

We come this morning to the 3rd of 4 speeches given by Elihu. It's the shortest speech and addressed directly to Job. Within this chapter, Elihu seeks to answer two questions from Job: What is the point in being good (vv1-8), and, why doesn't God answer prayer (vv9-16)?

- I. What is the point in being good? (vv1-8)
- II. Why doesn't God answer prayer? (vv9-16)

I. What is the point in being good? (vv1-8)

1. We can divide this first heading up into two subpoints—Job's question (vv1-3) and Elihu's answer (vv4-8).
2. (1) Job's question (vv1-3), v2—"Do you think this is right?"—that is, do you think what I'm about to quote you as saying is right?
3. V2—"My righteousness is more than God's? For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?'"
4. Elihu quotes Job twice—the first time (in v2) is actually Elihu's own conclusion which he puts in Job's mouth.
5. V3—"For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?'"
6. This is Elihu's paraphrase of Job—he nowhere actually said these exact words but he said similar things.
7. Elihu is basically claiming he said something like this—"What benefit is there in me being righteous?"
8. "Does it bring an advantage to God? Does it bring any profit to me?"—"Look at what it has brought!"
9. This is why Elihu asks Job in v2—"Do you say, 'My righteousness is more than God's?'—that is, do you think you are wiser and more just than God Himself?
10. Elihu is accusing Job of thinking he was more righteous than God, which is another way of saying, God was unjust.
11. Job was suffering as a righteous person, and thus the question was—Why be righteous if righteous people suffer?
12. Now again, to what extent Job actually said these words and thought this way, is unclear—but this is what Elihu is accusing Job with.
13. (2) Elihu's answer (vv4-8), v4—"I will answer you, and your companions with you"—Elihu was not only going to set Job straight, but also his three friends.
14. V5—"Look to the heavens and see; and behold the clouds—they are higher than you"—that is, God is higher than you.
15. This is really the main theme of vv4-8—Elihu is basically seeking to put Job and his friends in their rightful place.
16. And in some sense, v5 is really a summary of the entire chapter—God is in the heavens and you on the earth.
17. If the clouds and heavens are above you, than how much more is God Himself, who's enthroned in the highest heaven.
18. He then gives two implications: your sins cannot harm God (v6), and your righteousness cannot benefit God (v7).
19. (a) Sins cannot harm God, v6—"If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? Or, if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?"
20. This doesn't mean God doesn't take notice of sin and punish it—it seems means it can do nothing to Him.

21. While sin dishonors Him and violates His law—it does nothing to His Being or Essence—it cannot reach God.
22. John Gill—"Men can no more reach God by any hostile action of theirs, such as sin is, than they can reach the sun and stop its course, lessen its light or pluck it from its orbit."
23. (b) Righteousness cannot benefit God, v7—"If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?"
24. Nothing man does, negatively by sinning or positively by obeying can add or subtract from God Himself.
25. Lk.17:10—"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"
26. We are "unprofitable servants" in that, our obedience to God (our righteousness) adds nothing to God.
27. Robert Hawker—"All the goodness of the world is unprofitable to the LORD; for whether men bless GOD, or revile GOD, the one neither can add to His glory, nor the other tend to the lessening of it. The glory of the sun is never the less for any dark or bright clouds below. The LORD has no need of our services. And indeed, all the good that any man is enabled to do, the ability must be derived from GOD to do it."
28. V8—"Your wickedness affects a man such as you, and your righteousness a son of man"—this is in opposition to God.
29. While nothing man does can affect God, it does affect man—by "affect" means "to move or trouble."
30. Nothing man does moves or troubles God—He is not affected by anything within or without Himself.
31. But this is not true of man—our actions (good or bad) affect others—they change them and trouble them.
32. When we do something bad, it affects those around us for bad, and when we do something good, it affects them for good.
33. But either way, our actions affect others—they affect ourselves and they affect others (for good and bad).
34. Thus, what Elihu does is, he brings us face to face to what is often referred to as God's transcendence (I want to consider three brief things about God's transcendence – explained, clarified, and applied).
35. Consideration 1—Transcendence explained—the word "transcend" literally means "to exceed or surpass."
36. Thus, transcendence refers to the fact that God exceeds or surpasses His creation—He transcends it.
37. Simply put, there's God and then there's God's creation, and these two are very different from each other.
38. God's transcendence relates to other truths about God, such as His impassibility, immutability, and simplicity.
39. Simply put—nothing can affect God—God is unaffected by creation—He isn't changed or altered by it.
40. This is very different of man, who is affected by things around him—the actions of others affect us.
41. For example, if I were to give you a gift of \$500 you would be positively affected, but if I stole \$500 from you, you would be negatively affected.
42. But either way, my actions towards you would affect you—you would be affected for good or for bad.
43. And this is precisely what Elihu is denying happens to God—He isn't affected by the actions of His creation.

44. This means, nothing we do benefits God, and nothing we fail to do detracts from God—He is the same.
45. I fear many Christians are unclear on this—they think it's possible to make God more or less joyful (happy).
46. But brethren, this would imply that God isn't already perfectly and unchangeably blessed in and of Himself.
47. Nothing we do can add anything to God, and nothing we fail to do can detract anything from God—God is unaffected by creation).
48. A.W. Tozer—"Were all human beings suddenly to become blind, still the sun would shine by day and the stars by night, for these owe nothing to the millions who benefit from their light. So, were every man on earth to become atheist, it could not affect God in any way. He is what He is in Himself without regard to any other. To believe in Him adds nothing to his perfections; to doubt Him takes nothing away."
49. Consideration 2—Transcendence clarified—here I want to make a necessary and important clarification.
50. And in order for me to make this clarification I need to remind you of an important theological distinction.
51. That distinction concerns God's essential and manifest glory—His essential glory is that which belongs to Him by nature, and His manifest glory is that which is given to Him by His creation (including us).
52. God's essential glory can never be increased or decreased—God is glorious and can never be any more or less.
53. God's manifest glory is that which is given to Him by creation—both the world around us as well as us ourselves.
54. God's essential glory concerns who God is in and of Himself, whereas His manifest glory concerns that glory of God perceived by man.
55. I can illustrate this with the sun—the sun always burns hot and shines bright (even though the clouds may hinder both).
56. Perhaps we can say the sun is essentially hot and bright (regardless if we feel or see it)—but when the clouds are removed, the glory of the sun is manifest (it is felt and seen).
57. But feeling and seeing the sun doesn't make the sun any hotter or brighter (the removal of the clouds merely makes the sun known).
58. Ps.29:2—"Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name"—this is one of many statements in the Psalms where we are exhorted to give God glory.
59. Now, you might think at first, that this contradicts what I've said—David tells us to give God glory—thus, if we give God glory, He has more of it, and if we fail to give Him glory, He has less of it.
60. But this has to be understood of God's manifest glory—that is, the glory that is given to God by man.
61. When we give God glory who benefits? Well, remember what we've said, nothing we give God benefits Him.
62. When we give God glory, this benefits us, because in giving to God, God gives to us—in blessing Him, He blesses us.
63. Nothing man does ever benefits God, and yet, in giving glory to God, man is benefited from God as He blesses us.
64. Perhaps I can put this another way—God blesses those who bless Him—or, in blessing God we receive blessing.
65. Consideration 3—Transcendence applied—here I want to suggest a threefold proper response to God's transcendence.

66. (a) Humility—I'm not sure, but I fear this is one reason why few Christians think about God's transcendence.
67. Simply put, God doesn't need anything or anyone—He's perfectly sufficient in and of Himself—He doesn't need you or me.
68. A.W. Tozer—"To admit the existence of a need in God is to admit incompleteness in the divine Being. Need is a creature-word and cannot be spoken of the Creator. God has a voluntary relation to everything He has made, but He has no necessary relation to anything outside of Himself. His interest in His creatures arises from His sovereign good pleasure, not from any need those creatures can supply nor from any completeness they can bring to Him who is complete in Himself."
69. (b) Gratitude—while God doesn't need man, He enlists the service of man to accomplish His purposes.
70. Irenaeus (120-200)—"Service to God adds nothing to Him, and He has no need of human obedience. On the contrast, He grants life and eternal glory to those who follow and serve Him. He bestows benefits on those who serve Him just because they serve Him, but He does not receive any benefit from them because He is rich, perfect and in need of nothing."
71. (c) Adoration—this I trust is an obvious response to God's transcendence—"You are great, O LORD GOD. For there is none like YOU, nor is there any God besides You."

II. Why doesn't God answer prayer? (vv9-16)

1. While Elihu nowhere quotes Job as directly asking this question, it's implied throughout these 8 verses.
2. We can divide this section into three parts—Elihu answers Job (vv9-13), he exhorts Job (v14), and he rebukes Job (vv15-16).
3. (1) Elihu answers Job (vv9-13)—within these verses, Elihu explains why God refuses to answer prayer.
4. V9—"Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty."
5. That is, people cry out to God for help because oppression—they are under the heavy arm of the mighty.
6. V10-11—"But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?'"
7. This is why He refuses to answer them—while they cry to Him for help, they refuse to acknowledge Him as God.
8. V12—"There they cry out, but He does not answer, because of the pride of evil men"—this is why they refuse to acknowledge Him as their God.
9. In many ways pride is the original sin, as Paul attributes pride to the reason Satan rebelled against God.
10. 1Tim.3:6—"A bishop must not be a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil."
11. V13—"Surely God will not listen to empty talk, nor will the Almighty regard it"—this is how Elihu describes their prayers.
12. The Hebrew word rendered "empty talk" literally means "empty" or "vain"—it's rendered "falsehood" and "deception."
13. The idea is this—their prayers were empty of sincerity—their words were void or empty of their heart.
14. (2) Elihu exhorts Job (v14), v14—"Although you say you do not see Him, yet justice is before Him, and you must wait for Him."

15. Here Elihu paraphrases Job's complaint—on several occasions Job complained about not being able to see or hear God.
16. "Although you say you do not see Him"—that is, Job was unable to hear from God or perceive His work.
17. "Yet justice is before Him"—even though you are unable to see or hear from God, you can be assured He acts justly.
18. "And you must wait for Him"—the word rendered "wait" literally means "to be in anguish" or "pain."
19. The idea is prolonged or delayed waiting—waiting for someone while undergoing pain and/or anguish.
20. (3) Elihu rebukes Job (vv15-16)—he ends this 3rd speech with a stern rebuke—"And now, because He has not punished in His anger, nor taken much notice of folly, therefor Job opens his mouth in vain; he multiplies words without knowledge."
21. That is, because God hasn't punished Job in His anger because of his folly, Job is allowed to add rebellion to his sin.
22. Because God hasn't closed his mouth in punishment, Job continues to open it with defiant and empty words.
23. Thus, in closing I want to focus upon the theme of true prayer—like every other religious activity, there is prayer and true prayer.
24. With every religious activity there's a counterfeit—there's false worship, love, repentance, and holiness (and so too, there's false and true prayer).
25. Now, let me clarify, when I say that God doesn't hear false prayer, I don't mean He doesn't hear it in any sense (God hears everything).
26. But God doesn't hear them in an acceptable way—He doesn't hear them favorably as He hears His people.
27. Jn.9:31—"Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him."
28. Observation 1—True prayer is humble—this is the very nature of what prayer is—it's asking God for something.
29. Now, it's true, prayer is more than this, as it's also a means whereby we communion with God and give His praise.
30. But at its very core, prayer is a humbling act—it's asking God for help—it's a confession of neediness.
31. And this is why sinners never truly pray—because they never truly humble themselves before God as needy sinners.
32. Observation 2—True prayer is urgent—it's for this reason, Elihu describes prayer as "cries" or "pleas."
33. Thus, within true prayer we urgently cry to God for deliverance (v9), renewed joy (v10), and wisdom (v11).
34. Before we quickly look at these things, let me suggest, these are among the benefits God gives to man.
35. While man is unable to benefit God, God graciously benefits man in answer to humble and believing prayer.
36. (a) Deliverance, v9—"Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty."
37. In the first place, this refers to the physically poor who are oppressed by the wealthy and the influential.
38. And that's oftentimes true—God's people are usually among the weak, needy, and poor of this world.

39. But it's always spiritually true with regards to Christians, who are oppressed by their mighty enemies.
40. (b) Renewed joy, v10—"But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night'"—those who truly pray, pray to God our Maker who gives songs in the night.
41. Let me simply say in passing, that it's necessary to acknowledge God as our Maker before we acknowledge Him as our Redeemer.
42. Thus, we must call to Him as God our Maker—"who gives songs in the night"—that is, songs of comfort and joy.
43. Scripture everywhere associates singing with joy and gladness, Isa.16:10—"Gladness is taken away, and joy from the plentiful field; in the vineyards there will be no singing."
44. This is a description of God's judgment upon Moab—He will remove gladness, joy, and singing from the land.
45. In contrast to this, Elihu speaks of God as "giving songs in the night"—that is, restoring joy and gladness in the midst of affliction.
46. Thus, by "songs in the night" are meant the joy, gladness, and comfort that God gives us in times of hardship.
47. Only God can give these songs—only God can make our hearts sing while in the darkness of sorrow.
48. The apostles sang hymns in prison (Acts 16:25), and Christians can rejoice in the night, if God gives us a song.
49. CHS (Songs in the night)—"There are three reasons Christians can sing songs in the night: daytime is recent in memory; the night is not as dark as it could be; the night will soon end and morning come."
50. (c) Wisdom, v11—"Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?"
51. Observation 3—True prayer is patient—that is, it waits on God to benefit us when and how He determines.
52. This can be illustrated in Job, who was presently in the midst of a very serious and prolonged darkness.
53. And while Job must humbly and believingly cry to God for deliverance, renewed joy, and wisdom, he must wait on God.
54. God is the one who determines how long the night lasts, and how dark it will be—we must trust Him in the midst of the darkness.
55. But you know, there is a sense in which this entire lifetime is one prolonged night, through which we must cry to Him as we wait for the morning.
56. Ps.30:5—"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning"—while God will give songs to sing the night, there's coming a day when the night shall end, and we shall sing together in the new heavens and earth.
57. "Job, your specific night will soon end as the Lord will deliver you from your afflictions, but there's a sense in which his night continued until he died.
58. But either way, if we view the night as a time of intensified affliction or as a description of this life, the Lord will give us songs to sing within it, and it shall eventually last—"you must wait for Him" (v14).