

JOB 33-37, selected verses

(Ch. 33:1, 6-7 Ch. 34: 5, 17, 35-37 Ch. 36:26-29 Ch. 37:1-2, 5, 11, 13, 23-24)

TO CRITICIZE GOD MEANS NOT TO UNDERSTAND

All the following are words of Elihu to Job:*Job, hear my speech, and listen to all my words. Truly I am as your spokesman before God; I also have been formed out of clay. Surely no fear of me will terrify you, nor will my hand be heavy on you.**Job has said [Job, you have said], "I am righteous, but God has taken away my justice"**Will you condemn Him who is most just? Job speaks without knowledge, his words are without wisdom. Oh, that Job were tried to the utmost, because his answers are like those of wicked men! For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God.**Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; nor can the number of His years be discovered. For He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man. Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, the thunder from His canopy? At this also my heart trembles, and leaps from its place. Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, and the rumbling that comes from His mouth. God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend. Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds. He causes it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy.**As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him. He is excellent in power, in judgment, and abundant justice. He does not oppress. Therefore, men fear Him. He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart.*

True or False: Those, who criticize the most, understand the least.

In many instances in life that is exactly true! Whether it's you declaring what's wrong with the way the neighbor operates his ranch and farm, or the neighbor spouting off about you, those who criticize the most, very often understand the least. Maybe it has to do with the way your in-laws raise their children or handle their money, the teacher teaching classes, or an owner operating a store. It applies in politics. It even applies in church. Criticism is often unfounded. However, that's not always 100% accurate, is it? If a filthy household leads to sickness and disease, if money is short but plenty gets spent on gambling, if sin is present in this way or that, and with a loving heart one seeks to correct it, the criticism comes in love.

BUT there is one area of life where that statement, about criticizing and not understanding, is always True. In fact we could simply say, "Those, who criticize do not understand." Period. I'm talking about criticizing and finding fault with God. Criticizing God is always a statement of ignorance.

Our text for today comes from the book of Job ("jobe" not "job"). Maybe the expression "the patience of Job" is something you've heard? That phrase is accurate. Job displayed great patience. Chapter 1 describes him as the greatest of all the people of the East. Perhaps he lived at Abraham's time or a little later. His wealth was great—5000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys. He had 7 sons and 3 daughters, and a very large household of servants to run the operation. In one day the devil, with God's permission, took all away from Job. The devil wanted Job to "curse God." Job did not curse God. Shortly after that sad day, the devil, again with permission from God, afflicted Job with painful boils, in order to get Job to curse God. Job did not curse God. Even when his wife said, "Curse God and die," Job did not. Job was faithful and patient in all his affliction—not ever aware that another trap was set for him by the devil.

Chapter 2 tells us that three of Job's friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar-- came to comfort him. They were shocked at his appearance and suffering. They were grief-stricken at his circumstances. They were speechless for 7 days. (What friends!) The next 29 chapters are cycles of conversation between Job and his friends. Job regrets the day of his birth and wishes he were dead. The three friends each insist that Job's suffering has come as discipline from God, that Job has done something wicked, of which he has not repented. After all, God does not bring grief upon those whom He is not correcting. I think you can understand the logic of what they're saying. But their words were not accurate! Be careful when you apply misbehavior as the cause for calamity in someone else's life.

Job in reply, insists he has not committed some wicked deed, that God is being unfair to him, that he would like to make a case before God, but can't, because who can make a case before God? Job does not claim that he is sinless. Job has not lost his faith in the Lord's promise of the Savior, *I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth. And after my skin is destroyed this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another. How my heart yearns within me! (Job 19:25-27).* Yet Job does say straight out, *God has wronged me, and has surrounded me with His net (Job 19:6).* Job feels short-changed.

Ultimately the back and forth discussion grinds to a halt. Neither side budes. Then a fourth friend enters the discussion, Elihu. Elihu speaks from his heart to Job. Elihu does not charge Job with wickedness, as the other three had. Yet Elihu does take issue with Job: Job has found fault with God! To Elihu, Job in effect is like a wicked man. Oh, he has been rigidly and unyieldingly faithful to God, pious in his conduct and life; but Job has an issue in his heart, like a wicked man, thinking that God has to show him some respect for all his good conduct, that God is wrong to be so unfair.

Do you ever think like Job? That God has been unfair to you? What good has all your godly living, church attendance, and Bible reading done? You end up suffering just like, if not more than, others. You have an issue with God. Sometimes this surfaces in life at the unexpected death of a family member, or at the onset of a debilitating sickness, or at the unfolding of a tragic disaster. “God, You are being unfair to me, and I am one of your children!” Those, who criticize the most, know the least. You cannot see what God is really accomplishing in your life through that which seems so unfair. Perhaps by it, He saves you from something worse? Had you gone to the Hills when you wanted, you would have been in a terrible car accident. In Job’s case, it wasn’t God at all that brought these sufferings on Job. It was the Devil, trying to destroy Job’s faith in God! God was allowing all this to come upon Job, so that Satan would have to “eat humble pie” and walk away defeated in his plot against God. Do you realize that God allows Satan to afflict you at times, to put Satan in his place when you do not fall for the bait?

Who are you to criticize God? Elihu uses an example: *Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; nor can the number of His years be discovered. For He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man. Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, the thunder from His canopy? At this also my heart trembles, and leaps from its place. Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, and the rumbling that comes from His mouth. God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend. Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds. He causes it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy.* Are you going to find fault with God who marvelously controls the rain cycle for your daily bread? Are you going to find fault with God who can thunder at you--BOOM!--from the skies and make your heart jump? He is Almighty. Are you going to find fault with God who *causes it* [the storm] *to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy.* If you do need correction, will you fault Him for correcting you? If the land or others need certain actions from God, will you find fault for His sending it even though it affects you unpleasantly? And if God’s actions are acts of mercy for you, by which He is leading you closer to Jesus the crucified and risen Savior from sin, are you going to find fault with that?

When affliction comes, go the Lord, your Father, as a dearly loved child. Put away any resentment that so easily comes. (Have you ever said or thought, “God, I hate you”?) Do not criticize your God! That’s the devil and your weak sinful flesh working against you, laying yet another trap against you. When affliction comes, stop feeling sorry for yourself, as if no one cares and no one understands. “Nobody else has it like me. Everyone else has it so much better. I am being picked on even by God.” Do not feel sorry for yourself. You have a Father who sent His Son for you. In Jesus you are a forgiven heir of heaven! *We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).* When affliction comes, do not even question the Lord, do not blame it on others. God is not answerable to you. When affliction comes, it does not matter WHY. Do not even ask WHY. Stop trying to analyze, searching for the cause. Put your hurt feelings and pride aside, and run to the Lord for help! Job was patient, but he did not run to the Lord for help.

Elihu, the 4th friend, continued, *As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him. He is excellent in power, in judgment, and abundant justice. He does not oppress. Therefore, men fear Him. He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart. God does not oppress His children.* He comes to us in mercy, and in judgment declaring us Not Guilty for Jesus’ sake! His justice is harsh and unrelenting against those who turn away from Him, but His justice is kind and forgiving to those in Christ. Fear Him, respect Him, stand in awe of Him. *He shows no partiality to any who are wise.* Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. In Him is real wisdom. God treats all the same in Christ; that is, He does whatever it takes, to bring each one to Christ and to heaven. Do not criticize that!

In the book of Job, immediately after Elihu’s words, Job said nothing. Then God Himself stepped in! *Prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me! Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His” Job 40:7-9).* Did Job respond by arguing? No. *“I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. . . Therefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42: 1-6).*

The Lord forgave Job and blessed him during the next 140 years of his life! blessed him with more than he had before! Indeed, Job learned: Those who criticize God, do not understand. Job learned to trust Him!

You also: Trust Him. By the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, who works through the Scriptures, trust His message of life in Jesus. Trust His wisdom and love for you.

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---