

Study 4 - Job, by Neville Clark- The preparation of Job

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This is the next section of the book of Job, a very intriguing section in fact, this is the section in which Elihu now speaks, so you will recall that what we have done is that we have found that in the first couple of chapters there are two rounds of conversation between Yahweh and Satan, which commences the affliction that then besets Job. Then for the next 20-odd chapters, Job and his three friends who came to commiserate with him appear to go round and round in circles as they try to unlock the reason for Job's suffering, and as you will appreciate, the friends really make no progress in that entire discussion, with Bildad's last speech in Ch 25, being somewhat of a summary of Eliphaz' first speech in Ch 4. The friends, of course, are limited by their view of exact retribution, that false doctrine of exact retribution, that God deals with people in an immediate sense in this life, based on their conduct for good or for bad. Therefore, although Job appeared to be living an extremely godly life, the fact that he was suffering now, such grave calamities, must mean that he was an out and out hypocrite, and clearly God was displeased with him. His external righteousness must be external only, and he was really a very corrupt sinner. The friends, therefore, were all about trying to elicit a confession from Job, because it seemed clear to them that he was going to die very, very quickly, and that the best thing that he could do would be to confess his sin, and to repent before he died.

Well, of course, that wasn't true at all, Job wasn't the sinner that they thought he was, and the sins that they began to make up, that they created, weren't true at all. In fact Job was being tried only because of a discussion that Satan had with God right at the outset of the book, which of course, none of the participants thereof knew about at all. But what happened in the process of Job's three friends going round and round in circles, and beating him over the head with this continual berating argument of his wickedness, was that even if they made no progress, Job made considerable progress in his understanding of his relationship with God, and to such an extent, that by the end of Ch 31, well, Job had lost everything, I mean he had completely lost everything apart from his character, but nothing could take his character from him. He got to the position where he basically said, 'Well you know, even if God changes his character, I will never ever change my character.' And so of course, Satan was wrong, even if Job did lose all the money and all the blessings God gave him, he would never ever curse God, so much so, he says — and I speak with respect, that even God would leave the Truth before Job did.

And that's where things have got to at the end of Ch 31 and Job had a number of charges now that he was going to bring against God because he believed that God was doing a poor job of ruling the world. God wasn't treating him justly and as you have on your hand outs, five at least charges that Job thought to bring against God as he desired his day in court. Well, when you come to Ch 32 and we introduce the next character of the story, and that's the young man Elihu. And Elihu is now going to speak between Chs 32 and 37 and so this is the next section of the book of Job, and as we mentioned yesterday there are four rounds, or four cycles of speech which Elihu commences upon. Now the exact place of Elihu in the entire book of Job is a subject which has given rise to an enormous debate, even within the brotherhood. And the question really is, Was he good or was he bad? Does he help the situation here, or does he hinder the situation, or does he just interfere? And the problem is made worse by the fact that you could cut out the whole speech that Elihu makes here and the book of Job would read seamlessly even if you ignore it. I will show you what I mean. You look at Ch 31:35, at the end of Job speaking, I mean Job's not going to speak any more after this, apart from some interaction that he has with God at the end. But in v 35 of Ch 31 as Job concludes his words, he says "Oh that one would hear me, behold my desire is that the Almighty would

answer me and mine adversary had written a book," so he wants God's charges put down on a piece of paper, so that he can defend himself against them.

Well, you know, when you come to Ch 38:1 God answers him. "Oh," he says, "that one would hear me, my desire of the almighty is that he would answer me," that's what he said in Ch 31, well in Ch 38:1, it says that "Yahweh then answered Job out of a whirlwind Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge," So God does answer him, you see. So my point is, you could delete Chs 32 to 37 and the whole book of Job would read seamlessly as though nothing had ever gone wrong. So what is the need for Elihu? 'What part does Elihu play' therefore, becomes the question. If, as I say, and I think you can see, if we omitted his entire contribution we would still have a perfectly literal reading of the book.

In fact, it has been suggested that Elihu is nothing more than a disrespectful young person who bursts into the record uninvited. I mean you remember that the three friends had made an appointment to come and see Job, but Elihu wasn't part of that appointment. He just turns up in this record, bursts in uninvited, sounds off against the three friends, which he does, sounds off against Job, which he does, and doesn't really solve anything, because Yahweh still has to come and speak after Elihu's finished, commencing in Ch 38.

So the question is Well what does he do that's of value? He was extremely angry with Job, I might say, V 2, If you have got a coloured pencil, just note the repetition here. "Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel.' Towards the end of the verse, "Against Job was his wrath kindled." "Against the three friends, v 3, was his wrath kindled." V 5, "When Elihu saw there was no answer in the mouth of these three men then was his wrath kindled." You see, he comes into the record almost like an angry young man, and he is going to take a piece out of each of them. And people have looked at this and said 'Well you know, is this just a young man that's lost control of himself in his immaturity who comes into this debate, uninvited.

Well, not quite, the other interesting thing is, Elihu does wait, he does wait for 20-odd chapters before he even says a word. He appears to have been the silent listener to this whole debate which has been going on up until now, and you can see that almost a tidal wave is building up in him. When you look at V 4, "Now Elihu had waited until Job had spoken." V 11 "Behold I waited for your words," he says. V 16, "When I had waited, for they spake not and stood still." So he waits and he waits and he waits until everyone's spoken their piece, until Job has had his two major soliloquies, the monologues we call them, and then you get to the end of Ch 31 and the words of Job are ended and there is a break in the conversation. The three friends are standing there with their mouths open at what they have just heard Job say. Job has finished it and wipes his hands like this, and now they are looking at each other, at which point Elihu now comes into the picture, having waited. and waited and waited. His anger is building up and up and up as he hears what's been going on before him, and he says in v 18 of Ch 32, "I am full of the matter," he says, "the spirit in me constrained me, behold my belly is as wine which has no vent," it is ready to burst like new bottles. 'If I don't say something soon,' he says, 'I am going to explode. I can't believe what I am hearing from you three and from you Job.'

You see, so this is the emotion that Elihu brings into this debate in the first chapter. He is extremely emotional in what he says. On the other hand you know, Job wasn't short of answers when he debated with the friends. So you can see why Elihu might have been thought to have been disrespectful here. But when Job debates with the three friends, he's not short of answers at all. He was very quick to answer them on what they said, very quick to disagree that he had committed these greave sins of character which they have accused him of, and when he finally turns his attention to defeating their argument, it was all over in a couple of chapters from about Ch 22 onwards. There was no shortage of words from Job when he debated with the three friends. But when Elihu starts speaking here in Ch 32, Job says nothing. And Elihu disagrees with him strongly and Job says nothing, in fact Elihu invites Job to speak. 'Tell me Job, is that

what you said?' 'Have I misinterpreted you, have I got something wrong?' 'Tell me, answer me Job, I am here for you.' Silence. Not a word from Job throughout Elihu's speeches.

So the point is that it can't simply be that Elihu is just a simply a disrespectful young person who contributes nothing. Job, it appears, is unable to answer Elihu, completely unable to answer Elihu. In v6 it tells you here, in Ch 32, "Elihu' it says, "the son of Barachel answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old." You remember that Eliphaz was at a least a generation older than Job, he was a friend of Job's father, so there were a lot of years between the oldest of the three friends and Eliphaz himself. So he comes in and recognises the fact that he is young compared with them. "Wherefore," he says, "I was afraid and durst not show you mine opinion." 'I had to defer, I mean common courtesy alone requires me to defer until the older brethren have spoken,' and he acknowledges that. "I said," v 7, "days should speak." The older brethren should speak. 'Multitude of years should speak wisdom,' he says. So there is respect for his seniors in the mouth of Elihu, but the problem was that the multitude of years, in this case, did not speak a great deal of wisdom. They couldn't defeat Job, in fact they only irritated Job and painted him into a corner and sent Job like a catapult out this way, and now Job's spoken words which are extremely ill-advised.

It says in v 8, an interesting verse, that I will just draw your attention to, v 8 of Ch 32. "But there is a spirit of man and the inspiration of the almighty giveth them understanding Some have read this verse to suggest that Job may have been inspired, so, you see, even across the brotherhood, you've got these extremes of view. On the one hand Job is a presumptuous young person who bursts in to the conversation uninvited and says nothing. On the other end of the extreme you've got the suggestion that Elihu is inspired himself, because of, for example, v 8. I don't think that this suggests that Job is inspired, where it says here that "the inspiration of the almighty gives me understanding," I think it is the inspired word gives me understanding. I don't believe that this is saying that Elihu is inspired. If Elihu was inspired, he would know the real reason for Job's suffering, he would know why this whole thing had gone on. If he was inspired he would be speaking directly from God and you've got to say that there would therefore be no need for God to come in and speak separately in Ch 38. So it can't be that Elihu is an angel, it can't be that Elihu is inspired.

The interesting thing that I would say is, Elihu comes into the record in Ch 32, he disappears from the record in Ch 37, he wasn't part of the appointment that was made in Ch 2, he isn't included with the three friends in Ch 42, when God dresses them down for their conduct, so he comes into the record silently, he disappears silently, almost as if he was providentially there to inject this redirection of the argument, comes and goes without notice. I believe, brothers and sisters, that he adds a vital piece to this argument, an extremely vital piece to this argument, in fact, I would go so far as to suggest that if we did take a pen-knife and we cut the chapters of Elihu out of the book of Job, and we read from Ch 31 straight into Ch 38, then God's dealing with Job in Ch 38 might have been catastrophic. I mean, he might well have killed Job. Understand, Job is extremely aggressive in Ch 31, he's brought these charges against God and he is furious in Ch 31. If when the voice comes from the whirlwind in Ch 38 and answered Job, and Job had gone straight to God with the aggression he had in Ch 31, I don't think the conversation would have lasted very long, and Elihu brings some reality to this discussion which Job cannot answer, which probably saves Job's life. So there's a lot at stake you know, when you start to read the words of Elihu.

Well, who was he? Ch 32:1, These three men cease to answer Job because he was righteous in his own eyes, and that was true. "And then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite of the kindred of Ram. Against Job was his wrath kindled because Job had justified himself rather than God." He is a Buzite, it says, and Gen 2:21 Buz was a descendant of Nahor, the brother of Abraham, so like the friends, Elihu was a distant relation of Job. The name Elihu, and this is important, actually means "God is he." "God is he." And straight away it gives you a clue to Elihu's purpose, because you see, we read in Ch 31:35 that Job's desire was the the Almighty would answer him. He wanted an audience with God, and earlier in the discussion, Job had talked about how that audience might be obtained, because Job believed earlier on that he couldn't stand and speak to God directly, he couldn't have a personal audience with God. What he needed was a mediator, and umpire, a daysman, and you read about that in Ch 9:33. And why

did Job need an umpire? Well because God was too powerful for Job, God could just destroy him, he could overwhelm him in a moment. He could terrify him, and the purpose of the discussion that Job wanted to have with God, was for God to tell Job what he had done wrong. To tell Job what he had done to deserve all the suffering that he was going through.

Look what Elihu says here, Ch 33:6, "Well," he says to Job, God is he, right? "Well," he says, "behold, I am according to thy wish, in God's stead. But I also am formed out of the clay." 'You wanted somebody, Job to represent your case to God or God's case to you, well, I'm going to stand here and do it for you.' Elihu means 'God is he,' and you can see where this is going, brothers and sisters, he says "I am according to thy wish in God's stead, but I am also formed out of the clay." You might like to take a note, Matt 1:33, "Behold a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel which being interpreted is, God with us." 'I am according to thy wish in God's stead,' he is going to represent God to man, but I am also formed out of the clay,' Heb 2:14, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself, likewise, took part of the same." So he could represent God to man but he could still understand man's condition, because he is also formed out of the clay. He's not God, he is not an angel, he is not inspired, he is just a friend. But you can see what Elihu's done, Job has justified himself rather than God and Elihu says, 'Job, you've made a great mistake here, you've made a very big mistake. Job wants a vindicator, Job wants an umpire so that he can go to Law with God. Elihu says, 'Well, I can't do that for you Job, I can't represent your position to God, but I can represent God's position to you. You want to have the argument with God, Job? Have it with me. If you can defeat me, then by all means take the argument directly to the throne of heaven, but if you can't defeat me, maybe you want to reconsider whether you really want to take this argument to God, because if you can't defeat me, and here I am made out of clay just like you, here I am, just a man, if you can't even defeat me, God will kill you. So you wanted an umpire, here I am, I'll offer myself, Job. Have the argument now.'

Ch 33:5, "If you can answer me, set thy words in order before me" 'Stand up,' he says, 'go on then, Job, give me your best shot, show me your argument.' That's exactly what God says to Job in Ch 38:3 when the voice comes from the whirlwind, "Gird up thy loins like a man," he says, "for I will demand of thee, answer thou me." 'Stand up and give me your answer,' says God to Job. You see, Elihu has begun it by saying exactly the same thing to Job, here in Ch 33. Of course, you appreciate, arguing with Elihu was a very different proposition to arguing with God. V 7, "Behold," Elihu says, "My terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee," isn't that exactly what Job wanted? 'Remove thy hand from me, don't terrify me,' isn't that what Job asked that God should do if he was going to 'take his case to God,' Elihu says. 'I can't affect you like this.' 'I can't overwhelm you, I can't destroy you, I'm just a man like you.' So, there's the point, if you think you've got a good case to take to God, take it to me first, because if you can't defeat me, you clearly can't defeat God.

Pretty important I am going to suggest, Elihu's intervention in this whole record, extremely important. Come across to Ch 3:32 here's what Elihu is going to do for Job. It says in Ch 3:32, 'If thou hast anything to say Job, ask me.' "Speak for I desire to justify thee." 'I am on your side, Job, I genuinely want to vindicate you Job.' So you see Elihu's position, he isn't part of the group that came to see Job, he wasn't part of the appointment. He just turns up in this discussion, he says his piece, and he leaves. He leaves, perhaps before the end. He might have been right there at the end when he heard the voice of God, but he is not addressed by God as the three friends are. He just remains silent. A vital, a vital injection into the whole course of this argument by Elihu.

Elihu's approach is to start quoting back Job's arguments to him, and then to answer them. I will show you how this all works out. There are a number of places in the next few chapters where Elihu quotes Job's words and that forms the entire basis for Elihu's answers. I reckon you can get a pencil out and circle these verses because you have to understand when Elihu is speaking his own words and when he is actually quoting what Job says, back to Job. There are half a dozen places, that's all across these chapters, so here we start. The bottom of Ch 33:8, "Surely Job thou hast spoken in my hearing, I have heard the voice of thy words, saying." Ok, so verses 9, 10 and 11 are not Elihu's words, they are Elihu quoting Job. So

what Elihu says in v 9,10,11 is the basis for what he answers, you see, put a box around v 9,10 and 11. Similarly, v 13 "For why dost thou strive against God and where it says "for" he is saying, so this is a quote from Job, and "he giveth not account of any of his matters. Who can understand what God does?" "You pray and he doesn't answer, you look around and there is no explicable reason why things happen." So the last half of v 13 is another quote from Job. Ch 34:5, "For Job hath said, v 5 and 6, a quote from Job. V 9 of Ch 34, "For he hath said, it profits a man nothing that he should delight himself with God." There's another quote from Job, do you see? It is as well to understand where Elihu is speaking his own opinion, and when he is quoting Job. Finally, Ch 35:2, "Thinkest thou this to be right that thou saidst," and here's the quote, "my righteousness is more than God's," "for thou saidst v 3, what advantage is it to thee." So vs 2 and 3, he is quoting Job, and finally, Ch 35:14, "Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him....and so forth, this is the final quote from Job. So you can see, Elihu is simply quoting what Job said back to Job and then he is saying 'And this is how I would answer you. I'm not going to answer you like the friends answered you. I am not going to copy their argument, I don't agree with their argument, but this is what I think you should think about, based on what you have said. And Elihu, by the way believes that Job has sinned, I mean, the three friends believed he had sinned, but the three friends say that Job has sinned historical sins, sins of hypocrisy which he has committed and for which they are trying to get a confession. Elihu, when Elihu talks about Job's sins, he only refers to Job's sin in the debate. Job has sinned by making himself more righteous than God. He doesn't believe Job was committing these secret sins all through his life, he is going to say that you have sinned Job in the discussion in the last few hours, 'that's the sin I want to talk about,' the rest, 'Oh no, I do't believe you are the hypocrite the friends say you are.' You see, he is very much more level-headed than all the rest.

Well, OK, he begins here Ch 33:8. There are four speeches, Ch 32 is the introduction but 33 is his first speech, 34 the second speech, 35 the third speech and Chs 36 and 37 together are the fourth speech of Elihu. So here is he first speech of Elihu, Ch 33, V 8, "Surely," Job, "thou hast spoken in my hearing and I have heard the voice of thy words saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent neither is there iniquity in me. Behold God finds occasion against me he counted me for his enemy, he putteth my feet into stocks, he markest all my paths." What you find is Elihu quotes Job, here, he quotes him elsewhere as we have said, but not always does Elihu get it right, and this is one of the other points that proves that Elihu is not inspired, sometimes he does overstate what Job says. He's interpreted what Job says and put his own meaning on it, and sometimes he gets it a little bit wrong. Elihu doesn't always say exactly what Elihu quotes back but Elihu gets the general gist of Job's argument absolutely right. But my point is, the fact that he makes some small mistakes means that he is not inspired, but his argument is basically sound.

Well here is Job's major point, he is suffering in these few verses we have just read, he's suffering, but he has done nothing to deserve it. Not that Job thinks that he is sinless, but he is forgiven. So when Job says here he is "clean without transgression and innocent," Job knows of course that he sins, but if he is forgiven, then he is made clean. His major issue is that his suffering is out of all proportion to any sins that he might have done. And what's more, v 13, God gives no account of his matters, God won't answer me, at least in this life he doesn't talk to men, you can never even find out what God's will is with you and what he might be punishing you for, if that's the case.

Well, says Elihu, let's talk about how man communicates with God. There are three ways in which God communicates with man. V 14, "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceives it not. He says there two ways in which God speaks to man, and when you turn the page to Ch 33:29, you will find that he says, "Yea, all these things workers God, oftentimes with men. You see the margin there for oftentimes "twice and thrice," and so what Elihu does in Ch 33 he explains the three ways that God communicates with man. And here's the first one, v 15 "in dreams, in a vision of the night when deep sleep falls upon men and slumbering upon the bed." So the first way God communicates with men is he gives them visions. That happens, Job, God actually does communicate with man. The creation and God's rule of creation is not a complete mystery at all. He does tell men, certain men, what he is doing. That is the first way. Here is the second way God communicates with man. V 19, "Man is chastened also with pain upon his bed and a multitude of his bones with strong pain." Now Elihu is going to make this a method of communication, you say where is the communication? Elihu's point is, and I will come to this in a subsequent chapter when Elihu explains it in detail. God communicates with man through suffering. Now this is a brand new point in the debate. No one has ever said this in the discussion. God's voice is heard in the providential

experiences of life, that's Elihu's point. Job couldn't help but see himself in this because look, Elihu goes on, "So man's life abhors bread, his soul dainty meat, his flesh is consumed away. These are words that directly apply to Job, so he says, "God communicates in visions," well everyone knew that. 'God communicates through providential experience of life, it might be one thing, it might be other things,' that's a brand new point, that's Elihu's second point. And the third way, he says that God communicates with man is by messengers, v 23. "If there be a messenger with man, an interpreter, one among a thousand to show unto man God's uprightness. Now you notice I've changed a couple of words here, it is difficult to understand, v23, when scripture just uses the word "his," you've got to figure out whether the "his" is a person or whether it is God, and I think that's the correct understanding. "If there be a messenger with him," that is, with man "an interpreter, one among a thousand to show unto man his," that is, God's "uprightness." God sends mediators, God sends messengers, to man, to represent God. And this is the place that Elihu fills in Job's life at this point of time. He's going to represent God's character to Job, and he's going to offer Job the opportunity to debate with him. 'You'd better not debate with God,' you see. And this, of course, is what sets Elihu apart from the friends. One among a thousand, he makes the point, this is an extremely unique man that God sends to man. He is an interpreter, who can explain God's character to man, that's his point, who can interpret scripture for man. And v 24, "The messenger will be gracious to man," this messenger, and this messenger will say to God 'deliver man from the pit because I have found a ransom, an atonement.' So this messenger will come and speak atonement for man. What's the point, well the point, well the simple doctrinal point that Elihu makes here, is in v 24, "deliverance is on the basis of the ransom" or as the margin says, "the atonement.' Deliverance from death comes on the basis of atonement, and Vs 27 and 28, atonement comes on the basis of confession. V 27 says,"God looks upon men and if any man says, I have sinned and perverted that which is right and it profited me not," then God will deliver his soul from going down into the pit. So the minute a man confesses that God is right and he is wrong, atonement can be place. And Elihu says, "God sends messengers to men, those messengers come and they represent God's character to man. If the man confesses his wickedness and God's righteousness, then God can cover that sin and save him from death, that's the third way that God communicates with man. And this is very important at the time that Elihu says this, because look across at Ch 34:5 what's Job's problem? "Well, Job has said," says Elihu, "I am righteous and God has taken away my judgment." 'I am righteous and God is not,' or Ch 35:2, "Thinkest thou this to be right that thou saidst Job, that my righteousness is more than God's," Job's got a major misunderstanding of the character of God versus his character, and Elihu says, "God sends messengers to men to represent to them God's character God's character compared to their own and the minute a man says 'I have sinned,' Ch 33:27, 'I have perverted that which is right,' then God can deliver man, but God does have to send 'one man among a thousand' to the multitude to just help them understand the difference between their characters and God's, and that is the role that Elihu plays, you see?

In all the communication God has with man, the objective is the same. Look at Ch 33:18, "God keeps back man's soul from the pit and his life from perishing." V 22, "Yea, his soul draws near to the grave and his life to the destroyers." V 24, "then he is gracious to man and says deliver him from the pit." V 28, "God will deliver man's soul from going to the pit." V 30,"to bring back his soul from the pit." This is all about saving man from death, that is the purpose of God's communication with him, and what did I say? About five verses there I read, all the same point in this particular section. That's why God communicates with man, you see? I think it is fair to say it, brothers and sisters, Job just hasn't just seen it before, he hasn't thought that this might be the case, look at V 32. "Job if thou hast anything to say, answer me," 'speak now Job, if I've got this wrong and I am misrepresenting you, if I am misrepresenting God, you think, tell me now, speak for I desire to justify thee. But if I haven't got it wrong, Job, then listen to me. "Hold thy peace and I will teach thee wisdom." 'I think you've gone too far Job, but please tell me if I have misinterpreted anything.' Silence. Absolute silence from Job, you see? Elihu is right isn't he. So that's the end of Ch 33.

Ch 34, second speech. V 5, Job. You say "I am righteous and God has taken away my judgment." In fact, Job you say V 9, "It profile the a man nothing if he should delight himself with God." 'What's the point of being in the Truth, that's what you are saying Job, isn't it. That's what you are saying, well let's take these one at a time.' V 10 "Therefore hearken to me ye men of understanding, far be it from God that he should do wickedness and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity." God is not wicked, Job, that is just not true. God is not unrighteous, he's not unjust, he's not wicked. V 14 "If God set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath, then all flesh would perish together." 'Man would return to the dust. God is omnipotent, He is all-powerful. And Job, I might say if God really did want to kill you, what's taking him so long? If God did really want to kill you as you believe, you'd be dead already. He'd just go

whoof and withdraw it and you'd fall to the ground in an instant. Well, that hasn't happened Job, so it doesn't appear to me that God does want to kill you because it seems very obvious to me that if he wanted to it would happen before we finished this sentence. Perhaps, therefore, there is another reason for your suffering.' You see, he is pretty astute. Elihu, he is starting to put things together isn't he?

Ch 34:21, "For God's eyes are upon the ways of man he seeth all his goings," 'God is omniscient, he does know everything, he knows about the injustice in creation, he knows all of these things and I might say, sometimes he deals with that.' Look at v 20, Ch 34:20 "In a moment shall they die and the people shall be troubled at midnight and pass away and the mighty shall be taken away without hand." 'Look around Job, just cast your mind back across history, don't you find it strange that sometimes unexpected things happen, unbelievable things happen, and people who are in height positions, all of a sudden die, they just get taken out of the way, because God is trying to change the direction of his creation. It happens to the least expected person at the least expected time, but major things change. God is in control, actually, of creation, Job. He might not be controlling it like you want, but there is no question he is in control of creation because look at the obvious providential things that have happened around us.

Ch 34:31, "Surely it is meet to be said unto God," that is to say, 'the right response to God is' "I have borne chastisement I will not offend anymore." 'Humble yourself Job.' "That which I see not," V 32, "teach thou me, if I have done iniquity, I will do no more," 'Isn't that what you should be saying Job? Don't accuse God of injustice, Job, humble your self before God, but understand this.' As I say, Elihu is not supporting the doctrine of the three friends where he talks about Job's iniquity, the iniquity I believe he speaks of is the iniquity in the debate. Job's allegations, Job's accusations against God, of God's injustice and so forth, that's Job's iniquity, not any of this nonsense about secret sins. Chastening is a means of communication from God, not just punishment. In fact, V 36, "My desire is that Job may be tried unto he end because of his answers for wicked men," or as it should be, 'because of his answers like a wicked man.' 'Job, until you learn your right place with God, I can't see any reason for the suffering to stop. My desire is that the suffering continues until you have come to your senses, because that's the purpose of it, Job. Well, going against trial, won't get you anywhere. For God to remove the trial that you are currently under, Job, would be the worst possible thing for you. Well, it sounds pretty tough what Elihu is saying, but that is basically where he is up to. Job, with you, God's got to be cruel to be kind.' To have removed the trial before now would not have done obviously what he wants to do. That 's the end of the third speech, Ch 35.

Now let's come back to another point, Ch 35:3, "You say, what advantage would it be unto thee," "What profit should I have if I be cleansed from my sin," or as the NIV says, "What profit is it to me and what do I gain by not sinning?" So Job now contemplates for a fleeting moment the prospect of leaving the Truth, what's the point of being righteous? You know that by the end of Job's speech he says, 'there is every point in being righteous,' but throughout the debate he had said this. He had said, 'Well you know, the wicked prosper, nothing goes wrong for them, they have big families, they live a long time, but here am I living an extremely Godly life, marking every one of my steps, and look what's happening to me?' A thinking man might say, 'Well what's the point of this?' Well Elihu quotes him back, and says, 'now you have said this, Job, What's the point of not sinning?' 'Well,' he says, 'the first point is that ultimately, whether you sin, or whether you don't sin, you really can't affect God, V 6, If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him, God? Or if thy transgression be multiplied, what doest thou unto Him?' So you see, if you see sufferings as a punishment from God and you decide to punish God back by signing, you should understand that your punishment won't work. No, V8 "Thy wickedness might hurt a man as thou art and thy righteousness may profit the son of man," certainly your conduct may affect yourself and it can affect other people, but understand that if you decide to punish God - whenever have you ever thought to do this, brothers and sisters, things aren't going too well in your life, you think God is down on you for some reason, and you say 'Well, it is not fair, this shouldn't be happening to me, but because it is happening to me, I'm going to take a liberty, I am going to do something ungodly, I am going to do something I shouldn't do, because, God should understand.' It is a very human thing to do, actually, it might sound alarming, that I would suggest that you of all people could do such a thing, but, I think that, you think that. Elihu says, you can't affect God by whether you sin or whether you don't sin, you certainly affect people by whether you sin, but it can't do anything to God. Never think to punish God back for how things are going in life, by doing something before him which he doesn't like, never think to do that, Job.

In fact, he says, now you've been praying Job, v 13 "Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it." A consistent life, Job, is a pre-requisite to answered prayer, so things aren't going as you would like them to go and you decided to punish God back for how he is treating you, don't pretend that he is going to listen to your prayers, you are only going to start the spiral downwards, Job, if you think like this.' Amazing isn't it to see this sort of thing recorded in Scripture. V16, "Therefore does Job open his mouth in vain, he multiplied words without knowledge." 'You say, V 14, Job, that God doesn't listen to my case when it is right in front of him. My case is right in front of God and he is not listening to me, and in V 15, Job, you say further that God's anger never punishes, it doesn't take the least notice of wickedness, God doesn't act against wickedness, but as I say Job, in V 13, a godly conduct, or a consistent life, is a pre-requisite for answered prayer, God doesn't hear vanity. Well just be glad he doesn't, because if God did answer your prayer, in the frame of mind you are in now, he might punish you even more. Just be glad God doesn't answer the prayer of inconsistent people, change your life Job, and then re-approach God in prayer.'

End of the fourth speech, Ch 36. You see, this is an extremely astute speech from Elihu. 'Now Job, let's talk about the chastening of God, let's us talk about this whole suffering thing,' Ch 36:7, look at this, brothers and sisters, this is most interesting. Ch 36:7, "God withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous but with kings are they on the throne, yea he doth establish them forever and they are exalted. And if they be bound in fetters and holden in cords of affliction, then God showeth them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He opened also their ear to discipline and commandeth that they return from iniquity." What is that saying? V 7 Point 1, the righteous are kings with God. He doesn't oppress them, he exalts them, that is how God views the righteous. V 9 When things go wrong for us, we examine our lives very carefully, and often the first question we ask is 'What have I done to deserve that?' Well, that's a fair enough question, exact retribution isn't true, but that is probably not an unhealthy question to ask, because you could ask that question every day. V 10 'Then we listen to God.' When things go bad, we listen to God. Look at V 15, God delivers the poor in his affliction, he openeth their ears in oppression. Be honest, when do you offer your best prayers? When things are going well, or when things are going not so well? You know the answer to that. And imagine your prayers were getting a bit lack lustre, imagine you were not praying as conscientiously as you should be, and God says, 'I want to hear more from you.' What should he do? "He delivered the poor in his affliction, He openeth their ears in oppression." If your Father wants to talk to you and he wants you to listen, how should he achieve that? "He opens our ears in oppression," and Job has never thought of this before, and Elihu says — this is a bombshell in Job's life, and Elihu says, 'Job, you say that God is unintelligible, you say you can't talk to him, he doesn't answer you, he's talking to you now, Job, suffering and trial is a major means of communication from God to the saints, because it is when they give their best prayers, that's when they are most attentive, when things aren't going well. So God wants to talk to us, however should he begin that discussion. It says it right there, doesn't it.

V 16, "Even so would God have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness." 'You know what, Job, if you had been more attentive to God's conversation with you before now, the suffering would have already stopped.' And isn't it true? That's exactly what it says in V 16. 'If you had been listening to what God is trying to teach you, well we wouldn't be having this discussion right now, so Job, don't be tempted, V 20, "desire not the night when people are cut off from their place,' this is a reference to death, 'don't ask to die, Job, don't wish that the grave would close over you,' V 21, "take heed, regard not iniquity," 'don't respond to God's discipline by turning to evil Job, don't do that,' V 26 "Behold, God is great, Job, we know him not neither can the number of his years be searched out," 'God is infinite, we can't begin to comprehend him. He is in control, he does love the righteous, he is just, and there is value in serving him, your values aren't wrong, Job, your conclusions are right, you are just not listening to the discussion from your Father.' But look, V27, "For God maketh small the drops of water, they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof." As they were speaking and having his discussion, it started to rain, little drops, one here, one there. Elihu actually first notices this, the weather changing, they are outside, because Job is outside the city, scratching himself with potsherds, by the side of the ashes of the fire place. They are outside and Elihu first notices the clouds beginning to darken overhead, back in Ch 35:5, and at that time he was comparing

God's immunity to man's activity, and he says, 'Look to the heavens, look how great God is, he says, and already the sky at that point is beginning to cloud over and it had attracted Elihu's attention.

Well now, we've got the first drops of rain beginning to happen in V 27. V 32, "With clouds, he covered the light, and he commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that comes betwixt." So now the clouds have moved in front of the sun in V 32, and the whole place is getting dark, Ch 37:2, "Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that cometh out of his mouth," so there's the thunder in the distance, you see. There is a storm beginning to happen, V4 "After it a voice roareth, he thundered with the voice of his excellency he will not stay then when his voice is heard." So now there is thunder nearby, and the voice of God in the thunder that Elihu has described. is getting louder and louder as the storm comes upon them. V 9, "Out of the south' or as it is "out of the chamber cometh the whirlwind, and cold out of the north," so there is a cold north wind blowing towards them. V 15, "Dost thou know when God disposes them and causes the light of his cloud to shine." What's that? Well now the clouds are lighting up, there's lightning, isn't there. There is this cold wind blowing from the north and the whole place is getting dark, they can no longer see the sun and the clouds are lighting up, and there is lightning that zips from one side of the sky to the other.

V16 "Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds and the wondrous works of Him that is perfect in knowledge," the clouds are balancing, they are starting to circle around them. V 17, "How thy garments are warm when he quiet the earthy by the south wind?" So the wind has changed direction and it is now coming from the south, and the earth has gone quiet, what does that mean? The birds have stopped chirping, the cattle have stopped lowing, all the animals around them, everything has gone extremely silent, everything has gone to ground, everything has gone into its burrow, all the animals. The livestock are probably lying down, this is getting quite serious here with the weather, and everything is quiet, no birds, no sound of livestock, all the animals are hiding, everything in creation has stopped and the clouds are starting to move faster and faster overhead above them.

V 18, "Hast thou with God spread out the sky which is strong and as a molten looking glass?" Now the sky looks like metal above them, you see, and the vault of heaven is sealed, and there is lightning darting from one side of the cloud to the other, reflecting off them, V 19. "Teach us what we shall say unto God; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness." So now they can hardly see each other and here they are these three friends, they are standing on one side with Job sitting there on the ground, there is Elihu standing, and he is relating what he says to the storm that is brewing overhead, and it has just got darker and darker and darker as they are having this discussion, and Elihu just keeps speaking.

V 22, "Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty." Now that is interesting, "fair weather," now look at your margin. What is this verse saying? "Fair weather cometh out of the north." The margin says, "gold cometh out of the north." Now this would normally be a reference to the sun, the problem is, the sun doesn't come from the north. What is this, brothers and sisters? What is happening here. They are right in the middle of a storm, the sun has already been obscured we read earlier by the clouds, but there is a light in the north, "gold" the margin says, there is a bright light coming from the north. What is it? I'll tell you what it is, Ezek 1:4, "I looked and behold a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and fire unfolding itself, and brightness was about it." It was the Shekinah glory. This is the presence of God now coming in upon this discussion, and a great light has come from the north, and immediately as this whirlwind starts to take over then Yahweh Ch 38:1 answers Job out of the whirlwind and says, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel with words without knowledge, gird up now thy loins like a man and I will demand of thee, and answer thou me" and all of a sudden we are into the discussion between Yahweh and Job, as the Shekinah has come right above them from the north and the storm has completely enveloped them and they are cocooned in this cloud and this darkness and Job is going to start his interview with God, an extremely dramatic situation.

You know, there is something even more powerful here than that, and it is contained in Elihu's last words. V 23 of Ch 37, "touching the Almighty," Elihu says, "we can't find him out, he is excellent in power and in judgment and in plenty of justice, he will not afflict." Now Elihu can probably see as he sees the shining in the north he probably realises what it is and before he gets completely drowned out by the noise of the storm and the voice of God, he puts in one last comment to Job and says, "this is the character of the God we love, Job, V 23 and I would like to take a note, Lam 3:32-33 says this, "but though he cause grief yet will he have compassion to the multitude of his mercies, for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." It doesn't give God pleasure to see his children suffer, but it is a necessary discipline for kings, brothers and sisters.

All right, now here is the final question. Why do you suppose that God appears to Job in a whirlwind? Do you think it is to demonstrate God's majesty? Perhaps it is so that all other external influences are removed and cocooned in this cloud and this darkness they can have a very intense discussion with God? Perhaps it is to show Job how small he is, compared with the creator of heaven and earth? Why do you think God answers Job in Ch 38 from out of a whirlwind? I don't think it is any of those reasons I just gave you, I think it is one pre-eminent reason and that is contained back in Ch 1. When you see this, if you haven't already realised it is the obvious reason, Ch 1:18, Why does God appear to Job in a whirlwind? Well, V 18, it says in Ch 1, "While he was speaking there came also another and said Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, and behold there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house and it fell upon the young men and they are dead, and I only a escaped to tell thee." What kind of a wind, brothers and sisters, is it that hits four corners of a house at the same time? It is a wind from the north, south, east and west, isn't it. What kind of a wind is that? It is a whirlwind. You see what Job thought? You see what God thought? God knew what really hurt Job in all of his sufferings didn't he? It was his children. And who was the God that Job really wanted to talk to about the suffering he was going through, it wasn't just the God of creation, it was the God of the whirlwind, it was the God who killed his children, isn't that the God that Job wanted to talk to? And so in Ch 38, in comes the Shekinah, this great storm builds up and Elihu notices the drops of rain coming down and the clouds swirling around, and the wind comes from the north, the wind comes from the south, it is obviously changing direction and the clouds are circling, the darkness overshadows them, the whirlwind comes above them and God speaks from the whirlwind, because that's the God that Job wanted to talk to, the God that killed his children out of a whirlwind. That's the very God that he wanted to talk to.

You see, Job's position was, you can have the business, you can have the money, you can have everything, Why did you have to kill my children? Isn't that right? Isn't that really the issue for Job? But Job now understands something, he understands that suffering comes for all sorts of reasons. He wasn't suffering because he had sinned, his children didn't die because they had sinned, that God is righteous that he does have the best interests of his servants a heart, and Job now has a mediator who has prepared him for God, who has represented God's character to him and could show him God's righteousness, and so now he is going to go into this debate and he understands something about God that he hadn't considered before. I don't say he didn't understand it before, he hadn't considered it in the extremity of his affliction before. Well let's finish Rom 8, Well how do we take that to the emblems, brothers and sisters, well I think this is the way, Rom Ch 8, and these last words, Job was a very bitter man about losing his children, he never said it, but I think the whirlwind proves it, because there are many ways that God could have instructed Job at the end. So in this story there is something that Job could never know, but we know in this verse, God never asked Job to endure anything that he wouldn't endure himself. And here it is in Romans Ch 8 :31, "What shall we then say to these things, if God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." That's the God of the whirlwind, you see. Job lost his children, God lost his son. At least in Job's case the children died without suffering that wasn't true of God's son. But God raised his son and I believe the inference from Job 42 is that he will also raise Job's children, Job will see his seed, he will see his children again, but of course, in the death of God's son, brethren and sisters, we with Job can all have life.