

Job 34
October 25, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Have you ever questioned whether God was treating you fairly in a difficult situation? If yes, what helped you trust Him? [Let people engage]

Transition: Sometimes when we go through difficult situations, it can be hard to understand why God allows certain things to happen. We may even begin to question whether He is being fair. But Job 34 reminds us that our understanding is limited, while God's wisdom and justice are perfect. As we look at this chapter, let's consider how Elihu explains God's character and why we can continue to trust Him, even when we don't understand our circumstances. Let's begin.

BOOK:

34 Then Elihu said:

² “Hear my words, you wise men;
listen to me, you men of learning.

³ For the ear tests words
as the tongue tastes food.

⁴ Let us discern for ourselves what is right;
let us learn together what is good.

⁵ “Job says, ‘I am innocent,
but God denies me justice.

⁶ Although I am right,
I am considered a liar;
although I am guiltless,
his arrow inflicts an incurable wound.’

⁷ What man is like Job,
who drinks scorn like water?

⁸ He keeps company with evildoers;
he associates with wicked men.

⁹ For he says, ‘It profits a man nothing
when he tries to please God.’

¹⁰ “So listen to me, you men of understanding.
Far be it from God to do evil,
from the Almighty to do wrong.

¹¹ He repays a man for what he has done;
he brings upon him what his conduct deserves.

¹² It is unthinkable that God would do wrong,
that the Almighty would pervert justice.

¹³ Who appointed him over the earth?
Who put him in charge of the whole world?

¹⁴ If it were his intention
and he withdrew his spirit and breath,

¹⁵ all mankind would perish together
and man would return to the dust.
¹⁶ “If you have understanding, hear this;
listen to what I say.
¹⁷ Can he who hates justice govern?
Will you condemn the just and mighty One?
¹⁸ Is he not the One who says to kings, ‘You are worthless,’
and to nobles, ‘You are wicked,’
¹⁹ who shows no partiality to princes
and does not favor the rich over the poor,
for they are all the work of his hands?
²⁰ They die in an instant, in the middle of the night;
the people are shaken and they pass away;
the mighty are removed without human hand.
²¹ “His eyes are on the ways of men;
he sees their every step.
²² There is no dark place, no deep shadow,
where evildoers can hide.
²³ God has no need to examine men further,
that they should come before him for judgment.
²⁴ Without inquiry he shatters the mighty
and sets up others in their place.
²⁵ Because he takes note of their deeds,
he overthrows them in the night and they are crushed.
²⁶ He punishes them for their wickedness
where everyone can see them,
²⁷ because they turned from following him
and had no regard for any of his ways.
²⁸ They caused the cry of the poor to come before him,
so that he heard the cry of the needy.
²⁹ But if he remains silent, who can condemn him?
If he hides his face, who can see him?
Yet he is over man and nation alike,
³⁰ to keep a godless man from ruling,
from laying snares for the people.
³¹ “Suppose a man says to God,
‘I am guilty but will offend no more.
³² Teach me what I cannot see;
if I have done wrong, I will not do so again.’
³³ Should God then reward you on your terms,
when you refuse to repent?
You must decide, not I;
so tell me what you know.
³⁴ “Men of understanding declare,
wise men who hear me say to me,
³⁵ ‘Job speaks without knowledge;

his words lack insight.’

³⁶ Oh, that Job might be tested to the utmost
for answering like a wicked man!

³⁷ To his sin he adds rebellion;
scornfully he claps his hands among us
and multiplies his words against God.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Guarding against spiritual cynicism. Job’s despair has led him to associate with those who question whether devotion to God yields any benefit ([Job 34](#)). The chapter warns against allowing suffering to erode our conviction that faithfulness matters. When hardship strikes, the temptation to view obedience as futile becomes acute—yet the chapter insists that God’s character remains trustworthy even when circumstances suggest otherwise.

Recognizing hidden judgment. God’s omniscience means nothing escapes divine attention—there is no refuge where wrongdoing remains concealed ([Job 34](#)). This cuts both ways: it should humble those tempted toward hidden sin, but also comfort those who feel their suffering goes unnoticed. God sees what others miss, including injustices perpetrated against the vulnerable.

Resisting the prosperity gospel. Elihu claims God repays people according to their conduct ([Job 34](#)), yet Job’s own experience contradicts this neat formula. The chapter’s application isn’t to embrace Elihu’s oversimplification but to recognize its limitations—suffering doesn’t always correlate with sin, and blessing doesn’t always follow obedience in this life. Faith must accommodate mystery.

Examining our accusations against God. The rhetorical questions “Can he who hates justice govern? Will you condemn the just and mighty One?” ([Job 34](#)) invite self-examination. When we accuse God of unfairness, we’re implicitly claiming moral clarity we may not possess. The chapter challenges us to hold our grievances lightly and remain open to perspectives beyond our limited vantage point.

Practicing humility in suffering. Perhaps most importantly, [Job 34](#) demonstrates how *not* to comfort the afflicted. Elihu’s theological correctness becomes spiritually hollow because it dismisses Job’s pain rather than honoring it. The application: defend God’s justice, yes—but never at the expense of human dignity and compassionate presence.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W.W. (1996). *Be Patient*. (pp. 132-136) Victor Books

1. God is just (Job 34–35)

Elihu had promised not to use flattery (Job 32:21), but he came close to it in 34:2 when he addressed his audience as “wise men” and “men of learning” (NIV). Actually, he was flattering himself; because if these “learned wise men” were willing to listen to him, they must have thought that he was more learned and wise than they! Quoting Job’s words (v. 3; 12:11), Elihu urged them to use discernment as they “tasted” his words, so that he and they might “learn together what is good” (34:4, NIV). Elihu compared his speaking to the enjoyment of a tasteful and nourishing meal.

Elihu listed two of Job’s complaints to be discussed: “God is unjust” (vv. 5–6) and “There is no profit in serving God” (vv. 7–9). He answered the first complaint in verses 10–37 and the second in Job 35.

“God is unjust” (Job 34:5–6, 10–37). The injustice of God was one of the major themes in Job’s speeches. He felt that he was being treated like a sinner, and yet God would not “come to court” and tell Job what he had done wrong. (See 9:2, 17–20; 19:6–7; 27:2.) Elihu recalled Job saying that he was innocent and had been denied justice (34:5; 10:7; 6:29), and that God was shooting arrows at him (34:6; 6:4).

Elihu presented three arguments to prove that there is no injustice with God. To begin with, *if God is unjust, then He is not God* (34:10–15). “Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity” (v. 10). “It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice” (v. 12, NIV). Abraham asked, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25) and the obvious answer is yes!

If God is truly God, then He is perfect; and if He is perfect, then He cannot do wrong. An unjust God would be as unthinkable as a square circle or a round triangle. According to Elihu, what seems injustice to us is really justice: God is paying sinners back for what they do (Job 34:11). In fact, God is so just that He has ordained that *sin itself will punish the evildoer*. (See Pss. 7:15; 9:15–16; 35:8.) There is no way to escape the justice of God.

Elihu emphasized that God is sovereign, and a sovereign God can be indicted by no law or judged by no court. The king can do no wrong. God was not *appointed* to His throne, so He can’t be taken from it (Job 34:13). To say that God is unjust is to say that He is not God and therefore has no right to be on the throne. But God controls our very breath and can take our lives away in an instant (vv. 14–15; Acts 17:25, 28). “It is because of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not” (Lam. 3:22).

The Book of Job magnifies the sovereignty of God. From the very first chapter, it is obvious that God is in control; for even Satan is told what he can and cannot do. During the debate, it appears that God is absent; but He is aware of how Job feels and what Job and his friends say. Thirty-one

times in the Book of Job, God is called “the Almighty.” Elihu was right on target: God is sovereign and cannot do wrong.

His second argument is that *if God were unjust, there could be no just government on earth* (Job 34:16–20). As a respected elder, Job had participated in local government and had helped to bring justice to the afflicted (29:7–17). But all human government was established by God (Gen. 9:1–7; Rom. 13:1–7); so if mortal man can execute justice on earth, why can’t a holy and sovereign God execute justice from heaven? He can dethrone kings and remove nobles, and He shows no partiality (Dan. 4:25, 32, 35). If the God who rules the world were unjust, there could be no order or harmony; and everything would fall apart.

However, Elihu made a big mistake in singling out and emphasizing only one divine attribute, the justice of God; for God is also loving and gracious. (Bildad had made the same mistake in his speeches.) In His wisdom, God devised a plan of redemption that satisfies both His justice and His love (Rom. 3:21–31). Because of the Cross, God can redeem sinners and still magnify His righteousness and uphold His holy law.

Elihu’s third argument is that *if God were unjust, then He must not see what is going on in the world* (Job 34:21–30). But God is omniscient and sees all things! A human judge, with his limitations, hears a case and makes the best decision he can, and sometimes he’s wrong. But God sees every step we take, and there is no place where we can hide from Him (Ps. 139:7–12). Job wanted God to meet him in court so he could present his case, but what could Job tell God that God didn’t already know? “God has no need to examine men further, that they should come before Him for judgment” (Job 34:23, NIV). Unlike human officials, God is not obligated to conduct an inquiry and gather evidence; He knows everything and can judge with perfect wisdom.

One of Job’s complaints was that God was silent and had hidden His face from him (9:11; 23:1–9), but Elihu had an answer for that: “But if He remains silent, who can condemn Him? If He hides His face, who can see Him?” (34:29, NIV) In Job 24, Job had accused God of ignoring men’s sins; but what right had he to judge the Judge? God waited 4 centuries before judging the wicked nations in Canaan (Gen. 15:13–16) and 120 years before sending the Flood (6:3). Sinners should be grateful that God gives them time to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

God rules over nations and individuals (Job 34:29), but He is not responsible for their sins; for He gives them freedom to make decisions. They also have the freedom to turn from their sins and trust God. Because of this, Elihu closes this part of his speech with an appeal to Job that he confess his sins and repent (vv. 31–33). “Ask God to teach you what you don’t know,” he counsels, “and promise not to sin like this again” (see v. 32). God rewards us on *His* terms, not our terms; and one of His requirements is that we repent and turn from our sins.

Elihu paused and gave Job opportunity to speak (v. 33), but Job said nothing. This may have angered Elihu even more because he ended this part of the address with a terrible accusation against Job. He said that Job lacked knowledge and insight, that he was rebellious and spoke proudly against God. Clapping the hands is today a sign of approval, but in that day it was a

gesture of mockery and contempt (27:23; Lam. 2:15). Elihu concluded that Job needed *even more testing!* (Job 34:36) Perhaps that would bring him to his senses. Having disposed of Job's first complaint, Elihu turns to the second one.

"There is no profit in obeying God" (Job 34:7–9; 35:1–16). Again, Elihu tries to throw Job's own words back in his face: "I am innocent" (10:7; 12:4; 27:6) and, "What have I gained by obeying God?" (9:29–31; 21:15) Job did make the first statement, but the second is not an accurate quotation of his words. *Job never did bargain with God as Satan said he would* (1:9, 21; 2:9–10). Eliphaz had discussed this topic (Job 22) and had come to the conclusion that neither man's piety nor his iniquity could make any difference to the character of God. But Elihu felt it was important to deal with the theme again.

Elihu asked his listeners to look up to the heavens and see how far away the clouds were, and then imagine how far God's throne was from the earth (35:5–7). Can a man's sins or good deeds on earth exert such power that they will travel all that distance and change the Almighty in heaven?

Then Elihu asked them to consider human society (vv. 8–16). Our sins or good works may affect people around us (v. 8), but God is not affected by them. Certainly God grieves over man's sins (Gen. 6:6) and delights in the obedience of the faithful (Ps. 37:23); but our good deeds can't bribe Him, and our misdeeds can't threaten Him. God's character is the same whether men obey Him or disobey Him. God can't change for the better because He is perfect, and He can't change for the worse because He is holy.

God cares for the birds and beasts, and they trust Him (Job 35:11; Matt. 6:25–34); but men made in the image of God don't cry out to God until they are under a terrible burden of oppression (Job 35:9). They forget God until trouble comes. But God knows that their prayers are insincere, so He doesn't answer them (vv. 12–13). This explains why Job's prayers haven't been answered: his heart was not right with God (v. 14).

But even if God doesn't relieve the burden, He can give the trusting sufferer "songs in the night" (v. 10; Ps. 42:8; 77:6). "Any man can sing in the day," said Charles Spurgeon. "It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but he is the skillful singer who can sing when there is not a ray of light by which to read." The Lord gave "songs in the night" to Jesus before He went to the cross (Matt. 26:30) and to Paul and Silas in the prison in Philippi (Acts 16:25). If God doesn't see fit to remove our burdens, He always gives strength to bear them—and a song to sing while doing it!

Elihu dismisses Job's complaint that he can't see God. The important thing is that *God sees Job* and knows his case completely (Job 35:14). Job's situation won't be changed by his empty talk and many words (v. 16), so the only thing for Job to do is wait and trust (v. 14).

God is gracious (Job 33), and God is just (Job 34–35); but God is also great and mighty (Job 36–37), and Elihu thought that Job needed to recognize how great God is.

Zuck, R. B. (1985). *Job*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 760-761) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

2. Elihu's second speech (chap. 34)

Since Job remained silent (cf. 33:32), Elihu continued. His second speech was a defense of God's justice, an answer to Job's allegation that God was unfair. The young protagonist spoke first to the three older visitors (34:1–15), as indicated by the plural “you” and “men” (vv. 2, 10) and “us” in verse 4, and then to Job (vv. 16–37) as indicated by the singular “you” (vv. 16–17, 33).

a. Elihu's desire that his elders hear him out (34:1–4)

34:1–4. Elihu again asked his elders, whom he respected (**you wise men ... you men of learning**; cf. vv. 10, 34), to **listen to** him (cf. his uses of “listen” in 32:10; 33:1, 31, 33; 34:10, 16; 37:14). Again, Elihu picked up Job's words (cf. 12:11) when he referred to the need for the debaters to test the accuracy of his **words as the tongue** can discern the quality of the **food** it **tastes**. They would need to decide the **right** thing about Job's case.

b. Elihu's denunciation of Job's claim that God was unjust (34:5–9)

34:5–9. Again, Elihu quoted several of Job's statements (see the chart “Elihu's Quotations of Job,” near 33:9–11). Then siding with the three, Elihu accused **Job** of being a deliberate sinner, associating with ungodly people, and claiming that **man** gains **nothing** by worshipping **God** (cf. 9:30–31; 35:2). Drinking **scorn like water** is redolent of Eliphaz's words in 15:16. Though Elihu was certainly wrong in saying Job associated with the **wicked**, he was correct in condemning Job for pouncing on **God** in a scornful, rebellious way. To say that a person is no better off for having served God is a complaint Elihu answered later (chap. 35).

c. Elihu's defense of God's justice and impartiality (34:10–20)

34:10–15. Sounding like Bildad, Elihu rose to the defense of God's justice, affirming that **God** cannot **do evil** or **do wrong** (cf. v. 12; 8:3, “Does God pervert justice?”). Though Job had complained that God had denied him justice (27:2), Elihu cited several evidences in support of His unflinching justice. (1) God gives **man what he deserves**, meting out punishment for sin (34:11). (2) For **God to do wrong** (v. 10) or **pervert justice** (cf. 8:3) would be inconsistent with His character and therefore **unthinkable** (34:12). (3) Having independent authority as the world's Sovereign, no one could influence **Him** away from justice (v. 13). (4) As the Sustainer of human life God, if He wished, could withdraw **His spirit** (or “Spirit,” NIV **and breath** instantly and everyone **would perish** at once (cf. 12:10; 27:3; 33:4), but in His goodness to mankind He does not do that.

34:16–20. For the third time in this speech, Elihu requested that his audience of four hear him out (**hear ... listen**; cf. vv. 2, 10). He then continued citing evidences that God is fair in His dealings. (5) If God were unjust, how could He **govern** the world? (v. 17) To accuse the **just ... One** of injustice is obviously wrong. (6) God does not hesitate to judge incapable and wicked **kings ... nobles ... princes, and the rich**. Partiality on God's part is out of the question because He is not influenced by men's power or money. **All** are equal under Him as **the work of His**

hands. In fact God can quickly, even by surprise at midnight (cf. v. 25), bring the wicked to death and remove **the mighty** (cf. v. 24). How, then, could Job say God is unfair?

d. Elihu's discussion of the punishment of the wicked (34:21–30)

34:21–30. Elihu may have been responding here to Job's concern about God's delay in executing justice (24:1–21). As further evidences of God's justice (see comments on 34:10–20), Elihu pointed up these facts: (7) God has all the facts in every case, for in His omniscience **He sees** everything everyone does (v. 21; cf. 24:23) so sinners cannot escape His judging by hiding in the darkness. Unlike human judges, God **has no need** to investigate cases (34:23; cf. Zophar's words in 11:11). God can put down **the mighty** (cf. 34:20) and set **up others in their place**, overthrowing and crushing **them in the night** (cf. v. 20). (8) God is fair for He does not overlook **wickedness**. **His eyes are on the ways of men** (v. 21) recalls Job's similar words in 24:23. God punishes those who reject and disregard Him and who mistreat **the poor** and **the needy** (34:26–28). (9) God's justice is seen in that, even though He may choose for a while to do nothing about sin and to remain **silent** to Job's and others' pleas for speedy justice, **yet** He as the Sovereign Ruler **over man and nation alike** will see that a **godless man** (*hānēp*, “irreligious person”; cf. 8:13) does not continue indefinitely and triumph endlessly (34:29–30). Job might not see God when He chose to remain silent (cf. Job's complaint along that line, 23:8–9) but that did not give him the right to **condemn** God (cf. 19:7; 30:20).

e. Elihu's arraignment of Job's non-repentance and rebellion (34:31–37)

34:31–33. Elihu was stunned that Job would have the audacity to speak **to God** the way he did. Job had affirmed his innocence repeatedly. But then, as if to put God on the spot, Job said that if God would show him where he had gone **wrong**, he would then stop sinning (cf. 6:24; 7:20–21; 10:2; 13:23). But Elihu felt, and rightly so, that such talk was uncalled for, that it was seeking to tell **God** what to do. Since God is sovereign, He will not stoop to man's **terms**, especially in the face of a non-repentant attitude. Elihu then said that Job would have to **decide** whether God would **reward** him when he was unrepentant.

34:34–37. Any person who is **wise** knows that Job's speeches (in which he criticized God for injustice) lacked **knowledge** (cf. 35:16; 38:2) and **insight**. Therefore **Job** ought to **be tested to the utmost** for speaking like the **wicked**. This statement sounds much like Zophar's words (11:5). Elihu sensed in **Job** a rebellious attitude, for Job (by the derisive gesture of clapping **his hands** to silence others) scorned others for defending God's justice.

Elihu was correct in chiding Job for rebelliously (a) questioning God's justice (34:17), and (b) demanding that God answer Him (v. 29) and show him where he had sinned (v. 32). But Elihu seemed to share something of the heartless attitude of the three elder counselors by wishing that Job would be **tested** “to the utmost,” and by assuming that Job's many words (cf. 35:16) meant he was **against God**.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Job 34). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.