

# Job #3: The Spirit's Interpretation

by Stephen Kaung

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*The sermon explores Job's spiritual crisis and the inadequacies of mysticism, traditionalism, and dogmatism, emphasizing the need for soul searching and listening to the spirit for divine guidance.*

**Duration:** 57:51

**Scripture:** Job 19:25-27, Job 26:14, Job 33:29, Job 36:26, Job 37:23, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Hebrews 12:5

**Topics:** "Spiritual Suffering", "Divine Discipline"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the journey of Job in the book of Job, specifically focusing on chapters 29 to 31. The speaker highlights how Job's life was initially filled with fellowship with God and righteous acts. However, in chapter 30, Job experiences a reversal where he becomes despised and his soul is poured out like water. Despite this, the speaker emphasizes that even in the midst of Job's suffering, there are flashes of divine light that enter his soul, such as Job's declaration that he knows his Redeemer lives. The speaker also mentions Elihu's attempt to interpret God's ways and encourage Job to appreciate God's discipline. However, the speaker concludes that neither mysticism, traditionalism, nor dogmatism can truly help in a spiritual crisis, as it ultimately requires soul searching. Despite this, the speaker notes that soul searching alone cannot solve spiritual problems, and one ends up where they began.

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## Transcript

So in a sense we can say that the discussion of Job and his three friends can very well represent what's going on within Job himself. He was there sitting in the ashes. He was scratching his wounds.

And all the time you'll find that emotionally, mentally, and volitionally there was stirring, there was striving, and there was searching. We mentioned yesterday morning, Eliphaz represents outwardly mysticism, inwardly emotion. Mysticism tries to solve a spiritual problem, but it cannot.

Emotion is usually involved, very much involved, when you fall into a crisis. And you'll find emotion shifts its position all the time. This is represented by the arguments of Eliphaz and Job.

On the one hand you'll find emotion will tell you that God is just. He cannot pervert judgment. There must be a reason for such suffering.

It must be because there is sin. It is true sometimes God does correct people, but that sense of correction is very slight. On the other hand you'll find Job replying, I cannot deny that God is just.

This is one of the basic tenets of the universe. And yet I have to maintain that I'm righteous. And you'll find when emotion is so stirred up, it finally comes to the point of almost a nervous breakdown.

You'll find that Job is emotionally on the verge of a breaking down. He asks for mercy, he asks for pity. And when he cannot prove his innocency, he says, my witness is in heaven.

Nobody seems to understand me, but my witness is in heaven. God knows. Bildad represents outwardly traditionalism.

Because he based his arguments on the tradition of the fathers. According to the tradition of the fathers, the wicked is punished. The good is rewarded.

And Bildad holds hell on to this. There is nothing new in tradition. Tradition always goes back to the old, to the past.

The older, the better. It is fixed, inflexible, but it doesn't solve any problem. Job's mind is free.

He was not bound by tradition. Ending his reply to Bildad, you'll find that he had great knowledge too. And yet even that freedom of his mind could not solve.

And the third friend, Zophar, represents dogmatism. Outwardly, and the will of man inwardly. Here you'll find within man, the will begins to clash.

On the one hand you'll find Bildad dogmatically pronounced that Job must be evil. Therefore he was punished. And equally, you'll find Job denied that he had sinned.

He continued to say he was righteous. So here, brothers and sisters, you'll find in a spiritual crisis, mysticism, or traditionalism, or dogmatism, will not help you out of a spiritual crisis. There are values in mysticism.

Of course there are many errors too. If you read the sayings of Eliphaz, you'll find there are many valuable sayings. For instance, Eliphaz suggested to Job, Now if you put away your gold and silver with the dust of the earth, and really love God with your whole heart, then you will find he is most precious than everything else.

Good word. There are good things in mysticism. But mysticism cannot solve a spiritual crisis.

There are good things in traditions too. We mentioned yesterday that we should not be bound by the tradition of the fathers. But certainly we should keep the tradition of the Lord.

There are certain traditions that come from God. You'll find that in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 2, and in 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 13, I think, or 15. There you'll find tradition, Christian tradition.

That which comes from the Lord and handed over to us by the apostles. And these are the traditions that we should treasure. But tradition does not solve a spiritual problem.

We need doctrine. Truth. Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

The Lord Jesus said, if you really desire to do my will, you shall know whether my doctrine is of God or of man. But to be dogmatic is human. It does not convince or convict.

So here you'll find neither mysticism, nor traditionalism, nor dogmatism can help in a spiritual crisis. In a spiritual crisis you'll find invariably and inevitably there will be soul searching. You cannot enter into a spiritual crisis with your soul at rest.

When you are plunged into a spiritual crisis, your soul will be all stirred up in turmoil. Your emotion will be stirred up, your mind will be confused, and your will will be crashing. On the one hand you'll find that all these soul searchings cannot solve any spiritual problem.

You'll end up where you begin. And that's what you'll find. You'll begin at chapter 3 and you'll end up at chapter 31.

And you'll find there is no difference. But is it totally a waste? No. Because out of the searching of the soul, when you're brought to the end of yourself, you'll find there are flashes of divine light.

Oh, if you read these chapters you'll find there are flashes of light coming into the soul. For instance, like Job says in chapter 19, I know my Redeemer lives. And the last, he will have the last word.

Even if I may not be able to see him in my flesh, but I know in the day of resurrection, I shall yet see him. See? Though he slain, yet will I. You'll find there are flashes of divine light into the darkened soul. But unfortunately, these flashes come and go and do not stay.

But anyway, you'll find that in the deep searching of the soul. What do you find there? It ends up in chapter 31. Now, dear brothers and sisters, we mentioned that chapter 29, Job summed up his life of the past.

When he was preserved by God. And what a life he lived. A life of fellowship with God.

A life full of light. A life full of righteous acts. But in chapter 30, the reverse.

He became a song, sang by those young ones and those despised ones. He was pushed around and kicked around. His soul was poured out like water.

His skins were blackened. He became a companion of the Austrians. A friend of the Jackals.

Brothers and sisters, you'll find he was just opposite of what he was. He was stripped of everything. The cross was deep into his soul.

Iron had entered into his soul. And do you know, when Job looked back to the past and when Job tried to see what he is now, you know what happened? After all the searching of the soul, he came to be so wrapped up with himself that you'll find in chapter 31, he came out with a conclusion. In chapter 31, Job used the personal pronouns I, my, me, mine, more than 80 times.

He was all wrapped up with himself. I, my, me, mine. And what a good I he was.

He proclaimed that he was right. He proclaimed that, he proclaimed his attitude towards sin. How he made a covenant with his eyes that he might not sin against God.

How he did not love the world. Even though God gave him great wealth, but he never made gold his hope. How he was good to everybody.

Supplied the need of those who were needed. How he was even kind to his enemies. How he treated his servants and maids.

How that he never had secret sins of idolatry. How he never rejoined at the destruction of his enemies. He tried to sum up his past life and he said, Look here God, I'm such a perfect soul.

Here is my petition. I sign my name here. Now you answer me.

Why is it that for a man like I am, you have treated me so badly? And in chapter 30 he even accused God and said, You are cruel. You've become cruel to me. Once you were kind, but now you are cruel to me.

Why do you do that? Oh dear brothers and sisters, we never know what is at the bottom of our soul until one day the depth is measured. There you'll find in spite of his expression, in the very beginning of disinterest, love towards God. But deep down in his soul there is that.

It is true that he did not serve God for gain. And yet, deep down within, he was not ready for love. He still trusted in God.

He had not denied God. But he misunderstood. He fainted under the chastening of his self.

Life was being discovered. Here you'll find I, the righteous, the righteous self. I will hold on to my righteousness.

Even before God, I will hold on to my integrity. I have not sinned. Why is it that I be punished? I cannot understand it.

He dared to challenge God with his own righteousness. Dear brothers and sisters, is there not a lesson for us today? Sometimes we think we love God with a disinterested love. And it is so.

But you'll find that when we are being measured to the very depth, there is still much mixture. Deep down in our soul there is still a love of self, self-pity, self-love, self-righteousness, self-vindication. There isn't that total abandonment unto God.

If we are totally abandoned to God, we will not question his will. We will not try to vindicate ourselves. We will yield ourselves humbly in his hand.

But Job hasn't arrived at that point yet. The cross has to uncover the subtlety of that self within. The cross has to break him completely in order that the spirit might be brought.

And this we find at the end of that discussion or debate between Job and the three friends. And the Bible says the words of Job were ended. He had spoken his last word.

Oh, when you come to that point, you breathe, you start to breathe. The words of Job were ended. Sometimes you may think that the words of Job will never end.

Oh, he seems to be able to go on and on, and he always has something to say. And isn't that what we are? Thank God the words of Job were ended. Thank God this was not the end.

Suppose this was the end of the book of Job. Suppose Job's life ended before the end of the Lord was reached. What a falling short of the purpose.

But thank God the words of Job were ended that God might begin. So here you'll find from chapter 32 to chapter 37 the words of Elihu. Now this is what we will have for this morning.

When Job and his three friends were debating among themselves probably there were lots of people around, I don't know. That's possible. And among the crowds that were listening in there was a young man by the name of Elihu.

Now we do not know this young man very well. We do not know whether he knew Job and his three friends before or not. We don't know.

Job and his three friends were older persons, but this man, Elihu, was a young man. He was just listening in. When the words of Job were ended and the three friends were silent then Elihu was stirred in his spirit.

Now the name Elihu means whose God is he. God is his God. This Elihu was a young man.

Now what does this man represent? To me, I feel this man represents the human spirit. The human spirit. You know when God created man he created man not only with a body with a soul but also with a spirit.

God is a spirit. We must worship him in spirit. And who can worship him in spirit? Only those who are created with a spirit.

So you'll find that man was created with a spirit. Our human spirit is an organ for God. It is by our human spirit that we can worship God the spirit.

God is not to be found neither in the body nor in the soul but God is to be found. But unfortunately because of sin our spirit was dead in sin and transgression. Therefore to most people they do not know they have a spirit.

All they know is a soul and a body. I never can forget a lady missionary who led my father to the Lord and then later on in her later years she stayed with us. She came from Virginia and every time when something happened she would throw up and say oh my soul and body.

She never mentioned the spirit. Of course she knew. But you'll find the common expression is soul and body.

People just know soul and body. They do not know they have a spirit. But thank God He that is born of the spirit is the spirit.

This is new birth. What is the meaning of new birth? What happens when you are born again? Nothing much happens to your body not much to your soul but at new birth there is a transformation in your spirit. The spirit that was dead in sins and transgressions is quickened into life.

It has become a new spirit. And since the time of new birth you have a new spirit. And the Holy Spirit dwells in your spirit.

Crying out. Isn't that true? Comparatively speaking the spirit is rather young. The soul is pretty old.

That is the reason why the soul is represented by Job and his three friends. And the spirit is represented by a young man. Our spirit, our new spirit is comparatively younger than our soul.

And you notice the humility of the spirit. This young man listened in to the arguments of these older people. He kept his silence.

It was the custom of the East for the young to respect the old. So when the old people were talking the young just listened. Even though within his spirit he was so full that it was on the verge of bursting.

And he used a very good metaphor. He said it was as if the new wine is fermenting in a bottle and there was no vent. But he kept his silence.

He was humble. He was courteous. He waited.

He waited until Job's words were ended. He waited until the three friends were silent. And he began.

He said, I acknowledge that there should be wisdom with the aged. And that is the reason why I keep quiet. But there is a spirit within man.

And the breath of God have given them. So here you'll find Elihu in the beginning of his word. He tried to convey to us that he is speaking in the spirit.

He is not speaking his own opinion and ideas. But he is speaking as he is moved in his spirit. True, I mingle.

But there is a spirit in man. It is true that Job is older. And yet we are both made by God.

And there is a spirit in man. And it is by that spirit that you'll find Elihu begin. So dear brothers and sisters, when the soul is busily engaged, the spirit remains.

Very often when we are plunged into a spiritual crisis, oh, if only we can listen to the spirit speaking. But we cannot. Why? Because our soul is in turmoil.

You'll find that our soul is agitating. Oh, our emotion is stirring and our mind is working and our will is striving. You'll find that our whole soul is caught up in a great turmoil.

And when you are in that state, you cannot hear the voice of the spirit. The spirit is too humble. The spirit is too gentle to interject itself into the conversation.

You know, the spirit never forces his way. He will wait. Oh, how delicate is our soul.

Dear brothers and sisters, often I am disturbed by one thing. And that is we do not know the delicateness of our soul. We live such a rough and rude life.

We live such a careless life that we do not know how delicate is our soul. Our spirit is like a dove, a little stirring, and it's gone. It is very delicate.

If you want to listen to the voice of your spirit, you have to be quiet in your soul. After the soul is quieted, then the spirit begins to speak. And it is in the spirit speaking you find interpretation.

The human spirit here is trying to interpret. But here you find Eli who says in chapter 33, verse 12, Behold, I will answer thee in this, Thou art not right. For God is greater.

You have lost sight of God. Your soul wrapped up with yourself. And that is the whole problem.

Why dost thou strive against him? For he giveth not account of any of his matters. Is God obligated to explain everything to you? Are you not willing to just submit yourself to him? Why is there not that utter abandonment to the will of God? Why do you demand an explanation as if he must explain? Don't you know he is God? He is greater than you? Can you trust him? By faith? But does God speak? Is it true that God never explains himself? That he always leaves us in the dark? No, not at all. God does speak.

He speaks once and twice, and then proceeds. You are now in a crisis. You demand an explanation.

You think that God has not spoken to you, has not answered your prayer. But God has already spoken. Not once, but twice.

But you have not proceeded. That's the trouble. Oh, dear brothers and sisters, it is true on the one hand that God is not obligated to explain everything to us.

He is greater than man. And we ought to trust him and yield ourselves to him completely. But on the other hand, God is one who does speak.

He has spoken once and twice. But the trouble is we have not heard. That's our trouble.

We blame God as if he has not spoken. But in actuality, it is we who have not heard. How does God speak? Once and twice.

In a dream? In a vision of the night? When deep sleep falls upon man? In slumbering upon the bed? Then he opened men's ears and sealed their instruction that he may withdraw men from their work and hide pride from men. He keepeth back his soul from the pit and his light from passing away by the sword. How does God speak? God speaks deep down within us.

The metaphor here is when one is in deep sleep, when the activities of his soul have come to an end, then God opens his inner ears and instructs. In other words, God speaks in us. This is the anointing.

You'll find in 1 John 2, verse 27, you do not need anyone to teach you because there is that anointing within you and he shall teach you in all things. Obey the teaching of the anointing and you shall abide. Dear brothers and sisters, how does God speak? God speaks with a still, small voice to our spirit.

Our spirit is the organ for God's speaking. If we are quiet enough, if all the strivings of our soul have come to see him, then we shall hear with our inner ear the speaking of him. It is the speaking of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Dear brothers and sisters, our spirit is just an organ, but the Holy Spirit is the inhabitant. He dwells in our spirit, but very often because our soul is so agitated that our spirit cannot hear the speaking. It's only when our soul has come to a rest then our spirit is able to hear the still, small voice.

This is the way. Walk with me. And you'll find when the spirit is speaking with the still, small voice in our spirit, it will show us our pride.

It will reveal ourself. It will deliver our soul. The way that we are going is going to the pit. How do we gain our soul? By losing it.

We think that we gain our soul by gratifying it. But the word of God says, if you lose your soul for my sake, you shall gain it to eternity. Has God spoken? Yes.

He always speaks, but we do not always listen. God speaks once, and twice. Not only once, but twice.

How? He is chastened, also with pain upon His bed, and with constant strife in His bones, and His life abhorred bread, and His soul dainty food. His flesh is consumed away from view, and His bones that were not seen stick out, and His soul drives near to the pit, and His life to the destroyer. Sometimes, when God speaks, we do not hear.

Therefore, God has to speak twice. And the second time He speaks, it is not speaking in a sense, it is working. So Madame Guillaume says, God's working is God's speaking.

When God works, He speaks. How does He work? He will raise up circumstances. He may bring in affliction, even sickness, like in this case.

God will so arrange our environment, and bring in afflictions, and bring in sickness, and bring in sufferings, or persecutions, or whatever it may be. That through all these happenings, we may see the hand, the chastening. In other words, God may speak to us through the illumination of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Or God may speak to us through the discipline of the Holy Spirit in arranging. Sometimes we are not quiet enough to hear the still, small voice within us. Therefore, God has to raise up a tumultuous environment, that through all the noises of the environment, we may hear.

If we cannot hear the whisper of the Lord, then He has to thunder it. Are we so dull, so slow, that we cannot even see His hand in our environment? What is the meaning of all this thing that happens? In other words, it is the chastening of the Lord. Job is not punished because of his sin, but Job is under the chastening of the Lord.

Why? It is because God considered Job as a son and not as a bastard. God had to train his son to perfect him. Oh, if you read Hebrews chapter 12, you will find this is what it is.

It is the discipline of the Lord. It is the chastening of the Lord. It is the child-training of the Lord.

The reason why Job is plunged into such critical times is not because he had committed anything, though he is nothingness, but because God wants to perfect him, to mature him, that he may be a partakers of the divine nature. During the time of chastening, there is grief. But afterwards, there will be the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

And this is what it is. Why is it that you do not understand? You need an interpreter. There is no interpreter.

If you have an interpreter, then he will interpret to you and you will not, you will not go into the pit. Who is that interpreter? Elihu is the interpreter. He is trying to interpret to Job.

What is the meaning of the crucible of trial? Who is the interpreter today? Our human spirit. Our human spirit is an interpreter. It is by our human spirit that we interpret the working and the speaking.

If you do not listen to the voice of your spirit, if you do not hearken to your spirit, then, even though God may speak and he may work, you still do not understand and you will still go down. So how important is our human. Dear brothers and sisters, our human spirit is the organ for God.

It is not by our soul that we search out God. It is in our spirit that we come and know. Well, Elihu spoke three times.

He spoke, he stopped, he spoke again, stopped again, spoke again, and stopped again. Why? Because you remember there were three rounds in the debate between Job and his three saints. They go through one round, another round, and the third round.

So here you'll find Elihu did the same thing. He spoke in chapter 32 and chapter 33. And he told Job that God is greater.

He tried to interpret the way of God, saying that this is the discipline, the chastening of the Lord. Do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be faint under it, because God is treating you as his son. You should appreciate that.

He is trying to deliver your soul. After he finished his first talk, as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, he looked around. Especially he looked at Job.

He was expecting that Job certainly will respond to that. Here he was telling Job the real meaning of all the trials. And certainly Job will appreciate that, and will thank him for that.

But Job kept silent. He was defiant. And you know, when Job kept silent, not in the sense that he had nothing to say, but in the sense that he was defying him.

He was not accepting it. He did not appreciate that. And the three friends had nothing to add, to help the anger of Elihu.

Oh, brothers and sisters, if you read chapter 34 and 35, chapter 35, you find that Elihu seemed to be another person. The argument that he is a master, he, he, these two chapters were nothing but a repetition of what the three friends were accusing Job of. He started to accuse Job just like the three friends.

A reversion. Now, brothers and sisters, this shows us what a human spirit is. What is a human spirit? A human spirit is just an organ.

May I say a human spirit is in vacuum. A human spirit is neutral. It can either be inhabited by the Holy Spirit and thus under the influence of the Holy Spirit, or it can be invaded by the soul and thus express the thought.

This is our human spirit. You know, sometimes we do not understand a human spirit. Sometimes we tend to think that the spirit is all right.

Whatever comes from the spirit is right. You remember in one occasion when our Lord Jesus was traveling towards Jerusalem and passing by Samaria, the Samaritans were not accepting because His face was towards Jerusalem. They were so prejudiced against the Jews.

And you remember the circumcised of Zabardes, James and John, they came to the Lord and said, Now, Lord, how dare these people do not receive you, the Messiah? Do you want us to call fire down from heaven to burn up these people? What did the Lord Jesus say? The Lord said, You do not know what kind of a spirit you have. Dear brothers and sisters, do not think that because it comes out from the spirit it has to be right. When the human spirit is under the control of the Holy Spirit, it speaks for God.

But when the human spirit is invaded by the soul, it becomes a spokesman for the soul. That is what you have here. In the beginning Eli was spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

And he spoke for God. But when he noticed that Job was defiant, there was no reaction. His own self gained control over his spirit.

And he spoke like a man. Not different. Beware.

Even our spirit needs to be purified. That is what you find in 2 Corinthians 7, verse 1. Not only our flesh needs to be purified, even our spirit needs to be purified. But thank God.

He spoke for two chapters and he stopped. Did he begin to realize who was speaking? Suppose he did. He stopped.

And then he opened his mouth again. For the third time. Chapter 26, 36 and 37.

And there you'll find again. And Eli would proceed and say, Suffer me a little, and I will show thee that I have yet words for God. That spirit of humility came upon him again.

Oh, you can notice whether the human spirit is under the control of the Holy Spirit, or under the influence of the soul. You can easily distinguish it. The spirit that is under the control of the Holy Spirit has a humility in it.

Even the humility of the Lamb. But when the spirit is under the influence of the soul, you'll find an arrogance. So here again you'll find, Suffer me a little.

A spirit of humbleness again came upon him. And he said, I will, yes, speak for God. I'm not speaking for myself anymore.

That's futile. I acknowledge my fault. I'm going to speak for God again.

What he said was re-emphasize the chastening of the Lord. But with a warning. If you listen and humble yourself, you will yet enjoy that union even more.

But if you do not listen, you may end up in disaster. Dear brothers and sisters, isn't that true? Why do we call it a spiritual crisis? Because it may come out either way. Sometimes a spiritual crisis will make you.

But at other times, it has the possibility of breaking you. It may persecute you. Or it may ruin you.

It all depends whether we will yield. So dear brothers and sisters, you'll find that Elihu is trying to help Job out of his soul into his. And there he will begin to understand the working of the Lord.

And from the discipline of the Lord, Elihu moved on. And he speaks, he spoke on the government. There is such a thing called a government.

God is great. He governs the universe. He governs the world according to his will.

If only we know his government. If only we learn to yield ourselves to his government, then we will not suffer. His ways are higher than our ways.

His thoughts are higher. His government is beyond our understanding. But if we only are willing to submit ourselves, to abandon ourselves to his government, you will find his government is a benevolent.

And as he was speaking, a storm began to gather. There was lightning. There were thunders.

There was darkness. Rain. And Elihu used this to explain the government.

But after the storm, the gold in the north. Job entered into a storm full of lightning. But after the storm, there will be that golden sun rising in the horizon.

And this is the government. Dear brothers and sisters, the anger of the Lord, he is full of tender compassion.

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