, or who can say, ‘You have done wrong’? 24 “Remember to extol his work, of which men have sung. 25 All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar. 26 Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable. 27 For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, 28 which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. 29 Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion? 30 Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea. 31 For by these he judges peoples; he gives food in abundance. 32 He covers his hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark. 33 Its crashing declares his presence; the cattle also declare that he rises.

36:1–37:24 Elihu’s fourth and final (see 36:2) speech (see note on 32:1–37:24 – A fourth counselor, named Elihu and younger than the other three (32:4, 6–7, 9), has been standing on the sidelines, giving deference to age and listening to the dialogue-dispute. But now he declares himself ready to show that both Job and the three other counselors are in the wrong. Elihu’s four poetic speeches (32:5–33:33; ch. 34; ch. 35; chs. 36–37) are preceded by a prose introduction (32:1–4) written by the author of the book.), addressed for the most part to Job (but see note on 37:2 – The Hebrew for this verb is plural, indicating that others (including the three friends) besides Job are being addressed here). (CSB)

36:1 *continued*. Elihu's tone becomes more compassionate, believing that he still has important wisdom from God to share with whoever is listening. Elihu's fourth and final speech continues until 37:24. (TLSB)

36:2–4 Elihu desires to strengthen the case for God's goodness and justice. (CSB)

Bear with me. Elihu remains confident that he can convince his audience if they will be patient. (TLSB)

on God's behalf. Elihu intends to strengthen the case for God's goodness and justice. (TLSB)

36:3 *knowledge from afar*. Since the source of knowledge determines its validity, Elihu claims that he can be trusted because his knowledge comes from where God dwells (i.e., his words are inspired). (TLSB)

ascribe righteousness. To show that someone is just or fair. (TLSB)

36:4 *one*. Elihu, totally confident in his ability to communicate. (TLSB)

perfect in knowledge. Here Elihu applies the phrase to himself, while in 37:16 he applies it to God—thus appearing to make himself equal to God. But the Hebrew for “knowledge” is not quite the same here as in 37:16. Elihu is probably referring to his ability as a communicator, i.e., he claims perfection in the knowledge of speech. (CSB)

Also used in 37:16 with reference to God, but with different Hbr usage. Same Hbr word for “perfect” is used in 1:1; 1:8; and 2:3 to characterize Job. Here, Elihu claims knowledge of speech that is perfect or complete, i.e., beyond reproof or rebuttal. (TLSB)

Elihu is eager to share his “knowledge” and assumes that he can communicate it effectively (see note on 36:4). – He is speaking particularly to Job since the word “you” is in the singular in the Hebrew. (PBC)

36:5 *strength of understanding*. Lit, “strength of heart.” God punishes the wicked and defends the just without fail. (TLSB)

God's power assures the fulfillment of his purpose. (CSB)

36:6–9 A classic statement of God's justice in rewarding the righteous and punishing sinners (in contrast to what Job has been claiming). In v. 7 Elihu perhaps has in mind Job's complaint that God will not leave him alone (see 7:17–19), and in v. 9 he may be thinking of Job's charge that God will not present his indictment against him (see 31:35–36). (CSB)

36:6 *wicked ... afflicted*. In response to Job's rhetorical question (21:7), Elihu asserts that God does deliver justice to the afflicted by judging the wicked and terminating their successes. (CSB)

36:7–9 *the righteous*. Those who are faithful to God in due time are exalted like kings, as in the story of Joseph (Gn 37; 39–50). (TLSB)

they. The “righteous” from v 7 can fall victim to pride when elevated to important positions and then stray from the right way. (TLSB)

bound in chains. Chains used for captives kept them from escaping as in Na 3:10.(TLSB)

cords of affliction. Affliction makes those who err conscious that they are bound in sins. (TLSB)

declares to them their work. Elevation to important positions may make them proud and arrogant. (TLSB)

36:7 *does not withdraw his eyes...kings on the throne* – Those words remind us of two OT heroes, Joseph and Daniel. Both men suffered unjustly, faced severe temptations, and were eventually exalted to important positions. (PBC)

36:10 *makes them listen to correction.* Elihu states that God uses trouble to gain man’s attention. (TLSB)

opens their ears. God makes them pay attention. *to instruction.* Lit, “to His warning.” God continues to work with them though they have fallen into sin, causing them to accept obediently what is being taught, as in Is 50:4–5. (TLSB)

return. Repent and turn away from evildoing. See note, 22:23. God uses affliction to cause the righteous who have sinned to return to a faithful way of life. (TLSB)

Elihu speaks of affliction in a two-fold manner: as a wholesome discipline for the righteous, and as well-deserved punishment for the ungodly (verses 8-11). (PBC)

36:11 *listen.* One of two possible responses to affliction. The first is to recognize God speaking through affliction, submit to His instruction, and experience a pleasant change in one’s life. (TLSB)

complete their days. They will live a full and long life. (TLSB)

prosperity ... pleasantness. From Hbr words similar in meaning: “happiness,” “success,” “well-being” (i.e., “the greatest happiness”). (TLSB)

36:12 *perish by the sword.* Second of two possible responses to affliction by the righteous who have fallen into sin. If those who suffer do not obey God’s instruction through affliction, they will meet with a premature end. (TLSB)

die without knowledge. Reason for their early death. Since they have rejected God, He has withdrawn His breath (34:14), and they perish. (TLSB)

36:13–15 Elihu understands that the basic spiritual need of man stems from his hardness of heart—his refusal to yield to God, to cry out to God in his distress (see Ps 107), or to hear the voice of God in suffering. (CSB)

In newspaper and television reports we frequently see examples of such hardened people today – people who murder others and mutilate the bodies of their victims. In many instances they give no indication that they are sorry for having committed such horrible crimes. Even the sure prospect of death in the electric chair seems to make no impression on some criminals. (PBC)

36:13 *godless in heart.* Those who do not believe and trust in God (cf 8:13). (TLSB)

cherish anger. They become obstinate and stay angry at their circumstances and at God. (TLSB)

binds them. Describes the extent of the conditions God has brought upon them. Elihu understands that the basic spiritual need of people stems from their hardness of heart—including their refusal to yield to God, to cry out to Him in distress (Ps 107:13), or to hear His voice in suffering. (TLSB)

36:14 *cult prostitutes.* Ritual prostitution was an important feature of Canaanite fertility religion. The Israelites had been warned by Moses not to engage in this abominable practice (see Dt 23:17–18; see also 1Ki 15:12; 2Ki 23:7; Hos 4:14). (CSB)

Lit, “among the male prostitutes.” Speaks of dying in shame. Alludes to the short lives of temple prostitutes of the Canaanite religions. (TLSB)

In ancient times wild sexual orgies accompanied the practice of many heathen religions. Both male and female prostitutes participated in the revelry which included both homosexual and heterosexual activities. These lewd activities still take place today in certain occult groups. Such profligate life often leads to disease and an early death. (PBC)

36:15 Summary statement by Elihu as he teaches Job and his friends how God uses affliction and adversity to deliver the righteous when they have fallen into sin. (TLSB)

36:16–21 Elihu warns Job to respond to God’s discipline by turning away from evil (see v. 21). Verse 16 shows that he still views Job as a man for whom there is hope. (CSB)

36:16 *He also allured you.* With tender compassion, God brings his people back to himself (see Hos 2:14). (CSB)

allured. Same verb as in 2:3, where God says that Satan “incited” Him against His servant Job. Elihu thinks there is still hope for Job. God, with tender compassion, delivers His people (Hos 2:14). (TLSB)

out of distress. Lit, “from the jaws of distress.” God is endeavoring to pull Job away from even greater sorrow. (TLSB)

a broad place. In Hbr thought, broad, open spaces symbolized deliverance or prosperity, while cramped, narrow places symbolized distress and oppression. (TLSB)

table was full of fatness. Elihu wants Job to believe that God intends to restore him to prosperity with a large household and a table piled high with rich food. (TLSB)

36:17 *you.* Job is full of judgment, not prosperity. (TLSB)

judgment on the wicked. Judgment rightly due to wicked people. (TLSB)

36:18 *wrath ... scoffing.* Job’s anger could interfere with God’s instruction and returning to Him. (TLSB)

ransom. Hbr *kopher*, lit, “covering,” “atonement,” used to end trouble (Yom Kippur, “day of atonement”). Word can be used in the context of a bribe (1Sm 12:3). Elihu wants Job to return to God without resentment. (TLSB)

The KJV reads, “Beware lest wrath entice you to scoffing; and do not let the greatness of the ransom turn you aside.” Kretzmann says, “Job should not let the heat of his afflictions mislead him by its greatness and thus become guilty of presumptuous mocking.” In this verse the word translated “bribe” is the same word in the same word in the Hebrew as the word “ransom” in Job 33:24. There Elihu quotes the Angel whom we identified as the Son of God as saying, “I have found a ransom for him.” (PBC)

36:19 *cry for help ... force of your strength?* Rhetorical question. Elihu warns Job that none of his own resources will help him escape his afflictions brought about by his sin. (TLSB)

36:20 *long for the night*. Job often ends his speeches by speaking of his death, which is associated with darkness (7:21; 10:18–22; 17:13–16). Elihu encourages Job not to look for escape in premature death but to learn from his suffering. (TLSB)

vanish. Sudden, quiet departure in death. (TLSB)

36:21 *take care; do not turn to iniquity Beware of turning to evil*. Elihu’s evaluation of Job is the opposite of God’s (see 1:8; 2:3). (CSB)

Elihu says that Job is mistaken in giving vent to his feelings by complaining to God and insisting on bringing his case before him. (PBC)

this you have chosen. Elihu is fearful that Job has already made the wrong choice by seeking to avoid his affliction rather than learning from it. (TLSB)

36:22–33 Elihu anticipates some of God’s statements in the discourses of chs. 38–41. (CSB)

36:22 *God is exalted*. Important part of God’s teaching is the use of discipline. (TLSB)

36:23 *prescribed for Him*. Rhetorical questions. No one has the right to tell God how to act, so no one can accuse Him of failing to act in the right way. (TLSB)

36:24 *extol his work...men have sung*. Elihu urges Job to praise God rather than blame him. We also ought to keep that in mind. It is easy to complain when things go wrong. (PBC)

Remember to extol. People are to praise God, not challenge Him. *men have sung*. Luth: “When sadness comes to you and threatens to gain the upper hand, then say: Come, I must play our Lord Christ a song on the organ (be it the *Te Deum laudamus* or the *Benedictus*); for Scripture teaches me that He loves to hear joyful song and stringed instruments. And strike the keys with a will, and sing out until the thoughts disappear, as David and Elisha (1 Sam. 16:23; 2 Kings 3:15) did. If the devil returns and suggests cares or sad thoughts, then defend yourself with a will and say: Get out, devil, I must now sing and play to my Lord Christ” (WLS § 3105). (TLSB)

36:25 *it*. God’s power displayed in creation. (TLSB)

36:26 *is unsearchable*. See 37:5. That God’s ways and thoughts are infinitely higher than ours is an important theme in chs. 38–41. (CSB)

We cannot fully know God's greatness or fathom His age in human years. (TLSB)

36:27–38:1 Although Scripture does not tell us specifically what was happening as Elihu spoke, the context suggests that there was a storm brewing and then breaking loose during this time, which culminated in the Lord's appearance in the whirlwind. (TLSB)

36:27 *draws up the drops of water.* Elihu demonstrates a good understanding of the water cycle. Cf Ec 1:7. (TLSB)

36:28 *drop on mankind.* "Man" (Hbr 'adam) is related to Hbr word for "earth" ('adamah). As the earth receives its rain, so also does mankind. (TLSB)

36:29 *Can anyone understand.* Grammar anticipates a negative answer. (TLSB)

pavilion? In 27:18, the same Hbr word refers to the hut of a watchman. Here, it refers to God's abode in heaven. (TLSB)

36:30 *covers the roots of the sea.* Lightning's brightness reveals even the depths of the sea. (TLSB)

36:31 *by these He judges.* Elihu believes the water cycle and storms are under God's control, used by Him not only to provide food in abundance but also to discipline the peoples of the earth. (TLSB)

36:32 *covers His hands with the lightning.* Lit, "upon hands He covers light." God takes hold of lightning like a tool. Despite its zigzag route, lightning follows God's command. "O Thou strong and almighty God, I hear Thy voice in the clouds; I see Thy lightnings flash, and listen to the roar and noise of Thy thunder. Strong is Thine arm and great Thy might; if Thou chooseth, Thou canst in the twinkling of an eye dash me and all men, together with all creatures, to the ground. But, O Lord, Lord, remember Thy tender mercies and Thy loving-kindness; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions; according to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness' sake. Rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure" (Starck, p 467). (TLSB)

36:33 *cattle also declare* – many people who are well acquainted with domestic animals have held the opinion that cattle can sense the coming of a storm and will act in a disturbed manner. (PBC)

Cattle seem to know when a storm is coming. (TLSB)

Interestingly, in my experience cattle gather under trees or near fences when storms approach. Both of these places make them much more vulnerable to lightning strikes.

Ch 36 Elihu counsels Job that the Lord uses affliction not just for our punishment but also for our deliverance. Allow affliction to open your ears (v 15b) to learn the Lord's purposes, and to open your mouth in praises (v 24). Praise Christ most highly, who delivers you from evil by His agony and bloody sweat. • O Lord, lay Your hands on the cross, and use that tool for my instruction and deliverance. Amen. (TLSB)