

# JOB

## Chapter 32

*Elihu Rebukes Job's Three Friends*

**So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2 Then Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, burned with anger. He burned with anger at Job because he justified himself rather than God. 3 He burned with anger also at Job's three friends because they had found no answer, although they had declared Job to be in the wrong. 4 Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he. 5 And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, he burned with anger. 6 And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said: "I am young in years, and you are aged; therefore I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you. 7 I said, 'Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom.' 8 But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. 9 It is not the old who are wise, nor the aged who understand what is right. 10 Therefore I say, 'Listen to me; let me also declare my opinion.' 11 "Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your wise sayings, while you searched out what to say. 12 I gave you my attention, and, behold, there was none among you who refuted Job or who answered his words. 13 Beware lest you say, 'We have found wisdom; God may vanquish him, not a man.' 14 He has not directed his words against me, and I will not answer him with your speeches. 15 "They are dismayed; they answer no more; they have not a word to say. 16 And shall I wait, because they do not speak, because they stand there, and answer no more? 17 I also will answer with my share; I also will declare my opinion. 18 For I am full of words; the spirit within me constrains me. 19 Behold, my belly is like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins ready to burst. 20 I must speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer. 21 I will not show partiality to any man or use flattery toward any person. 22 For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away.**

**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. (CSB)

The name Elihu means "my God is he" or "he is my God." (PBC)

**Ch 32** It was customary for people to sit together after calamity and try to determine the cause (Jnh 1:7; Jsh 7), esp if the calamity fell on the whole community. (TLSB)

**32:1** *righteous in his own eyes.* He insisted on his innocence in spite of the terrible suffering that he was experiencing. (CSB)

Author hints that Job was vindicated only in his own eyes and not before God. Elihu's speeches (chs 32–37) are aimed at correcting this basic flaw in Job's relationship to God. Job was not serving God "for no reason" (1:9). Because he expected a reward for his piety, he ranted against God's administration of justice. Before God Himself appears on the scene (chs 38–42), Elihu plays the role of His defense attorney. He has "something to say on God's behalf" in order to "ascribe righteousness to" his Maker (36:2–3). In defending divine providence, he operates in

part with the principles advocated by Job's three friends. However, he does not attempt to relate them primarily and directly to Job's situation, as they did, but rather urges him to see himself in the perspective of God's absolute perfection. God, he points out, is just—for the simple reason that He is God, the almighty Creator of the universe and the omniscient Ruler of heaven and earth. God is not affected in His being by the behavior of puny people; nevertheless, He is concerned about the destiny of the work of His hand. According to His good and gracious will, He uses affliction to correct and purify humankind. (TLSB)

**32:2–3** *anger*. Elihu considers Job's emphasis on vindicating himself rather than God reprehensible, but he also believes that the friends' inability to refute Job was tantamount to condemning God. (CSB)

**32:2** *Elihu*. "He is my God." *Barachel*. "El (God) blesses." Elihu comes from a godly family. (TLSB)

*Buzite*. An inhabitant of Buz, a desert region in the east (see Jer 25:23). (CSB)

Probably a native of Buz in eastern Arabia. He is an outsider in this circle of friends, which makes him all the more hesitant to speak. (TLSB)

**32:3** *answer*. Job's three friends were unable to muster a response to Job's self-defense. (TLSB)

**32:4** *older than he*. Honor of speaking first was given to those who were thought to be wiser due to their age. (TLSB)

**32:6, 10, 17** *declare my opinion to you*. Elihu is eager to share his "knowledge" and assumes that he can communicate it effectively. (CSB)

**32:6** *young ... afraid*. See Jer 1:6–8; 1Ti 4:12; 2Ti 1:7. (CSB)

Just because he is young those men ought not write him off as having nothing to contribute. The Lord could use him as well as he can use anyone. (PBC)

**32:8** *breath of the Almighty*. Only God the Lord gives true spiritual wisdom. (TLSB)

**32:10** *I say* – There is general agreement that Elihu's style of speaking is rather pompous, verbose, and repetitive. "I", "me," and "my" dominate the early part of his discussion, occurring more than fifty times. Many scholars label him an arrogant young man; others regard him as a young man who speaks the truth bluntly but with deep conviction. Perhaps there is some truth in both views. Unquestionably Elihu was excited when he spoke. That can partly account for his wordiness. By their silence they now admitted that they had gotten nowhere in convincing Job of those special sins. (PBC)

**32:13** *God may vanquish him, not a man*. Elihu warns against the pride in Job's friends. They presume that if they could not overcome Job's self-righteousness, only God could—no other person could. (TLSB)

**32:14** *I will not answer him with your speeches*. Elihu feels that something important has been left out and, where the wisdom of age has failed, he by the Spirit of God (see NIV text note on v. 8) has the understanding to supply the right answers. (CSB)

**32:15–22** Elihu delivers a soliloquy to himself, but it is also for the benefit of those who may be listening. (CSB)

**32:15–16** *not a word yo say...they answer no more.* See v. 5. The breakdown of the third cycle in the dialogue-dispute cut short Bildad's last word and left Zophar without a third speech. (CSB)

**32:18** *I am full of words.* Elihu's speeches continue unabated through ch. 37. He has a genuine contribution to make, however, to the problems Job is facing. At the same time, he does not stoop to false accusation about Job's earlier life but usually confines his criticism of Job to quotations from Job himself. This is perhaps the reason that God, in the epilogue, does not condemn Elihu along with Job's three friends (see 42:7). (CSB)

*spirit.* Here Elihu is speaking of the strong conviction within himself. In Jb, "spirit" refers to the Spirit of God only once (33:4). (TLSB)

**32:19** *new wineskins ready to burst.* Old wineskins might be expected to crack or break (see Mt 9:17), but not new ones. Elihu is obviously eager to speak. (CSB)

When wine is fermenting, it produces carbon dioxide. The gas causes pressure in the container and will cause its lid to blow if not properly vented. Elihu is compelled to speak a word to Job, as though under pressure (cf Jer 20:9). (TLSB)

**Ch 32** Martin Luther believed God allowed Job's suffering to try and test his faith. When we feel such trials, we, too, can be comforted knowing that God is not punishing us because of our sin, but is strengthening our faith through testing. • Lord, guide me by the answers of Your Word, and silence the opinions of those who break counsel with You. Amen. (TLSB)