Title: The Third Speech of Elihu: God is Indebted to None

Number: 0623Job35.1-16(34)

Text: 35:1-16

Central Idea: You're not entitled—and neither am I!

Date: June 25, 2023

{Read Text / Prayer}

Turn over to Nehemiah chapter 8 ...

i. I Am Committed to Biblical Exposition

Central to my ministry w/i t/CH. Focus of my preaching & teaching is on expounding t/biblical text w/as much careful scholarship as I can.

ii. That's a legacy of the 16th c. Protestant Reformation

B4 that time, in t/west, t/RCC kept men in darkness by not only perverting God's W, but also my keeping it hidden from them.

After t/darkness came t/light — the light of t/Reformation.

"Bible was Unleashed" — like an unleashed ravenous lion, t/WOG went forth from pulpits & people alike, transf. lives 1 heart at a time. Still doing that. Expository preaching is a legacy of t/Ref.

iii. More importantly - it's the legacy of the Bible itself

Going back over 2 millennia to t/OT. We find t/nation of Israel returning to their land after years of exile. 5th c. BC.

T/pple had lost their native lang. which was Heb. Also t/lang. of t/OT.

We read in BON, 1 of t/last books written in t/OT economy (chapt. 8): 1 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to <u>bring the</u> book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.

2 Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.

I take it that they excluded small children. Maybe they went to CC!

3 [Ezra] read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday (sev. hours), in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

Ezra spoke from a pulpit ==>

- 4a Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose.
- 5 Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.
- 6 Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Note t/words of v. 7 ==>

7 [the leaders of Israel] explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. 8 They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

That's t/legacy of biblical exposition. The people didn't know t/Heb. lang., much like most don't know it today — Heb. t/lang. of t/OT or Gk. t/lang. of t/New. So t/leaders who knew that lang., men like Ezra, translated t/Word so that t/people could understand.

The people were crying when they heard the words of the law (repent. They were told to grieve no more, but to rejoice in t/LORD. Result? All the people went away, they celebrated [why?]

12 . . . because they understood the words which had been made known to them.

iv. This is why I am committed to expository preaching

Includes a familiarity w/t/orig. lang. Exegesis.

"We shall not long preserve the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained." (Luther's Works, 4:114-115).

So we focus on preaching thru books of t/Bible. That means you start in t/1st chapt. & work your way to t/last. That usu. takes an hr. With that caveat in mind . . . Back to Job

v. We were introduced to Job's 4th friend Elihu in chapter 32

Elihu had witnessed much of what had been going on betw. Job & his 3 friends - going all t/way back to chapt. 3.

Beg. in chapt. 4: 3 rounds of dialogue between Job & his friends Eliphaz, Bildad; Zophar. Those cycles of dialogue ended w/Job's last defense which runs from chapts 27-31.

vi. You get to chapter 32 and there's a log-jam

No one is saying anything. Job had finished talking (31:40c) {cite}; We read in 32:1 Then these three men (EBZ) ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

Who will break t/log-jam? Who will speak up & prepare Job for God's correction starting in chapt. 38? ==> Young man named Elihu.

32:2–3 2 But the anger of Elihu . . . burned; against Job his anger burned because he justified himself before God. 3 And his anger burned against his three friends because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.

After a defense of his right to speak in chap. 32, Elihu begins what is the 1st of 4 speeches starting in chapt 33.

I Elihu's First Speech: Is God Sovereign? (33)

Back when we were in that chapter ==>

"The major theme of all that Elihu has to say can be stated in three words; God is sovereign. He is not only good all the time, He is in control all the time. . . . God is never shocked or surprised. Our lives, therefore, are never out of God's control. And furthermore, God doesn't feel obligated to explain Himself." [Swindoll, 251]

II. Elihu's Second Speech: Is God Fair? (34)

G. isn't only fair, he's t/std. for what justice means.

God is t/Gold Standard in that He is t/absolute upon which everything else is judged.

Ch. 33 — Is God Sovereign? (Yes!)

Ch. 34 — Is God Fair? (Yes!)

U might get wrong impression from t/fact that G. is fair, that he's also obligated. That's our culture. I'm treated fair when you give me what I want. You are obligated to me.

III. Elihu's Third Speech: Is God Obligated? (35)

This question deserves a thunderous "No!"

G. is not obligated to anything other than His own nature.

Title: The Third Speech of Elihu: God is Indebted to No One

Main idea: You're not entitled—and neither am I

vii. This chapter is short: 16 vv: God's attributes are prominent In this chapt. we see God's: Justice; Immutability; Impassibility (not driven by emotions); Sovereignty; Omnipotence; Holiness;

Immanence; Esp. His Transcendence . . . INCLUDING ==>

viii. Aseity: He is dependent on no one or no thing

He is totally self-sufficient in Himself.

Christopher Ash, in his excellent commentary on t/BOJ:

"... two things follow [from God's nature]: Negatively (v. 6) you can sin as much as you like, but you won't damage God; you cannot cause him to suffer or damage his essence. Positively (v. 7) you can be as good as you like, but you can never put God in your debt; he doesn't need your good deeds, and your good deeds do not give him anything." [Ash, 354]

That is G's aseity. ==>

His independent self-suff. depending on nothing o/s Himself.

ix. I think the doctrine of the Trinity comes into play here

Some think that God needed to create sentient beings (angels & men)

in order to experience fellowship // to love.

W/i t/eternal Triunity of G. ==>

there existed Fellowship & Love between t/3 persons, F/S/HS

His self-sufficient independence (Aseity) is one side of a coin.

Other side is His creation. We are dependent on Him.

1 thing that doesn't mean is that G. owes us anything.

It's all by grace {define} — Cf. Romans 4...

Title: The Third Speech of Elihu: God is Indebted to None

Idea: You're not entitled—and neither am I

I've heard otherwise well meaning Xns say things like, "When mankind fell into sin, G. obligated Himself to redeem them."

Almost blasphemous. G. is obligated to no one!

x. We live in the age of entitlement

I sold some sports cards recently in an online auction. 1 card I had was listed for \$2 w/\$6 S&H. Card sold for opening bid.

Winner writes me asking if I could lower the shipping charge!

I replied that I have to consider packaging, my time, gas, as well as t/postage, so no. But I offered to cancel his order.

I misread his reply & thought he said he didn't want t/card.

So I cancelled. Then he responded asking me why. I apologized for my mistake & told him, "Listen, just to show you what an upstanding guy I am, I will send you t/card for free." His reply was a simple "TY" That was on a Fri. He writes me early on Mon to ask if I'd shipped t/card yet. I said, "no, but I'm planning to." He replies with a reminder that the post office will be closing soon. Next day he asks again if I

shipped t/card. I told him I did. He asks me for tracking info! My reply:

"Dude, do you realize that I'm shipping this card on my dime and you're getting it for free?" His reply: "Just send tracking." I didn't; he got t/card and at least said "Thanks for the card." But then he added, "I'll take more freebies."

xi. That's the spirit of our age

I want my reparations // college debt cancelled // govt. healthcare — you name it. When it doesn't happen we cry foul: "This isn't fair!" Fair? Are you kidding me?

Those are t/more egregious examples of entitlement.

Sometimes entitlement takes other forms . . . like when we suffer.

There we have to use caution.

D.A. Carson ==>

"If you live long enough, you will suffer. If haven't suffered yet, you will. The only alternative is not living long enough. If you live long enough, you will be bereaved. If you live long enough, you'll contract cancer, consumptive heart failure. . . . You might have a road accident or get fired from a job or two. If you live long enough, you will suffer.

If you live long enough, you'll lose children. Almost every family lost some children 150 years ago. We don't expect that anymore in the medicalized West. In many parts of the world, people still lose children, If you live long enough, you will lose some too. A church where I served some decades back in Canada had a woman in it who was 94 when I knew her, a widow ... three times ... who had lost all

her children by the age of 94.

I knew a man, Norman Anderson. He eventually was knighted by the queen, so he was Sir Norman Anderson. He had been a missionary in the Muslim world and a brilliant scholar in Oriental studies. His first child was a daughter who went on to become a medical doctor and went to the Congo as a missionary as it then was, the Belgian Congo. During the upheaval in which the Belgian Congo become Zaire in 1959, she was gang raped. She was furloughed home and eventually went to California to get more medical training. She tripped, fell down some stairs, and drowned in her own spittle.

The second child died in circumstances no less bizarre. The third . . . went to Cambridge University about the time that I went, and he contracted a brain tumor and died of the age of 2l before he graduated. All three kids [gone]. I knew Norman and Pat pretty well for the next 15-20 years until they died. Not once, not once, did I ever hear him say that God wasn't fair or complain about his loss. How do you do that? Does that even make sense?" [Making Sense of Suffering, Part 1, p. 1]

How do you do that? By t/grace & power of t/Holy Spirit.

Does that even make sense? Not always. I know it didn't for me.

Does he still bless t/believer? Yes. But remember, *You're not entitled—and neither am I*

xii. There's no such thing as obligatory grace

Grace is undeserved / unearned. G. is not obligated to grant it. Gift.

Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens

whom He desires. You're not entitled—and neither am I

III. Elihu's Third Speech: Is God Obligated? (35)

Elihu speaks directly / exclusively to Job.

- A. Job's Arguments (1-3)
- B. Elihu's Answers (4-15)
- C. Elihu's Assessment (16)

A. Job's Arguments (1-3)

1 Then Elihu continued and said,

This same phase is used at t/beg. of Elihu's 2,3,4 speeches.

- 2 "Do you think this is according to justice? Do you say, 'My righteousness is more than God's'? 3 "For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You? What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?'
 - 1. Job claims a greater righteousness than God (2)
- a. That's not what Job said directly it's the implication of what he has said
 - (1) Elihu asks:
- 2a "Do you think this is according to justice?
 - (a) Other translations have "do you think this is just?"
- **(b)** The word "just" or "justice" is Hebew *mishpat*Word that has judicial elements, but also carries t/idea of sovereignty.
 It's more than simple "fairness."

Same word used by God in 40:8 (transl. by NASB as "judgment") 40:8 (God) "Will you really annul My judgment [mishpat]?

Sov., righteous, judicial judgement.

Job got the idea in the end ==>

42:2-3,5-6 2 "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 3 . . . "I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. . . ." 5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; 6 Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes."

(2) Elihu adds:

2b Do you say, 'My righteousness is more than God's'?

(a) Job all along has been claiming innocence

True as far as not having deserved t/suff. he's exper. But, he also has been critical that G. has not come thru — Job seems to believe that G. is not holding up His end of t/agreement (of which there wasn't 1): Namely, that G. was entitled to deliver Job.

That this wasn't happening caused Job to place himself above G.

"Although at the start of the book Job firmly rejected this [idea that God will bless him because of his goodness] and showed that he worships God purely and simply because he is God and is worthy of his worship, it would seem that Job has faltered in this as his sufferings have continued." [Ash, 353]

^{1.} Job claims a greater righteousness than God (2)

^{2.} Job claims that being good doesn't matter (3)

^{3 &}quot;For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You? What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?'

a. Obedience is no advantage to God according to Job

b. Job is being inconsistent (illogical)

He believes that being good means God will vindicate him. Then he claims it really doesn't matter if he's good or bad!

(1) Problem is two-fold

(a) Job has bought into the false worldview that good people don't suffer — if they do then they're not good

He's confused b/c he has been good.

(b) Job also thinks that the reward for obedience is lack of suffering

Job is confused because he continues to suffer.

Doesn't make sense to him. He wants vindication & he wants it now. That isn't happening so he thinks, "Why bother?"

34:9 Elihu quoted Job as saying that: 'It profits a man nothing when he is pleased with God.' IOW there's no benefit in delighting in G.

Back to the fact that ==>

1. Job claims a greater righteousness than God

He's in effect placing himself in a position of judge over Him.

If you say that G. is acting unjustly, you are placing yourself above Him as His judge. Absurd!

Fallen, finite men placing themselves above G.?!

AND ==>

2. Job claims that being good doesn't matter

Job implicitly claims to exceed G's righteousness (and justice) by

claiming that he fulfilled his obligations, but G. has not. Do good & suffer? Why bother!

Had t/song been around, Job may have sung in his misery ==>
And they say there's a heaven for those who will wait
Some say it's better, but I say it ain't
I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints
The sinners are much more fun
You know that only the good die young . . .
[Billy Joel, Only the Good Die Young, 1978]

c. Enduring undeserved suffering is a mark of true saving faith I think I've been tested in that about as much as I could be.

(1) Jesus in the parable of the soils . . .

Matt. 13:20–21 20 "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

- A. Job's Arguments (1-3)
- B. Elihu's Answers (4-15)
- 4 "I will answer you, and your friends with you." (E/B/Z)
 - 1. First Answer: God's Transcendent Aseity (4-8) {define}
 - a. Elihu focuses on God's transcendent glory in v. 5
- 5 "Look at the heavens and see; and behold the clouds—they are

higher than you.

38:37 same word for "clouds" is used where G. says to Job:

"Who can count the clouds by wisdom . . ."

(1) No greater testimony of God's transcendent glory than creation

(a) I mean the creation in total — everything that isn't God was created by and for Him

(b) Creation proper

Psa. 19:1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Why all are w/o excuse (Rom. 1 — G's glory is revealed in creation.

(c) Creation of man — created in God's image

Psa. 8:4–6 4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet,

i. Uniqueness of man

We stand so far above t/rest of creation! No comparison.

What animal can write great works like Shakespeare (t/Bible!).

What animal can paint like DaVinci?

What animal can analyze & reflect on thought t/way we do?

What animal can know G. & His thoughts.

What animal can know & enjoy Him — forever!

- a. God's transcendent glory
- 5 "Look at the heavens and see; and behold the clouds—they are higher than you.
 - (d) Look around; look up! God is gloriously transcendent!
 - i. God's response to Job in 38-41 glory in creation!
- b. We see God's aseity (self-sufficiency) in vv. 6-8 6 "If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? 7 "If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, or what does He receive from your hand?
- (1) What did Elihu say Job's attitude was (v. 3)? 3 "For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You? What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?'

This was looking at things from Job's persp. What does Job get if he's good or bad. Elihu turns t/tables: what about G's persp?

Pos. and a Neg.

- (2) Negatively: Our sin does not do damage to God 6 "If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? [note the parallel thought] And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him?
- (3) Positively: Our Righteousness does not improve God 7 "If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, or what does He

receive from your hand?

TEV understands Elihu's ? question as irony: "Do you help God by being so righteous?"

(a) God cannot be affected by anyone's actions, good or bad We cannot hurt or damage Him. He doesn't need us — or our worship. Not like He's a balloon w/a slow leak that needs a constant flow of air to remain intact.

"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." [Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Patient]

- (4) Does that mean our conduct doesn't affect anything? No! It affects other people:
- 8 "Your wickedness is for a man like yourself, and your righteousness is for a son of man.
 - (a) These two lines are parallel:

 Your wickedness is for a man like yourself,
 your righteousness is for a son of man.

Our goodness, or wickedness, affects other people. It doesn't affect G.

NIV: "Your wickedness only affects humans like yourself, and your righteousness only other people."

One writer ==>

"When God shows mercy it is not because man has persuaded Him to do so, and if He inflicts judgment it is not because man has injured Him. God is sovereign and therefore self-determining. He is not bribed by man; His standards for judging people are firm, impartial, and uninfluenced. But since a person's moral conduct does affect himself, it does make a difference for him whether he sins or not . . ." [BKC]

- 1. First Answer: God's Transcendent Aseity (4-8)
- 2. Second Answer: Job Has Become Proud (9-15)
- a. An example of pride in those who suffer (vv. 9, 12)
- (1) Speaking of the unrighteous here:
- 9 "Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry for help because of the arm of the mighty. [= oppressors]
- 12 "There [better "consequently"] they cry out, but He does not answer because of the pride of evil men.

34:36 (Elihu) 'Job ought to be tried to the limit, Because he answers LIKE wicked men.

Here those answers are characterized by pride & unbelief.

b. Elihu gives an example of how people should respond (10-11) 10 "But no one [of t/wicked] says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, 11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?'

- (1) There needs to be the recognition of three things:
- (a) God as Creator

10a "But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker . . . "

i. Humility in recognizing the Creator-creature distinction

Here we have the wicked to refuse to recognize God in His providnce G. is sov./king/all things come thru Him. We are to humble ourselves.

ii. Paul in Acts 17 before the philosophers of Athens:

Acts 17:24–26 24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 [aseity] nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

- (a) God as Creator
- (b) God as Comforter

10b "... who gives songs in the night..."

i. What's that about?

"night" = times of suffering/darkness.

"songs= t/joy that He alone can give during those times.

ii. Acts 16:25 — Paul and Silas in Philippi

They had been beaten with rods; thrown in prison; feet in t/stocks): "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them"

Song in the night.

- (1) There needs to be the recognition of three things:
- (a) God as Creator
- (b) God as Comforter
- (c) God as Counselor

11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?'

There's intelligence in t/animal world—but nothing in compar. to man We alone can know t/thots of G.

- c. God does not hear the prayers of the wicked (13)
- 13 "Surely God will not listen to an empty cry, nor will the Almighty regard it.

"Surely God will not listen to an empty cry, nor will the Almighty regard [see] it."

- (1) "Almighty" = Heb. *shaDDai* Used more times in Job than any other OT book
- (2) "Cry" ("God will not listen to an empty cry") is the Heb. form for "vanity/nothingness"

Cries of t/wicked are addressed to nobody (a god of their making); so their cries are useless.

(3) How can it be that God ignores the cries of the oppressed & innocent?

Answer: these people may be oppressed, but they are not innocent.

They are depraved & therefore, proud. An "empty cry."

(a) Sin of pride runs parallel to God's aseity

Where G. is independent/self-determining/self-suff.; man thinks he is. He doesn't need God — until he does.

Here t/cry for help comes from a sinful heart.

There's no repentance, only expectation that something is deserved. Seeking comfort, not t/Comforter.

(b) Our culture is driven by this Marxist concept of the oppressed versus the oppressors

If you're of European descent you are probably an oppressor. So down come t/statues of historical figures. Columbus / Day!

This is 1 reason why our culture is so divided. You fall into 1 of 2 categories: Either an oppressor or you're t/oppressed.

Leyton Talbert ==>

"This . . . is symptomatic of contemporary liberation theologies [contemporary liberalism], which canonize the poor and oppressed simply because of their poverty and oppression."

[social justice movt./reparations for t/oppressed/ affirm. action]
Talbert continues ==>

"The assumption is that God is necessarily and invariably on the side of the oppressed and owes them relief regardless of their personal relationship or attitude towards Him. This perverts the biblical picture of God's posture toward the oppressed. . . . Suffering itself is not a virtue that commands the compassion and protection of God, nor does it entitle a person to a claim on God. It is the attitude of the poor that determines God's posture toward them . . ."

You're not entitled—and neither am I

This doesn't mean we don't do what we can to help our modern day "widows & orphans." We certainly want to see justice & righteousness prevail. But that's accord. to G's stds, not man's.

So - Elihu answers Job . . .

- 1. First Answer: God's Transcendent Aseity (4-8)
- 2. Second Answer: Job Has Become Proud (9-15)
- d. Application to Job 14-15
- 14 "How much less [cf. to t/wicked] when you say you do not behold Him, the case is before Him, and you must wait for Him!
 - (1) Two things that make up Job's complaint
 - (a) He can't see God (implies God's inactivity)
 - (b) He can't wait for G (it's taking too long)

The case is b4 t/Judge & Job has to wait. [^]

We're not entitled — and neither is Job for that matter.

- e. Verse 15 is hard:
- 15 "And now, because He has not visited in His anger, nor has He acknowledged transgression well,
- (1) Seems to indicated that Job is upset that he suffers while the wicked don't (Job's complaint back in chapter 21)
 - (a) NIV
- 14 How much less, then, will he listen when you say that you do not see him, that your case is before him and you must wait for him, 15 and further, that his anger never punishes and he does not take the least notice of wickedness.

- A. Job's Arguments (1-3)
- B. Elihu's Answers (4-15)
- C. Elihu's Assessment (16)
- 16 So Job opens his mouth emptily; he multiplies words without knowledge."

1. Elihu's assessment is God's as we will see later

1 more speech by Elihu — chapters 36&37. Then it's G's turn.

You're not entitled—and neither am I

Grace . . . I mentioned Romans 4 earlier ==> JESUS

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. 8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

{Prayer}

^{*} Suffering; Entitlement; God's Grace; Gospel (Jesus)