

EXPOSITION  
OF  
THE BOOK OF JOB,  
WITH  
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS;

BY  
THE REV. JOSEPH CARYL, A. M.

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ABRIDGED FROM THE LONDON FOLIO EDITION OF 1676.

By JOHN BERRIE, ESQ.  
DALKEITH.

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Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.—JAMES v. 10, 11.

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## TO THE READER.

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IN the course of Divine Providence, I have often had occasion to consult the Book of Job. I experienced much benefit in these exercises from the perusal of Mr. Caryl's Commentary on that part of the inspired writings which occupied the learned and pious Author's time and attention for more than twenty years during the civil wars. I was induced to make extracts from the whole work, and now publish them in the humble hope that they may be found useful, not only to the afflicted themselves, but likewise to those who converse with and desire to comfort them.

The only apology offered for introducing them to the notice of the public is, that many of that numerous class of mankind for whom they are chiefly intended, (the afflicted) have neither leisure nor opportunity to read the voluminous and valuable work from which they are extracted.

That the divine blessing may render them profitable to all who may peruse them, is the sincere desire of

JOHN BERRIE.

DALKEITH, *April* 1836.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE,

EXTRACTED FROM DR. CALAMY AND S. PALMER'S NONCONFORMIST'S MEMORIAL.

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JOSEPH CARYL, A.M. of Exeter College, Oxford, where Wood speaks of him as a noted disputant. He was born of genteel parents in London in 1602. He was preacher to the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, where he continued several years with applause, and he was a member of the Westminster Assembly. In 1653 he was appointed one of the Triers for the approbation of ministers. He was sent by the Parliament to attend the king at Holmby-house, and was one of the Commissioners in the treaty of the Isle of Wight.

Soon after his ejection in 1662, he gathered a congregation in the neighbourhood of St. Magnus, near London bridge, to whom he preached as the times would permit. He was a moderate independent ; a man of great piety, learning, and modesty. He died at his house in Bury Court, Feb. 7, 1673, aged 71. In the summer of that year, his church chose Dr. John Owen for their pastor ; and in 1708 they built a new meeting-house in Bury Court, at which time Dr. Isaac Watts was their pastor.

When that band of worthies was ejected from their congregations by the Act of uniformity 1662, Mr. Caryl's farewell sermon is founded on Rev. iii. 4. " And they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

" *They shall walk with Christ.* They shall enjoy peace and intimacy with him as his friends. They shall walk in white garments, which is expressive of their state of justification, but particularly of their character, which is truly honourable in the sight of God and man ; and likewise of their inward peace and joy, arising from the testimony of conscience, the witness of the Spirit, and a well-grounded hope of future glory, in consequence of which they may now glory in tribulation.

" Hence he takes occasion to caution Christians against any thing that would wound their consciences and defile their garments. He exhorts them to adopt Job's resolution, chap. xxvii. 6. To maintain purity of heart and life ; that angelic robe, which the world can neither strip off, nor sully with its reproaches.

" Finally, this walking with Christ has respect to the heavenly glory of which his transfiguration was a type.

" Having told his hearers that it had been the great object of his labours among them, to bring them into this holy and happy state, he concludes thus,



'It shall be the desire and prayer of my heart, that if I should have no more opportunities among you, as you have been stirred up to get the white robe of grace, you and I may meet in glory, when we shall never part; that will be the answer of all our prayers, and the issue of all our labours; then we shall have as much joy as we can hold for ever.'

Mr. Henry Dorney, in a letter to his brother, says, "that famous and laborious minister, Mr. Joseph Caryl, your ancient friend and companion, is departed this life. His death is greatly lamented by the people of God throughout this city. His labours were great, his studies incessant, his conversation unspotted; his charity, faith, zeal, and wisdom, gave a fragrant smell among the churches and servants of Christ. His sickness, though painful, was borne with patience and joy in believing; and so he passed, from time to eternity, under the full sail of desire and joy in the Holy Spirit. He lived his sermons."—*Dorney's Divine Contemplations*, Letter cxiii. p. 343.

The following recommendation of the Rev. Mr. Caryl's Exposition of the Book of Job, is given by the celebrated Mr. Hervey, author of *Theron* and *Aspasio*, &c.

"Mr. Caryl in expounding this book, has acquitted himself as a master in Israel, his thoughts are beautiful and animated; his criticisms are correct and judicious; his language, considering the time he wrote, remarkably pure and strong; his doctrines are truly edifying, because, generally speaking, they are evangelical. What is very necessary, but a very difficult task in explaining this part of scripture, the connexion of sentiment is discovered; the bearings and dependencies of the argument are pointed out; and the transitions from one passage to another are shewn to be not wild and disorderly, but just, regular, and graceful."

## INTRODUCTION.

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It was the personal wish and resolution of the apostle Paul,—*I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.* And surely it is far better to speak or hear five words of Scripture with our understandings, than ten thousand words, or even the whole Scriptures, while we understand them not. Now, what an *unknown tongue*, about which the apostle disputes, is, in reference to all, the same is the Scripture to most, even in their own tongue, that which they understand not. For as an unknown tongue does always hide the meaning of words from us, so do oft-times the spiritualness and mysteriousness of the matter. While a man speaks in a strange language, we hear a sound, but know not the words; and while a man speaks in our own language, though we know the words, yet we may not understand the meaning; and then he that speaks is to us, in that reference, as the apostle calls him, a *barbarian*. While the leaves of the book are opened and read to such, or by such, the sense is shut up and sealed.

When the evangelist Philip heard the Ethiopian statesman read the prophet Isaiah as he travelled in his chariot, he said to him, *Understandest thou what thou readest?* He answered, *How can I, except some man should guide me.* He understood the language, but the meaning was under a vail. The very same may we say, to many who read the scriptures, *understand you what you read?* And they may return the same answer,—*How can we, except we have some man to guide us?* Nay, for all the guiding of man, they may answer, how can we except we have the Spirit of God to guide us?

Paul, we know, was a learned Pharisee, and much versed in the law, and yet he says of himself before his conversion, that he was *without the law*: but when Christ came to him, then the commandment came to him. *I was once without the law, but when the commandment came, that is, when Christ came and his Spirit came in, or after my conversion, and expounded the commandment to my heart, then the commandment came*—came to my heart in the power of it, and I understood to purpose what the law was. So that the teachings of the Spirit, the teachings of God himself, are chiefly to be looked after and prayed for, that we may know the mind of the Spirit—the will of God in Scripture.

But God has set up this ordinance—the ordinance of interpretation to do it by; both that the Scripture might be translated out of the original, into the common language of every nation (which the apostle calls interpreting, in that place before cited) and also that the original sense of the Scripture might be translated into the mind and understanding of every man; which is the work we aim at and now have in hand.

But before I begin that, give me leave to beseech you in the name of Christ, to take care for carrying on of this work a degree farther: I mean to translate the sense of Scripture into your lives, and to expound the word of God by your works—*Interpret it by your feet and teach it by your fingers*, as Solomon speaks in another sense, that is, let your workings and walkings be scripture explications—your lives the commentary of Scripture.

Having a book full of various matter before me, I shall premise some things

in general, and something more particularly concerning it, before we come to the handling of the text.

First, That what God speaks concerning the whole work of creation, we may apply to the whole book of Scripture : *It is very good*. Solomon observes, that wheresoever the wisdom of God speaks, it speaks of excellent things. And David, to quicken our endeavours, and excite our diligence to the study of the word, prefers it in worth to thousands of gold and silver, and in sweetness, above the honey-comb. And when he ceases to compare, he begins to admire, —*wonderful are thy testimonies*. And well may that be called wonderful, which proceeds from the God of wonders. All Scripture is given by divine inspiration, or by inspiration of God ; and I need not stay to shew you the excellency of any part, when I have but pointed at such an original of the whole.

As, therefore, the whole Scripture, whether we look at the majesty of the author, the height and purity of the matter, the depth or perspicuity of the style, the dignity or variety of occurrences,—or consider the art of compiling or the strength of arguing—disdains the very mention of comparison with any human author—so are comparisons in itself,—as book with book, chapter with chapter, dangerous. There is not in this great volume of holy counsel, any one book or chapter, verse or section, of greater power or authority than another. Moses and Samuel, the writings of Amos the Shepherd, and of Isaiah, a descendant of the blood-royal, the writings of the prophets and evangelists, the Epistles of Paul, and this history of Job, must be received with the same holy reverence and affection.

Yet, notwithstanding, as the parts of Scripture were written by divers secretaries, published in divers places, in divers ages, on divers occasions, and for divers ends ; so the argument and subject matter, the method and manner of composing, the texture of the style of writing, are likewise different. Some parts of Scripture were delivered in prose—others in verse or numbers ; some parts of the Scripture are historical, shewing what has been done ; some are prophetic, shewing what shall be done—others doctrinal, shewing what we must believe. Again, some parts of Scripture are clear and easy ; some are obscure and very knotty. Some parts of Scripture shew us what God made us ; others, how sin spoiled us ; a third, how Christ restored us. Some parts of Scripture shew forth acts of mercy to keep us from sinking ; others record acts of judgment to keep us from presuming. And because the way to heaven is not strewn with roses, but, like the crown of Christ here upon earth, set with thorns ; because not smiles and loving embraces from the world, but wounds, and strokes, and temptations do await all those who are enrolled for the Christian warfare ; because every true Israelite must expect that which Jacob, upon his death-bed, spake of Joseph, *that the archers will shoot at him, hate him, and grieve him*. In a word, because many are the troubles of the righteous, therefore the Scripture presents us with sundry platforms of the righteous conflicting with many troubles.

Now these considerations, that are scattered severally through the whole Scripture, seem all concentrated and united together in this Book of Job : which, if we consider in the style and form of writing, is in some parts prose, as the two first chapters, and part of the last, and the rest is verse. If we consider it in the manner of delivery, it is both dark and clear : if we consider the subject matter of it, it is both historical, prophetic, and doctrinal. In it is a mixture of mercy tendered to, judgments threatened against, and inflicted on, the wicked : In it is a mixture of the greatest outward blessings and the greatest outward afflictions upon the godly, concluding in the greatest deliverances of the godly from affliction. In this last the book is chief. There was never any man under a *warmer sun* of outward prosperity than Job was ;

neither was there ever any man in a *hotter fire* of affliction than Job was, God seeming to give charge concerning this trial of Job, as King Nebuchadnezzar did concerning the three children, to have *the furnace heated seven times hotter than ordinary*.

In the second place, I shall premise a few things in particular concerning this book. I shall not detain you long, however, with the disquisition regarding the author and penman of it, about whom there is much variety of judgment. Some say it was one of the prophets, but they know not who; some ascribe it to Solomon, some to Elihu, not a few to Job himself; but most give it to Moses. The resolution of Beza on the point shall serve me. "It is very uncertain who was the writer of this book," says he, "and whatever can be said concerning it, is grounded but upon very light conjecture. And therefore, when the Scripture is silent, it can be of no use for us to speak, especially seeing there is as much spoken as will find us work, and be of use for us." It is conceived to be the first piece of Scripture that was written. If Moses was the writer, it is most likely he wrote it before the deliverance of the people of Israel out of Egypt, while he was in Midian.

Nor shall I detain the reader long about the inquiry, or rather about the refutation of that fancy, that this whole book is a parable rather than a history, like that of Lazarus in the gospel, not a thing really acted, but only a representation of it. Now this may be clearly refuted, both by the names of places and persons, (which we shall have occasion to open when we come to the book itself), and also by those allegations of the prophets and apostles concerning Job, the prophet Ezekiel quoting him with Noah and Daniel, two men that unquestionably were extant, and therefore Job also. All I shall say in particular farther shall be in these three things.

1st, To shew more distinctly the subject of this book.

2d, The parts and division of it.

3d, The use, or scope, or intention of it.

*First*, For the subject of this book, we may consider it either as principal or collateral.

The main and principal subject of this book is contained in Psal. *xxxiv.* 19. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

Concerning this subject, there are two great *questions* handled and disputed fully and clearly in this book. The first is this, *Whether it doth consist with the justice and goodness of God to afflict a righteous and sincere person—to strip him naked—to take away all his outward comforts.* Or *whether it doth consist with the justice and goodness of God that it should go ill with those that are good, and that it should go well with those that are evil.* This is one great debate, the main question throughout the book. And then, secondly, here is another great dispute in reference to the former, namely, whether we may judge of the righteousness or unrighteousness, of the sincerity or hypocrisy of any person, by the outward dealings and present dispensations of God towards him. That is a second question here debated.

The friends of Job maintained the first question negatively, and the second affirmatively. They denied that God in justice could afflict a righteous and holy man. They affirmed that any man so afflicted is unrighteous, and may so be judged, because afflicted. And so the whole argument and dispute which the friends of Job brought, may be reduced to this one syllogism, *He that is afflicted, and greatly afflicted, is certainly a great open sinner, or a notorious hypocrite; but Job, thou art afflicted, and thou art greatly afflicted, therefore certainly thou art, if not a great open sinner, yet a notorious hypocrite.*

Job as constantly and as vehemently maintains the contrary. He acknow-

ledged himself to be a *sinner*, yet he stiffly denied he was a hypocrite. He disclaimed his own righteousness in point of justification, yet he justified himself in point of uprightness. And as for the sinfulness of his nature and of his life, he was ready (except known and wilful iniquity) to own both, and charge himself faster than his friends could, appealing to and triumphing in free grace for pardon.

This is the sum of all the dispute between Job and his three friends, the hinge upon which the whole matter turned.

But besides these, there are many discourses falling in collaterally, which concur to make up the subject of this book.

First, We have the character of a discreet and faithful master and father of a family, and the special duties which concern these relations.

Secondly, We have the character of a faithful, zealous, and just magistrate in the commonwealth, how he ought to behave himself, and what his duty is, set down also plainly and clearly by occasion of this dispute.

Thirdly, We have a great discovery made in the secrets of nature. The bowels of nature are as it were laid open, and the great works of creation are here displayed. In this book you have discourses of the heavens, of the earth, sun, moon, and stars—of the hail, the snow, the frost, the ice, the lightning, and the thunder—of jewels, of minerals and metals—of beasts, and birds, and creeping things—embracing the whole circle of natural knowledge or philosophy.

Fourthly, Here are discourses of Christian morals—of the duties of equity from man to man—of the duties of piety which man owes to God—of the duties of sobriety and temperance towards a man's own self,—yea, here we find the great duty of faith, the matter of believing in the Redeemer of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lastly, Here are many discoveries made of God, in himself and his attributes; in his power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and faithfulness. In a word, it is a summary, a compendium of all knowledge, human and divine, both concerning ourselves and concerning God.

Secondly, As to the parts or division of this book, we may divide it into five sections.

The first of which sets forth the happiness and fulness of Job's outward estate, and the integrity and perfection of his spiritual estate. And this is contained in the first five verses.

The second presents Job's affliction, Job's fall, the great and sore calamity which in a moment did overtake him, with the occasion of it. And this you have set forth from ver. 5. exclusively, to ver. 9. of chap. ii.

3d, We have the questions, the debates, and disputes which arose about the fall of Job into that sad condition, which are contained from verse 9th of chap. ii. to the end of chap. xxxi.

4th, We have the moderation or determination of this dispute and this argument, first, by Elihu, and then by God himself, from the beginning of chap. xxxii. to verse 7th of chap. xlii.

5th, and lastly, We have the restitution of Job,—his restoring and setting up again, and the repairing of his estate, and making of it double to what it formerly had been, to verse 7th of chap. xlii. to the end of the book.

Now, for the *third* thing which I proposed, which was the use, or scope, or intention of this book, it aims at our instruction in divers things, first, (which much concerns every Christian to learn), it instructs us *how to handle a cross*; how to behave ourselves in a conflict, whether outward or inward; what the postures of the spiritual war are; and with what patience we ought to bear the hand of God and his dealings with us. This the apostle James speaks of,—you

have heard of the patience of Job, as if he should say, Do you not know why the book of Job was written? Why God in his providence did bring such a thing to pass concerning Job? It was that all men should take notice of his patience, and might learn the wisdom of suffering, that noble art of enduring.

Job was full of many other excellent graces, and, indeed, had all the graces of the Spirit of God in him; but patience was his principal grace. As it is with natural men, they have every sin in them; but there are some sins which are the *master sins*, or some one sin, it may be, does denominate a wicked man; sometimes he is a proud man, sometimes he is covetous, sometimes he is a deceiver, sometimes he is an oppressor, sometimes he is unclean, and sometimes he has a profane spirit. He hath all sins in him, and they are all reigning in him, but one as it were reigns above the rest and sits uppermost in his heart. So it is with the saints of God, every saint and servant of God has all grace in him; every grace, in some degree or other, for all the limbs and lineaments of the new man are formed together in the soul of those that are in Christ. But there is some special grace which gives the denomination to a servant of God, as that which gave the denomination to *Abraham* was faith, to *Moses* meekness, and to *Job* patience.

2d, Another instruction which we are to take from the whole book is this, God would have us learn, that *afflictions come not by chance, that they are all ordered by providence* in the matter, in the manner, and in the measure, both for the kinds and the degrees, they are all ordered, even the very least, by the wisdom, by the hand and the providence of God.

3d, Another thing which we are to learn generally from this book, is this—the Sovereignty of God; that he has power over us, over our estates, and over our bodies, and over our families, and over our spirits; that he may use us as he pleases, and we must be quiet under his hand; when he comes and will take all from us, all our comforts, we must give all glory to him. This book is written for this especially, to teach us the *Sovereignty of God, and the submission of the creature*.

4th, It teaches us, that God sometimes afflicts his children out of *prerogative*; that though there be no sin in them which he makes the occasion of afflicting them—such was Job's case—yet for exercise of his grace in them, for trial of their graces, or to set them up for patterns to the world, God may and does afflict them. *Though no man be without sin, yet the afflictions of many are not for their sins.*

5th, There is this general instruction which God would have us learn out of this book, namely, *the best gotten and the best founded estate in outward things, is uncertain*; that there is no trusting to any creature-comforts. God would unbottom us quite from the creature by holding forth this history of Job to us.

6th, God would also show forth this for our learning—the strength, the unmoveableness of faith, how unconquerable it is, what a kind of omnipotency there is in grace,—God would have all the world take notice of this in the Book of Job, that a godly man is in vain assaulted by friends or enemies, by men or devils, by wants or wounds, though he even be benighted in his spirit, though God himself take away the light of his countenance from him, yet he would have us learn and know, that over all those, a true believer, is more than a conqueror, for here is one of the greatest battles fought between man and man, between man and hell, yea, between man and God; yet Job went away with a victory; *true grace is often assaulted; it never was or shall be overthrown.*

7th, This also we may learn, *that God never leaves or forsakes his people totally or finally.*

Lastly, The book teaches this general lesson,—*That the judgments of God are*

*often times very secret, but they are never unjust.* That though the creature be not able to give a reason for them, yet there is infinite reason for them.

Such are some of the general lessons which may be deduced from this book. But how unsearchable are God's judgments, and who can find them out to perfection? This book serves also to confute the slander of worldly men, and Satan, who sometimes affirm that the people of God serve him for their own ends. God did, on purpose, cause these things to be acted, and the history to be written, to stop the mouth of Satan and all iniquity, and to show that his people *follow him for love*; for the excellency they find in him, and in his service. Though he strip them naked of all they have, yet they will cleave to him. This history serves to reprove those who judge of men's spiritual estate by their outward condition, or by some unbecoming and rash speeches uttered when under the hand of God in sore affliction, and refutes the opinion, that a man may fall totally and finally away from grace, and from the favour of God. God hath showed by this history, that such an opinion is a lie. If ever any man were in danger of falling quite away from grace received, or might seem to have lost the favour of God formerly showed, surely it was Job; and if he were upheld in the grace of holiness, and continued in the grace of God's love, notwithstanding all that came upon him; certainly God would have all the world know that free grace will uphold his people for ever. This book also reproves the pride and extreme presumption of those who think to find out the *secrets of God's counsel, the secrets of God's eternal decrees, the secrets of all his works of providence*; whereas, God shows them in this book, that they are not able to find out, or comprehend his ordinary works, those which we call the works of nature, the things of creation, the things that are before them, which they converse with every day, which they see and feel, and have in their ordinary use. They are not able to find out the secrets of the air, of the meteors, of the waters, of the earth, of beasts or birds, every one of these puts the understanding of man to a stand. How are they able then to find out the counsels of God in his decrees, and purposes, and judgments? and for that end it is, that God sets forth here so much of the works of nature, that all men may be stopped in that presumptuous way of searching too far into his counsels.

In conclusion, from this book may be deduced the two following exhortations.

1st, We are exhorted to the meditation and admiration of the power and wisdom of God manifested in the creatures. The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, may be clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.

2d, To glorify God in every condition, to have good thoughts of God, to speak good words for God in every condition. We are drawn to this, by considering how Job, though sometimes in the midst of his conflict he overshot himself, yet he recovers again, and breathes sweetly concerning God, showing that his spirit was full of sweetness towards God, even when God was writing bitter things against him; even when he says, *though he slay me yet will I trust in him*; than which, nothing could express a more holy and submissive frame of spirit, in reference to God's dealings with him. Surely he thought God was very good, who had that thought of God, *to trust him even while he slew him*.

From the history of this afflicted saint we may also draw the two following consolations.

1st, That all things do work for the good of those that love God.

2d, That no temptation shall take hold of us, but such as God will either make us able to bear, or make a way for us to escape out of it. We can be in no condition cast so low but the hand of God can reach us, send us deliverance, and raise us up again.

# PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

OF

## THE BOOK OF JOB.

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### CHAPTER I.

*VER. 1. There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil.*

There was such a man, but it is not precisely known at what time he lived, though it is probable it was between the time of Abraham and Moses.

The land of Uz appears to have been on the borders of the Sabeans, and in Lam. iv. 11. Jeremiah speaks of them as Edomites. It is generally allowed that they were profane and superstitious, yet Job lived holily and justly among them, from which observe, that God hath his servants in the worst of places. It is a high commendation, as well as a great honour, to be good and do good, amongst those that are evil. True grace will shine as a light even in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Job was a perfect man, not absolutely, but in comparison with those that were all over spotted with filthiness, or only painted with godliness. A perfect man is one whom you may know by his tongue, and his actions are a transcript of his inner-man; *perfect* being taken for inward soundness, *upright* denotes justice and equity, so it is expounded, Psal. xv.

The fear of God is a holy and filial affection, awing the whole man to obey the whole will of God; or it is put for the external or instituted worship of God.

"To eschew evil," is to turn from it with reluctance and abhorrence; Job's heart rose against evil, and that is the strength of holiness, it is not enough not to commit it.

God first describes Job's spiritual estate, hence observe, that gracious habits and spiritual blessings are not only the choicest, but those only can render a man happy. When God gives a man true grace, he gives the one thing necessary, so he need not be discontented with his own lot, nor envy the condition of any other.

As in this description, Job's graces are put before his riches, so sincerity is preferred before all his other graces; sincere and sound-hearted persons are esteemed by God as perfect. Truth of grace is perfection here, and all who are sincere before God, are just and honest in all their ways before men, which is a great ornament to a profession of godliness, and none but such as shew the reality of their grace by their conduct, have a right to make a profession before men.

God is pleased with nothing we do, unless we do it in his fear; holy fear contains in it every grace we receive from God, and all the worship we render to him, it keeps both heart and life clean. Godly persons oppose all sin and avoid all occasions of evil, we cannot avoid sin if we will not avoid the occasion.

*Ver. 2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.*

"Children are the blessing of the Lord; they are put first as being the best part of his inheritance. He was father and master of a large family, yet we never hear that he excused himself as many do, that they have not time for the worship of God, or any thing to give to the poor, because they have families to provide for. All who make



such excuses, would do well to consider, that what is prudently given in alms, is put into the best fund for the benefit of their children; there is a Dutch proverb, that there is nothing gained by stealing, nor lost by praying.

*Ver. 3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five-hundred yoke of oxen, and three hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.*

Though riches are but external and accidental, yet it is common to call a wealthy man, a man of substance; it is only by having heavenly wisdom, that we *inherit substance*. Cattle were more esteemed in those days than gold and silver, and, having life, they are more excellent in their nature. Job was the greatest man in riches, honour, power, and in grace, and that is the best greatness of all; his outward high station is set forth so fully, that the universal and sudden change might be the more conspicuous and discover his patience the more fully by the sad reverse, as Ruth i. 21, "I went out full, but the Lord hath brought me home again empty." To be very great and very good, shews that a man is good indeed. In Job we see the rich man get through the needle's eye, because all his camels and riches did not take up so much room in his heart as one single thread. All his outward estate was kept without. To renounce the world, is to cast it out of our affections, not out of our possession; if you would go the ready way to attain the things of this life, walk in the ways of God; Woe to those that get a wound to their consciences by getting riches, Job served God so frequently, that it is called continually, yet he grows in wealth abundantly. The time we spend in prayer and other offices of religion, &c. whets our tools and oils our wheels, and promotes and gets a blessing upon all we go about. Piety and charity are ordinarily the surest way of thriving; but Job's prosperity and piety being mentioned before his affliction, teaches us, that neither can preserve us from the calamities of this life, as Job's mistaken friends thought.

*Ver. 4. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and drink with them.*

Job's happiness is here described by the concord of his children, they harmoniously feasted together at their own homes, without mixing with strangers at public entertainments. Though feasting may be very lawful, and even laudable on some occasions, when it is in moderation, and the conversation edifying; but it becomes sinful when a person cannot afford the expense, and are thereby prevented from complying with the calls of providence in distributing to the necessities of others, or when it is unseasonable, or when the Lord is threatening or inflicting judgments, or when it issues in *surfeiting or drunkenness*; for such feasting the land mourns. The sons of Job did not feast alone, and the sisters did not intrude upon them, they came by their special invitation.

The mutual agreement of children is a great blessing and comfort to their parents. How many have their hearts rent by the contentions and disputes of their children. When attending a feast, beware of spending too much time, so as thereby to neglect and unfit thyself for the worship and service of God.

*Ver. 5. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all, for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts; thus did Job continually.*

Job could not infuse holy habits into his children, but he sent an order for them to separate and prepare themselves for the sacrifice. To cleanse, is called sanctifying, Exodus xix. 14; Gen. xxxv. 2; and it appears they all obeyed, for he offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all, which teaches us that every soul must believe for himself, and that parents ought to pray for each of their children particularly, and that even grown up children should obey with reverence and submission the lawful commands and directions of their parents. The chief and special care of parents should be for the souls of their children.

A holy person desires that all others were made holy, and if by means of their counsel and instruction they become holy, it may be said that they have sanctified them. Special preparation is necessary for every holy duty. Psal. xxvi. 6. We are to take heed how we hear.

Job's diligence and zeal is apparent from the time of his performing this service and duty. It is our duty to dedicate the first and best of every day to God. Job had a special reason for this service. For though he knew that his sons had not openly and

avowedly blasphemed God, yet he was afraid that they might have neglected a due reverence of God in their thoughts ; for he knew that the heart is deceitful, and that it quickly conceives and also conceals its vain and vile productions. It is dangerous to let any sin lie a moment on the conscience unrepented of, for it will be reckoned by God a cursing of him in our hearts.

A tender conscience is grieved when there is ground of suspicion, and we may suspect that we have sinned when we have been praying, much more when we have been feasting. The sins of the world are described, Luke xvii. "They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted," &c. and there is none of these evil in themselves. Therefore we ought to keep our hearts with all manner of keeping, even in our lawful transactions. A good man turns his suspicions of other's faults and failings into prayers for their pardon, not into slanders that they may be defamed.

Job's offering sacrifice as often as his sons did feast, teaches us, that when we do any thing from a conscience of duty, we will persevere in it ; we may be said to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably ; to have the heart in a praying frame, and to pray when duty requires it, is to pray always. Nature may have good moods, but grace is steady.

In these five verses we have the prosperity and sincerity of Job, and the holiness and piety of his life. God having thus qualified him, proceeds to try him in the furnace of affliction.

*Ver. 6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.*

Angels are the sons of God by creation ; they are mighty in power, and always ready cheerfully to obey him, therefore said to present themselves before the Lord. And what is the difference between these angels and this Satan ? Only sin. The angel sinning, presently became an adversary to God and man. All opposition to what is good is Satan ; hence our Lord said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Satan is said to come among the sons of God, in allusion to the dealings of men in their assemblies ; and there is no necessity to try to find a similarity in every particular. Satan did not offer himself for any good purpose, but came thither by the overruling power of God.

*Ver. 7. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou ? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

This question may seem to chide and shew a dislike of what Satan had been about, but chiefly to draw a confession from him, or perhaps to shew that he was under the divine control, and accountable for what he did. The word translated "going to and fro," signifies, to compass, or make a circuit by any kind of motion.

*Ver. 8. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil ?*

God calls Job his servant, as being his special right and property ; and by way of distinction, as to his riches, he is the greatest man of the east, but in reference to his holiness he has no equal upon earth. Though all the saints are conformed in their nature to the will of God, which is holiness, yet they differ in degree ; we should not content ourselves that we are like others in grace, but study to excel therein. He that is a servant of Christ is not only free but noble ; he is under the special care as well as enjoys the peculiar love of God ; and he has a perfect knowledge of, and will give a true testimony of every one.

It is not he that commendeth himself, or is commended of others, but whom the Lord commendeth, that is approved of him ; and they who are so need not mind though all the world be silent, or even slander them.

The Lord's question to Satan may be, Hast thou taken notice of ? or affirmatively, thou hast considered my servant Job, and set thyself to tempt and try him.

The most eminently godly are exposed to the most violent temptations from Satan.

God having spoken of Job as a man does of that which he glories in. Though Satan does not attempt to deny God's testimony of him, yet he represents Job as mercenary, and of course an hypocrite.

*Ver. 9. Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought ? Some render, Doth Job fear God in vain ? No. He looked for riches and he hath*

stained them. When a man's actions are fair, to accuse his intentions is devilish. Envy and malice accuses what others do well, while love excuses what is ill done.

Is it lawful to have an eye to our own advantage while we do our duty?

Must we serve God for nought in that strict sense? There is no man doth, or possibly can, serve God for nought. For he hath bestowed so many benefits, and promised so many more, they outvalue all the services of the creature. 2d, The more blessings any man receives the more he ought to serve God. 3d, It is lawful to have respect to benefits both received and promised by way of motive, Heb. xi. 26. and xii. 2. 4th, But reference to benefits is sinful, when we make them either the sole or supreme cause of our obedience.

In all our duties we must set the glory of God in the throne; our desire of heaven on the right; and the fear of hell on the left hand; our desire of outward comfort at the footstool. Thus we must marshal and rank our respect to God and ourselves, and we may look on secular advantages as fruits of holiness and encouragements to it, but not as proper causes producing it.

Satan's speech seems to imply, 1st, That riches will make any man serve God. 2d, That God can have no servants from love. 3d, That Job had no desire to please God, but to benefit himself.

As there is nothing we should dread more than being hypocrites, so there is nothing we should dread less than being called so without cause.

*Ver. 10. Hast not thou made an hedge about him and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.*

Here Satan answers God's question, by putting another, in which he discovers how grievously he is vexed at the prosperity of Job, and particularly enumerates the favours he had conferred on him, that he might thereby debase and lessen the value of Job's obedience, and contradict the character that God had given of him; by which, from the use he made of them in what he proposes in the following verse, he discovers himself to be the father of lies, yet they contain truths full of consolation to the people of God, as,

1st, The safety of the man or nation to whom God himself becomes an hedge or wall, Zech. ii. 5. "I will be unto her a wall of fire round about." He hath not left the least gap for Satan or any annoyance to come in; the hedge surrounds on every side, so that their mighty and malicious enemies cannot touch the meanest thing that belongs to them. Christ assures his disciples that the very hairs of their head are numbered, as if he had said, your enemies cannot pull off a hair from your head, but God will call them to an account for it.

2dly, That whom God blesses, they are blessed indeed; and therefore the people of God may, and ought to seek their Father's blessing on all their lawful undertakings. All success is from the Lord; but he does not work that we should be idle, nor has he promised to bless the indolent. It is absurd to say, Lord help us, while we neglect the use of the means that are in our power; we should beware of standing still in regard of attention and diligence, but as to fear and diffidence we may.

*Ver. 11. But put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

To put forth the hand signifies to help, Psal. cxliv. 7. Acts iv. 30. by stretching forth thine hand to heal, and sometimes to hurt or punish, Isa. v. 25. ix. 12. Then Satan's meaning is, let him feel the weight of thine hand in sore affliction, either strike him thyself, or give me a commission to deprive him of all that which thou hast given him, and thou mayest take my word for it, that as soon as thou takest away his riches, he will withdraw his service and show that he is an hypocrite.

To touch signifies a sore affliction, chap. xix. 21. and it signifies a light affliction, Gen. xxvi. 11. It is certain, that if God do but touch the highest and greatest estate in the world, it will quickly fall to pieces.

What is it to curse God to his face! see Mal. iii. 14. it is to speak against God's ways, to quarrel and be angry with his providence, or to curse his people.

Although Satan can only guess at the hearts of men, and at what would be the consequence of bereaving Job of all his enjoyments, yet he boldly asserts, as if it were done already, he will curse thee to thy face. Affliction is the trial of sincerity; bring professors to the fire, and then they show their metal. While religion and prosperity go together, it is hard to say which we are following.

*Ver. 12. And the Lord said unto Satan, behold all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand ; so Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.*

It is not always an evidence of God's good will to have our motions granted. Paul besought the Lord thrice, but Satan had his petition granted at once. It is ground of comfort to the Lord's people, that while they are suffering, his will is doing, and that what Satan and evil men desire sinfully, he grants holily ; Satan wills it that God may be blasphemed, but God will glorify himself by it.

From the limitation of Satan's commission learn, that God himself sets the bounds to the afflictions of his people. The season, measure, degree, and continuance of them, he keeps in his own hand ; and know for thy comfort, O believer ! that he himself fills thy cup of sorrow, and thou shalt not have one drop more than he prescribes, nor than he knows to be necessary and will render profitable to thee, 1 Cor. x. 13.

*Ver. 13. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house.* From this to ver. 19. is contained a particular description of Job's affliction, as 1st, The season. 2d, The instruments. 3d, The matter, his outward estate. 4th, The variety. 5th, The suddenness. 6th, The incessant report of these afflictions.

It was a notable day ; and what can more embitter a cup of sorrow than to have it put into our hands on a day of feasting and rejoicing. If joy be troublesome in our sorrows, what must sorrows be in the midst of our joys. In chusing this time, as well as by bringing such a complication of distress so suddenly upon Job, there is a mixture of malice and cunning ; the clearest day of outward comfort may be overclouded before evening.

*Ver. 14. And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, the oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them.*

This is as if he had said, thy cattle were not carelessly exposed, and the sad disaster which has befallen them did not come through the negligence of thy servants. It is true, that the greatest care cannot secure the continuance of our outward possessions ; but it is well when we are not to blame for indolence or inattention when they are taken away.

*Ver. 15. And the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away ; yea they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

The Sabeans inhabited Arabia-Felix, and lived by robbery. They came like a storm violently upon them, and while they were gratifying their covetous desires they were doing Satan's work. It is said, that Satan stood up and provoked David to number the people. He somehow knows how to lay the bait suitable to our inclinations.

While Satan makes one suffer, he makes others sin ; when the Sabeans were plundering and murdering, little did they think they were in Satan's service, no more than those who cast their fellow-creatures into prison for well-doing, think that they are only the devil's drudges ; for it is said, Rev. ii. 10. " The devil shall cast some of you into prison," and we know he only does it by his agents.

It would increase Job's affliction greatly that the servants lost their lives (it is probable) in faithfully defending his property, neither was it it out of any kindness to Job that one escaped to bring the painful tidings with speed and certainty, but that Job might be overwhelmed with the sudden and unexpected intelligence, as there was no room left to doubt of its truth.

*Ver. 16. While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, the fire of God is fallen from heaven and hath burnt up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Satan would not allow Job the least breathing. This second charge comes close upon the first: the second messenger tells him that the fire of God (which is supposed to have been some terrible flash of lightning) hath fallen upon and consumed the sheep in a moment ; by which Satan would suggest to Job that God was now become his enemy as well as man, and those afflictions are most grievous wherein God himself appears to be against us. The malice of devils and the rage of men may be endured, but who can stand before God when he manifests his anger ? if when God withdraws his comforts, the soul sinks under the smallest trials, what must it do when God reveals his wrath ? It must be overwhelmed altogether in such a complication of distress.

It might appear as if God had rejected his sacrifices, by his destroying the sheep from which Job had selected his offerings.

*Ver. 17. While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, the Chaldeans made out three hands and fell upon the camels and have carried them away; yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

The Chaldeans, who are here to be understood of a nation, (are described to the life,) Hab. i. Their name is derived from a word which signifies to rob and spoil. It is very rare that God makes one good man his rod to scourge another: he usually employs the worst of men as his instrument to correct and afflict his people. The dirty scullion scours the silver vessel, and makes it clear and bright for the master's use.

*Ver. 18. While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house.*

*Ver. 19. And behold there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

This was the greatest affliction that came upon Job, it being upon his children, and upon them all at once; they were suddenly cut off by a violent death, and to Job, who was so tender of the souls of his children, and so fearful of their sinning at their feasts, it would exceedingly aggravate the affliction that they were buried in the ruins of the house while they were feasting; and no doubt this was reserved to the last, that it might cause him to repine and murmur against God, and thereby Satan would have got the victory, and his prediction would have been fulfilled. The Lord who holdeth the wind in his fists gave Satan power, and he brought a terrible wind, which is issued in with a *behold*, that we may attend to its awful consequences. Job's children perished by it, yet it was not in wrath to them, but for the trial of their father; we ought not to judge by what men suffer, nor by the manner of their death, of their eternal state. It is said that every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord, to teach us that men should be holy at their feastings, and at all their refreshment with the creature. For this we see how quickly worldly things may be destroyed, and how foolish it is to seek rest or comfort in them, and when our tribulations abound, let us seek support and consolation from him who can make us more than conquerors through him that loved us.

When we consider the power and policy of Satan, let us bless God that he cannot stir to do us that mischief which his nature at once inclines and enables him to do until God permits him.

*Ver. 20. Then Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped.*

The design of Satan in making Job poor to a proverb, was to make him blaspheme God; it is also thought that he suggested to Job, that since God had so little regard to his comfort, why should he be mindful of his honour. But instead of this he testified the greatness of his grief by rending his garment, &c., and also evidenced his deep humiliation under the hand of God, and sorrow for all his sins; he neither despises nor unbelievably faints; he shewed a Christian fortitude, which is quite opposite to stoical apathy. He fell down, and in the exercise of fear and love worshipped God in his heart, and he honoured God by externally waiting upon him according to his appointment. In the temple, when all the service was performed according to the divine prescription, there was beauty and comely order. But a varying and departing from it, would have filled that holy place with deformity, although the outward lustre had been preserved.

When God afflicts we ought to humble ourselves for our sins; and we may express our sorrow by external gestures, but such expressions of sorrow should always be accompanied with godly sorrow.

We should remember it is our duty to worship and honour God at all times, and therefore we should never sorrow as if we had nothing else to do. The people of God turn their afflictions into prayers or praises; grace makes every condition work glory to God, and he makes all things to work for good to those that honour and love him. They that worship God must do it in *spirit*, that is, with love, fear, and sincerity, and in *truth*; that is according to the rule prescribed in God's word, the former strikes at hypocrisy, the latter at idolatry. Internal worship is complete in itself, but however complete external may be, it is never pleasing to God without the internal.

*Ver. 21. And said, naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I re-*

*turn thither ; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

This speech expounds the meaning of Job's former actions ; nakedness may be taken for the want of all outward comforts. I came a poor helpless naked creature into the world ; should not this lay our pride in the dust ? death will shake us out of all worldly comforts and possessions ; but those who get spiritual riches, shall be adorned and enriched for ever.

There is nothing said about the time he abode here ; indeed it is but a flood and an ebb, and then we launch into the ocean of eternity.

Job uses the words as an argument, both to support himself and also to acquit God. I have as much as I brought into this world, then what wrong is done me by all that is come upon me ? from which observe, that a godly man desires to justify God in all his dealings with him, and that the consideration of what we once were, and of what we must soon be, may relieve our spirits in the greatest afflictions.

A mere natural man may repeat the first clause, but he cannot say it with Job's spirit, neither can he add, " The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." This is ascribing to, and acquiescing in the sovereignty of God, and not a mere confession of the frailty of nature.

A *gift* is any good freely bestowed ; we have nothing of our own but sin ; therefore riches, honours, children, &c., as well as grace and glory, are all the undeserved donations of God.

Job speaks as if he had done nothing, " The Lord gave," yet it may imply the satisfaction he had in his own mind, that what he was now deprived of had been given him by God blessing his honest labours, and had not been obtained by fraud and injustice.

*Note.* That what we get honestly, we can part with contentedly ; but let those who will be rich and obtain it by unlawful means, beware of making God a partner of their guilt, by saying, the Lord gave. He may, and often does give when no means are used, and though unlawful means may be said to be under the eye of his providence, yet they are never under the influence of his blessing. Wicked men may grow rich, but they are never blessed ; their prosperity is their curse.

Let those who swell with pride, because they have abundance, and contemn and despise those that are in want, consider this text, and 1 Tim. vi. 17, and they are the best medicine that ever was prescribed for curing pride. Let the poor look upon this text, and beware of discontent and envy ; let none fret because they have so little, or envy others because they have so much. It is "*The Lord that gives ;*" and this really believed, would satisfy us with our lot, not because we have this or that, but because our God is the disposer ; and this will open our hearts and purses, and make us confess with David, all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

In all the evils we either feel or fear, let us say "*And the Lord hath taken away.*" A view of the absolute sovereignty of God will quiet and support, and enable to say, my Lord may dispose of me and mine as he pleases, I will not only bear it, but take it well, "*Blessed be the name of the Lord.*" This is the triumphant conclusion which flows from the former propositions ; and it wounded Satan more than all that he had done to Job wounded him.

As the children of God should labour to bring their hearts to bless and glorify him, in, and for their afflictions, so they become blessings indeed when they are enabled to do so.

*Ver. 22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

As if the Holy Ghost had said, it is matter of admiration, that in all this Job did not sin by murmuring thoughts or rash speeches.

*Note.*—That is one of the highest acts of grace to be composed and submissive under great affliction, and, that whatever is well done by us, will receive a full testimony from God.

## CHAPTER II.

*Ver. 1. Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them, to present himself before the Lord.*

*Ver. 2. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

*Ver. 3. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? And still he holdeth fast his integrity, though thou movedst me against him to destroy him without cause.*

We left Job honourably acquitted, and proved an honest man, and Satan a false accuser; after which, one would have thought that he had got enough of it. But malice is restless. They that falsely accuse the people of God, though the evidence to the contrary be never so plain and full, yet will not cease to calumniate. Instead of confessing his mistake concerning Job, he comes with a farther design against him. Job being known to be armour proof, is, therefore, here set up for a mark, and brought upon trial a second time.

Job lays hold upon his integrity as a sword to wound his enemies, and as a shield to defend himself. The word signifies not only to be strong, but to prevail. True grace doth not only oppose, but conquers Satan and all his temptations. Hypocrites, who have but a show of grace, fall off in times of trial. The word *movedst* carries in it a vehement instigation. Satan is an importunate solicitor against the people of God. He moved God to destroy, that is, to swallow up, or devour Job without any direct charge. But he who does nothing without cause, had reference both to the being and improvement of Job's graces, and this was the reason why he left him in the hands of Satan, and, the issue being so honourable to Job. God retorts upon Satan that he had moved him against Job without cause, which should have shamed and silenced him; but he replies by a proverb.

*Ver. 4. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.*

It is a truth, that when a man's life is at stake, he will give all he hath for it, and think he has a good bargain; and it seems to insinuate that the fear of loosing his life had made Job humble and submissive under all that had befallen him.

Life is the most precious treasure, and if our lives are so valuable, what are our souls worth? We should, therefore, beware of sin, which endangers our souls, and we may learn their true value by the estimation that our Lord Jesus Christ had for them, in that he gave not only his riches, and reputation, but his life also to redeem them.

While life is continued we should study to improve it and other favours, as knowing that we deserve none, and let this influence us patiently to endure every bereavement.

*Ver. 5. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

Though Satan failed in his former attempt, it does not prevent him from making another motion; when he cannot overcome by one temptation he prepares a stronger. Let us learn from his example to pray always, and not to faint, and when we fail of success, instead of yielding, let us pray more earnestly, and imitate Jacob, who wept and made supplication; and above all, in the name and strength of Christ continue instant in prayer. Seeing a diseased body unfits the mind for holy duties, they are greatly mistaken who amuse themselves with pretending they will repent on a sick or death-bed.

*Ver. 6. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold he is in thine hand; but save his life.*

When God puts any of his servants into Satan's hand he keeps him in his own hand. This devouring lion, like persecutors, who try to ensnare the soul by drawing or terrifying into sin, and when they fail in that, then they inflict death on the body.

God says, "save his life," because he intended to make Job a monument of mercy as well as of suffering. A godly man is never in such a situation but God has some use of his life; and life and death are in the hand of God. Precious in his sight is the death of his saints.

From this we may consider and admire the wonderful love of God to us in Christ, when he was sent into the world to save sinners. He was put into the hands of Satan and his instruments; and as if his Father had said, "afflict him as thou wilt; persecute him in his cradle; slander, revile, and crown him with thorns; but save his life." No, this bound is not set to the malice of Satan and the rage of men; they are allowed to take life and all. But little did Satan think that he was thereby to destroy himself.

*Ver. 7. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sores, from the sole of his foot unto his crown.*

The word for sores signifies a burning, an inflaming ulcer; and if it is painful have one inflamed sore, what must Job have felt, when covered all over with the worst kind of sores; and, to add to his distress, it was so sudden and so vehement a stroke, as gave him reason to think that it came from the hand of God.

As to trust in means is to despise God, so to neglect means is to tempt him. Doubtless Job neither trusted in nor neglected means. But his disease was of that kind that are called the physician's reproach. They could neither discover a natural cause nor prescribe any cure for it; in this case physicians were of no value, and, therefore either to show that all means had proved in vain, or that none durst undertake the cure it is said,

*Ver. 8. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.*

What a sad reverse. This poor man, lately the greatest man of the east, and enjoying health and prosperity, now not only sick and sore, but left without any attendant to minister either medicine or cordials to him, so that he may say, Psal. cxli. 4. "No man careth for my soul." Although care and attention would not have cured him, yet means might have been used to alleviate his sufferings, or by their sympathy to have shown him that respect and attention which is calculated to comfort the distressed. When a man is sick and full of sores, a clean and soft bed may give some temporary repose. But instead of this he "sat down among the ashes," which shows what a sad and mournful condition he was come to. For to sit in ashes is an emblem of extreme sorrow, and only used in times of greatest calamity; from which observe, That our humiliation ought to correspond with our troubles, and this is one way of accepting the punishment of our iniquities, and improving present evils for our everlasting good.

2. That when permitted, Satan can suddenly afflict the body with diseases, and bind it with a spirit of infirmity as with a chain.

3. That the children of God need not think it strange, when they are brought into extreme distress, to be forsaken and left by those from whom they expected assistance when they need it most.

4. That health and strength is a very great blessing, which we should improve, by seeking an interest in and fellowship with him who will never leave nor forsake them that trust in him in any distress.

*Ver. 9. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die.*

It is probable that Job did not smart so much when Satan smote both flesh and bone, as now, when his wife smote him. And from this we see the reason why Satan spared his wife; and, also why he left him the use of his tongue. It appears that it was that it might be the instrument of cursing God. His wife's question is the same words as ver. 2. But God speaks them in honour of Job; she speaks them in contempt; and, therefore, turns them into a question, upbraiding and reproaching him, from which, observe, 1st, That those things that commend us most to God render us contemptible before the world. 2d, It is common for Satan and his agents to allege that a profession of holiness is vain and unprofitable. 3d, That from outward troubles, and want of success, he tries to discourage God's people in holy duties, and to dissuade them from them. But a good man hath his fruit in holiness; and, therefore, though he receives no outward or immediate fruit, he still holds fast his integrity, whereas a hypocrite delights in God no longer than while he gives him worldly favours. She next counsels him to curse God and die. Beza reads, bless God, that is, confess thy sin and prepare to die. But Job's reply confutes this. As Peter acted Satan's part, though unwittingly, yet he got his name by it, "get thee behind me Satan;" it was Peter's tongue, but Satan tuned it. So Job's wife might be a good woman, though misled by Satan.

To desire to live is natural, but to be willing to live because God wills it is an act of grace. To die is an act of nature, but to die because God wills it is from grace. Christ is said to be obedient unto death, because he died according to God's decree, and in conformity to his pleasure. To die thus is the duty of a Christian, and the crown of all his obedience. To wish for death because our lives are full of trouble is certainly sinful. God has as much use of our lives in our troubles as in our comforts; passive obedience brings as much glory to God as active doth.

Precious are the wounds of a friend when he wounds with holy reproof; but when a friend wounds by sinful counsel, or solicitation to sin, they are pernicious wounds



When that which should be our comfort is turned into sorrow, how great is our sorrow?

One act is enough to assimilate, but it is not enough to denominate. Job doth not call his wife a foolish and wicked woman, but only that she spake as one of the foolish women.

*Ver. 10. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.*

Job rebukes his wife, but it is in the spirit of meekness. He speaks comparatively, he doth not charge the whole sex. He labours to convince of folly, which is the readiest way to make one wise. Though there was sharpness in the reproof to search the wound, yet there was none to exasperate the person. It was an exact compound of love and anger, zeal and knowledge.

Job's question refers to the manner of receiving; we shall receive evil whether we will or not, but we ought to receive it as cheerfully as we receive good. Both good and evil comes to us often at the second hand; but we should take all as from the first, and this will make every good better, and every evil we feel not so bad. Afflictions coming from the creature are as the rod of Moses upon the ground, a biting serpent, but, considered in the hand of God, they are like the serpent in the hand of Moses, a rod to correct and a staff to support us.

To look on evil as coming from God will enable to bear it quietly.

*Note on Eccles. vii. 14.*—Consider that as the day of prosperity was from God, so is the day of adversity, for it follows God hath also set the one over against the other. So we should bear the one as patiently as we receive the other joyfully. Especially, as we never deserved the least part of the good that we enjoy; but we have deserved more than all the evil that we suffer, present evils should not make us insensible of or unthankful for past mercies. Whatever a believer loses he hath no reason to be dissatisfied; he has a portion that cannot be lost.

"In all this did not Job sin with his lips." There is more understood than express. It is not a bare acquittal, but a high approbation. To govern the tongue under great and sore afflictions is a rare attainment. Job did not murmur, repine, or blaspheme.

Anger can hardly be silent, and that anger is admirable which speaks and sins not. He that knows not how to be angry knows not how to love. And he that knows not how to reprove in love knows not how to be angry. Job, in a prudent and gracious manner, sharply reprov'd his wife, yet lovingly convincing her of folly; at once endeavouring to discover and cure her error.

*Ver. 11. Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him.*

The pedigree of these men is very uncertain, and it is of small importance from whom they descended. They were Job's friends, which is taken from a word which signifies to eat together as sheep, from which the word pastor is derived. And having heard of his troubles, they agreed to come and visit him, to mourn with and comfort him.

No doubt Job's troubles were noised abroad. The afflictions as well as the sins of the godly are carried about upon the wings of fame, and every one descants upon and censures them freely.

It is a proof of true friendship to mourn with and comfort the afflicted. If we really love God it will abide whatever befall us. And it manifests our love to our brethren to be genuine, when we continue to love and own them when they are despised and reproached by men, or are afflicted by the immediate hand of God. Some friends are like the swallow, they come in summer but flee away in winter. It is very becoming to prevent the invitations of our friends; it is good manners to be an unbidden guest at a house of mourning. It is very improper to judge or censure, upon hearsay, but a report is warrant enough to pity and pray for our afflicted friends; some look upon it as a compliment to visit those in affliction. But it is spoken of, James i. 27, as a prominent part of pure religion, and when we visit with an intention to comfort those in distress. Let us beware of acting the part of Job's friends, who added affliction to him whom they meant to comfort. What a sad condition is represented, Psal. lxxix. 20, when it is said, "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none," &c. and when it was fulfilled on the innocent Lamb of God when he suffered. None of his followers should think it strange when it is with them as it was with their Lord.

*Ver. 12. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle and sprinkled dust upon their heads towards heaven.*

*Ver. 13. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great.*

Great afflictions blast the beauty, change and disfigure the face, so that friends cannot know them. Job was now so changed that his friends lift up their voice and wept, thus giving vent to their sorrow, which, as is usual, would revive Job's grief. To show compassion to him, as well as to show their own sorrow, they rent their clothes and sprinkled dust, as a memento of mortality. However low we are, God can lay us still lower; and therefore, it is best to lay ourselves as low as we can, as he does who sits upon the ground when his heart sits down with him too. His friends saw that the pain of his body was great, and that his mind was troubled, for which reason, they sat down with him and kept silence. When a man is resolved to mourn let him mourn; your advice may anger him, but it will not help him. Let sorrow have its way a while, and that will make way for comfort.

### CHAPTER III.

*Ver. 1. After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day.*

At last Job, who had formerly opened his mouth to justify and bless God, with a loud or clear voice cursed his day. Sorrow sometimes stops the mouth. *Psal. lxxvii. 4. "I am so troubled that I cannot speak."* A wise man hath his tongue at his command, he speaks upon mature deliberation; but a fool's tongue commands him. The word here used, to curse, is derived from a root, which signifies light or unsettled, and so it means any thing or person which we condemn or despise, so it is frequently translated, as well as to curse or blaspheme. The Hebrew word for honour or glory, signifies heavy; and *2 Cor. iv. 17.* speaks of a weight of glory. Now, observe, that cursing a father is opposite to the 5th Commandment, "Thou shalt honour thy father," &c.—thou shalt look on thy parents as upon persons of weight—so to curse them is to look on them as vile and contemptible.

Can a man curse persons or things? No. Blessings and cursings are in the hand of God. A day is a part of time, and is incapable of a curse. Job curses either the day of his birth or the day on which he suffered such a world of evils. *Jeremiah* also cursed his day with a vehement curse. But the apostle says, "Bless, and curse not."

*Ver. 2, 3. And Job spake and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man-child conceived, or brought forth.*

To perish, signifies not to be, or it is to lose former dignity or respect—to have a mournful being. Let it not be remembered—let it be as if it had never been.

It must be granted that Job discovered much frailty and some passion in this complaint. But if we consider the acuteness of his pain, the multiplicity of his troubles, with their long continuance, we need not wonder that he did complain; and if we look to his end we shall see patience have a perfect work. There is indeed a mournful difference between Job's behaviour in the former chapter and what he now speaks.

Observe, That the holiest person is apt to fail even in the grace in which they excel—witness Moses and Peter.

2d, Observe, That great sufferings often produce grievous complainings, *Psal. lxxvii. 2. lxxxviii. 3—15.* Though the Lord gives us waters of gall to drink, when we consider what our sins deserve, we have great reason to be silent. But flesh and blood will cry out under great troubles. And since God bears with his people, they should bear with one another. He that understands man will compassionate the sorrows and not question the sincerity of a complaining brother.

3d, Observe, That Satan will never fully attain his ends on the children of God. He undertook to make Job curse his God, but when he had done his worst, and spent his malice upon him, Job cursed his day, but not his God. So it came far short of what Satan affirmed.

*Ver. 4. Let that day be darkness ; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.*

Proper darkness is only a privation of light, but it frequently means any sorrowful sad condition. Let not God take any account of it ; let it not be honoured with any special work of providence, which might make it to be remembered with honour among men.

From the two first clauses, as they are placed in succession, learn, That there is no day so dark, or condition so distressing, but if God regard and take notice of it, man may take comfort and rejoice in it. Even in the hour and power of darkness, if God lifts up the light of his countenance, we shall be safe and happy. Our every day's comfort depends on the blessing and care of God. Some translate Acts xvii. 30. "The time of that ignorance God regarded not—God did overlook that time;" he did not respect it ; that is, he lightly passed them by ; his eye was not upon them for good, so as to send among them that great blessing, the knowledge of Jesus Christ. When God, in a way of favour, doth but look towards us, our lowest estate is raised up. "Thou hast regarded the low estate of thine handmaid," said Mary.

To have no light is an addition and aggravation of darkness, as Isa. l. 10. "and hath no light," expresses one of the saddest conditions of an afflicted soul. "Neither let the light shine upon it," is, let there be no comfort, no joy, no good thing in the compass of that day.

Light, in scripture, expresses all good, as darkness all evil.

*Ver. 5. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it ; let a cloud dwell upon it, let the blackness of the day terrify it.*

The shadow of death might be translated image of death, such darkness as is like death. Clouds and darkness together. Job wishes a black cloud so fixed as to eclipse the whole day, and so to be a terrible day by reason of its blackness. Job heaps up words very like in sound, and all alike in sense. Metaphorical darkness stains the beauty of the creature. Let civil discord and war arise, and then what is honour but greater misery, and riches are but golden thorns. But the darkness of ignorance, guilt, and the displeasure of God, are the worst stains. Hence see what a blessing natural light is, and the outward light of a comfortable condition, but especially the light of God's countenance, which is better than life.

*Ver. 6. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it ; let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months.*

The word here used signifies thick darkness joined with tempest. Let darkness grasp it and make it still darker.

The glory of the night is its conjunction to the day. Night is called day, as it is part of the natural day. There is a certain purpose for the summer and for the winter, and also for the day and for the night ; and for any of them to be prevented from answering their end is their affliction, (so far as they are capable of it). It is a great curse upon any creature to be rendered useless.

*Ver. 7. Lo, let that night be solitary ; let no joyful voice come therein.*

Job would have no meetings that night, and if men will meet, let it be only to mourn together. When we reflect on our misimprovement and abuse of social meetings both in our houses and temples, we have reason to fear that the joyful voice may be suddenly taken from us. Let us therefore go voluntarily alone, that we may, like Jacob in prayer, wrestle with God for a blessing. This is the sweetest enjoyment of our lives, and is the best way of preparing for and improving our afflictions. But to have the society of friends interrupted, so that they cannot associate together, is one of the greatest afflictions upon earth, and it is quite contrary to the nature and happiness of man.

*Ver. 8. Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mournings.*

Let this night be cursed and mourned over with as enlarged sorrows as those who are hired on purpose to mourn over the saddest spectacles and most calamitous events, some seem to think that their troubles exceed their own sorrows, and, therefore, hire others to appear as mourners ; and the love of gain will turn some spirits into any posture, like Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

*Ver. 9. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark ; let it look for light, but have none, neither let it see the dawning of the day.*

In the day time star light is not valued, but in the night they are a great ornament, comfort, and guide. They are often a welcome sight to the traveller and mariner. Hence, to be deprived of small comforts may be a great affliction in times of distress.

When the apostle would have us to avoid all evil, he exhorts to abstain from the appearance of evil. So it is as if Job had said, Let it not see the least appearance of day.

When God looks upon us and expects to find repentance, and beholds presumption; for faith, and beholds unbelief; for patience, and beholds complaining, &c. no marvel when we look for light and behold darkness, for peace and behold trouble, for success and behold disappointment.

*Ver. 10. Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.*

And is this Job so famed for wisdom, and is this the defence he produces for cursing his day in so full and particular a manner? It seems to have more of passion than reason in it.

Trouble and sorrow take hold of us; and we enter upon and take hold of trouble as soon as we come into this world.

Some suppose that infants' tears is a presage of these sorrows; and well might they weep if they knew what a sea of storms they are launching into, and from which they shall never be fully relieved, till they arrive at the harbour, at the end of the voyage.

*Ver. 11. Why did I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?*

*Ver. 12. Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts, that I should suck?*

The general meaning of these two verses is, That it had been best for me not to have been born, and next best to have died soon after.

To give up the ghost is a cheerful resignation of ourselves in death.

In regard of outward troubles, death is the rest of man.

We are not only indebted to God for our lives at first, but also for the continuance of them, and for all the comforts we enjoy as we pass along. We need divine mercy in every step of our journey.

An infant is a very helpless creature. The seed of death is sown as soon as life is communicated.

*Ver. 13. For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest.*

Job here, in four distinct words, expresses the same thing; and in death there is rest from labour, from trouble and oppression, from sorrow and grief; and what is far better than these to believers, from sin, Satan's temptations, and the law of the members warring against the law of the mind.

Death brings the body to rest, and so is called sleep; and as we awake after sleep, so there shall be a resurrection from the dead; and this will be effected with infinitely more ease, by the power of God, than we can awake a person from a sound sleep.

To wish things otherwise than they are, because we suffer, is certainly sinful; but to wish that those things which have dishonoured and offended God had never been done is surely lawful.

It is lawful to complain under afflictions; but we should complain of or to creatures very little. While we pass over second causes, let us pour our complaints into the bosom of God, adoring his wisdom and justice in these things that we cannot understand. And in bewailing our own or the public calamities, we should endeavour to bear the cross cheerfully. To bear is the patience of necessity; to love to bear is the patience of virtue, and hath in it the highest affection, and the lowest subjection to Christ. To glory in any thing is more than to joy in or take pleasure in it. Col. i. 24. 2 Cor. xii. 10. Rom. v. 3. Gal. vi. 14.

If we mix faith with our tears, and while we bemoan our condition, believe that God is good and good to us, and that he is able to deliver us, we may wish that the things that are were not, and pray that God would make a change in our estate.

Job is angry with his very being. He complains not only of his troubles, but of his life. This must be numbered among his failings and faults.

*Ver. 14. With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves.*

Job now shows that he would have had rest, as well as the great and rich and wise.

Kings here are such as rule by law, with whom counsellors are joined : and it is well when they are both good, for evil counsellors often make a good man a bad king.

The word for desolate places is clearly applied to the grave. Ezek. xxiv. 20. Tombs may be called desolate places ; for when the bodies are laid there, all the company and friends leave them. Even kings and counsellors, who have stately funerals, are left there by their friends, favourites, and flatterers, and great sums were expended in building and beautifying them, yet it was customary to erect them in desolate places.

We see how God disappoints the vain conceit of endeavouring to perpetuate our name and greatness in the story of Absalom. 2 Sam. xviii. 18. That ambitious prince was cast into a pit, with a rude heap of stones cast upon him. By which we are taught the folly of preparing a place for a dead body, while the concerns of an immortal soul are neglected.

*Ver. 15. Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver.*

These houses filled with treasure may be their tombs. In these times they not only bestowed great cost upon their tombs, but they put great store of treasure in them. Josephus says Hircanus opened David's sepulchre, and took out three thousand talents ; and it is supposed that the Chaldeans raked up the graves of the Jews, not so much from cruelty as from covetousness.

Observe, that neither power, nor wisdom, nor riches are any privilege against death. How then is it said that righteousness delivereth from death ? It may be either from troubles or dangers in a day of public calamity, or from the sting of death, the evil of which is passed to a righteous man ; but riches can neither mitigate the pain nor pull out the sting of death.

Great men are called the men of the world, Psal. xvii. as if they were for nothing but this world, and so they have their portion in this life ; and their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever. Psal. xlix. The heart is the place where Christ and the thoughts of heaven should lodge. All things below should be *outward thoughts*. As the inward thoughts of a godly man are upon the things of God, so the inward thoughts of worldly men are after the world, and they may say to their departing souls, (as that trembling emperor), whether are you going ; where is the place of your rest ?

*Ver. 16. Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been ; as infants which never saw light.*

As if he had said, if I have gone too high in referring to kings, &c. yet surely I should have been as those that never knew themselves to be in this world. It is worthy of notice that the same word signifies both an infant and a giant ; and in the grave there is no difference between them.

*Ver. 17. There the wicked cease from troubling ; and there the weary be at rest.*

The Hebrew usually expresses many things in one word, but here it has diverse words to signify one thing, only differing in degree. The lowest expression for a sinner, notes one that misses a mark. The next signifies a willingness to sin, and an unwillingness to obey ; and the one used here signifies wickedness in the height. So Job means here that they had been restless in sin ; who could not sleep till they had done mischief, nor scarce sleep for doing mischief ; who weary and tire out themselves with vexing and troubling others. The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days. In the grave they cease from troubling ; there they are at rest. In Psal. xciv. " How long shall the wicked triumph ? " is answered, verse 23, " The Lord shall cut them off in their own wickedness. " As if it had been said, Until the Lord cut them off they will never leave off doing wickedly.

*Ver. 18. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. "*

The word for oppressor signifies also an exactor of debt, tribute, or labour ; and because at times they are demanded against right and equity, often with violence and cruelty, they may well be called oppressors.

The voice of an oppressor is the voice of slander and reproach. Psal. xlii. 10. " As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me. " The tongue wounds deeper than the sword, and God will punish for hard words as well as hard blows. However he may order the outward dispensations of his providence, his people will soon be brought to the house of silence, where they shall hear the oppressor's voice no more.

Paul and Silas sung praises in a prison, but they enjoyed the presence of Christ, which can make any place or situation comfortable. But in itself imprisonment is a sad condition. Our Lord speaks of a prison visit as a special service. " I was in pri-

son, and ye visited me." We should remember those that are in bonds as bound with them, and they who hear the voice of the oppressor as being ourselves yet in the body, and let this give a relish to, and make us thankful for the comforts of life.

*Ver. 19. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master.*

The grave knows no difference among men. There is but one distinction that outlives death. Happy are all those who are made righteous by God's grace. Both voluntary and constrained servants are free from their master. Job speaks of service as a state of affliction and trouble, under which many groan.

Job now begins to expostulate, and his main proposition is contained, in verses 20, 23, viz. That there is no reason why a man that lives miserably, and would die willingly, should have his life prolonged. He endeavours to prove the assumption at verse 24, where he shows that he lived in great misery, which he amplifies in the two last verses. This is the sum and scope of this last section.

*Ver. 20. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?*

The Hebrew word signifies labour. It is translated sorrow, verse 10, guilt, Psal. lv. and mischief, Psal. xciv.; because by these one man molests and vexes another, and makes him miserable. This deep inward sorrow made our Lord say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" that is, I am in the lowest depths of sorrow, within one step or degree of death.

The will and pleasure of God is a sufficient answer to Job's question. Yet as God seldom answers by his bare prerogative, other reasons may be adduced; such as, that life is continued to teach obedience by sufferings, and that grace may be increased; or, that God magnifies his power in supporting and delivering those whom he sets up as patterns to posterity.

Here is a man weary of light and life. The best things in the world may become burdens to us. Therefore, labour after true grace, which was never a burden to any man, or unsavoury to the bitterest soul. When you are weary of all other things, faith and patience will support you.

It is a trouble to possess good things when we cannot enjoy them. The possession and enjoyment of all temporal things may be separated, but the very possession of spiritual things is joy.

*Ver. 21. Which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures.*

To long is a vehement desire, even as an hungry man for food, or as a believer who has waited long expecting the accomplishment of any promised blessing.

*It cometh not.* That is, not so soon as they would have it, for death will come. But is it lawful to desire death? It is an enemy that no man can desire, yet some have expressed as eager a desire after death as ever any dug for secreted treasures; but still there is somewhat else at the bottom of that desire.

Instead of following Jonah's pattern when we meet with a cross, we should seek to God for relief, for he hath a thousand ways to let us out of trouble besides sending us to the grave. As death comes to many before they look for it, so some are calling for death before they know how to die. When Solomon praises the dead as better than the living, he personifies a natural man, who says it is better to die than live under oppression. But to bear a burden well is more desireable than deliverance from it, if, while bearing it, we can be doing good.

Spiritual treasures are called mysteries. Knowledge, life, and comforts are hid. Col. iii. 3.; Rev. ii. 17. The best things are hardest to be come by. Those that will have the crown must strive for it. We must dig for heavenly hid treasure! and yet both the treasure and strength to dig it are freely given.

*Ver. 22. Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave.*

And finding death, they are affected as they who (seeking for treasures) find a grave. For when they hit upon a grave they thought themselves sure of treasure.

Or rather it refers to those who bid death welcome, and are glad when they find themselves stepping into it. If the miseries of this life can make death itself desirable, then certainly the prospect of living in and with Christ will fill us with joy and earnest desires to attain it. It is desire that widens the vessel to take in abundance of joy.

*Ver. 23. Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?*

That which was before the object of Satan's envy is now the object of Job's com-

plaint, "a hedge." The one was for protection, the other of thorny trouble to Job. It is as if Job had said, why doth God continue my life when I am in such a condition, that I cannot discover the reason why I am brought into it, nor see any passage out of it? Affliction is not only wrapt up as to the *cause* and the *event*, but in the darkness of present duty. Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee. Ignorance of the particular cause or duty called to, under an affliction, adds greatly to the weight or smart of it.

*Ver. 24. For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters.*

Heb. "Before the face of my bread my sighings come," which notes the continuance of his sorrows. Job's grief was without any intermission, for sorrow and sighing sat as guests continually at his table.

Sighings are mere secret sorrows, but roarings must be heard, which points out the extremity of Job's sufferings. So David, Psal. xxxii. 3. to show his extremity of pain while he did not confess his sin, says, "While I kept silence" (while I smothered my sins in secret) "I roared for the disquietness of my soul." Silence in not confessing sin causes roaring under the guilt of sin. I am as it were melted into sorrows.

*Ver. 25. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.*

Job seems to make this the sum of all complaints. The Hebrew is, I feared a fear and it is come upon me, I long before thought that such a black day might come upon me.

*Query.* Was it lawful in Job to be thus fearful? An apostle bids us be careful for nothing. There are divers sorts of fear. Job's was a fear of caution, not of torment and vexation,—a fear opposed to security and presumption, not to joy and consolation. Job's fear was grounded on the uncertainty of creature comforts. He knew that wealth was but a brittle ware, and might quickly receive a crack. This fear we ought to carry about us in regard of our spiritual state, though grace be *everlasting ware*, and though we are high built we must not be *high minded*. Job's was a fear that made him diligent to prepare for an evil day, not a fear that did eat out all the comfort of a good day,—a fear opposed to hardness of heart, but not opposed to courage and strength of heart. Such a fear as this is a holy fear, a good companion in our best estate, which will not trouble but regulate our lives.

*Note.*—That holy wisdom and sanctified prudence prepares for evil in our good days. Lest the disciples in time of peace should forget trouble, Christ says, Matt. xxiv. 25. "Behold I have told you before."

When ungodly men have a good day they think it will last for ever. When they were merry, singing and feasting, Amos vi. 3. they would not allow the thought of a change; for it is added, "They put the evil day far from them." Isaiah describes them as making a covenant with death; and when he had been talking of judgments, they say, "If the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us." These are the thoughts of foolish and ungodly men. They have made "lies their refuge, and under falsehood have they hid themselves;" and so they confidently say, we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. Many of the people of God do say of the evils that are now upon us, "the things which we feared are come." These storms were seen long ago in the clouds, yea in the sunshine; and they who foresaw them with an eye of faith and holy fear, are in best case to grapple with them, and will be gainers by them.

Dangers unknown easily surprise us, whereas those we fear may either be prevented or prepared for. Trouble will lie heavy enough upon us, even when we look and prepare for it. Therefore say to thyself, I am rich, but before I die I may be poor. Now I have a house, but in a few days I may be turned out. Now I am at liberty, but shortly I may be cast into prison. Now I have a wife and children, but I may soon be bereaved of them, or they may be turned into crosses and afflictions.

Now, O my soul, art thou prepared to bear these changes? Surely Job questioned himself thus, which made him say, "That which I greatly feared is come upon me."

*Ver. 26. I was not in safety; neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.*

This is an addition to, and an exposition of the former verse. The Hebrew root also signifies, I was not secure. From the same root is *Shiloh*, that is, he whom all may

securely trust in and rest upon for safety. Job means, I did not think myself safe, or beyond the reach of danger.

Job had not a rest in confidence; he did not trust in his outward peace; but he had the rest of contentment even in his outward troubles. A wicked man's conscience is like a troubled sea, even when he enjoys outward peace. But Job enjoyed peace of conscience when his affairs were like a troubled sea.

The contrast in the conduct of the rich man will illustrate this verse, Luke xii. 9. His house was full, but his heart was fuller of the creature. He makes it a rock to build upon, and a pillow to sleep on. He sings a requiem to his soul. The rich man's words are affirmatives of all Job's negatives. Job's estate was as full as his, but his heart was emptied of all delight in it. I never expected much peace in the world, none at all from it, yet trouble came. When Job had abundance of all earthly things, he said he was not in safety, &c. Hence observe, that in the spring-tide of worldly prosperity, we should keep our hearts within the channel. A believer, like Noah's dove, finds no rest; and after all his flights and fluttering among creatures, he must say, Return unto thy rest, O my soul.

God often wrests worldly enjoyments out of their hands who hold them fastest. Christ gives an instance, in the days of Noah and Lot, when they were secure, buying and selling, &c. as if the world had been their own. Then the flood and the fire came and swept them all away.

But the way to hold spiritual things is to cleave to them with full purpose of heart. And what Christ says of this life is true of the things of this life; "He that will lose (that is, he who is ready to lose) the things of this life, shall save them; and he that will save (that is, he who is resolved to save) the things of this life, shall lose them." Put them out of your hearts and you may hold them in your hands.

### TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.

A QUESTION is started and touched in many books of Scripture how the justice and goodness of God can be vindicated while his providence distributes good to the evil and evil to the good. But it is here purposely handled in a very long disputation between Job, the respondent, and his three friends, opponents. Then in a full determination, first, by Elihu, an acute and wise reasoner, and then by God himself, the most wise and infallible moderator.

There are three principles wherein Job concurs with his three friends—

1st, That all the afflictions which befall man come under the eye and certain knowledge of God.

2dly, That God is the author and efficient cause, the orderer and disposer of all these afflictions and calamities.

3dly, That in regard of his most holy majesty and unquestionable sovereignty, he neither doth nor can do any wrong or injury to any of his creatures, whatsoever affliction he lays, or how long soever he is pleased to continue it upon them.

These three principles, and such conclusions as are immediately deducible from them, are copiously handled by them all, and they all speak very glorious things of the power, wisdom, justice, holiness, and sovereignty of the Lord; but Job far excels the other three.

But they proceed to a fourth principle, which he utterly denies, about which so much of his answer as opposeth their objections wholly consists. That their fourth principle seems to be bottomed on two grounds.

1st, That whosoever is good and doth good, shall receive a present reward, according to the measure of the good he hath done, and that the wicked shall be paid with present punishments according to the measure of his demerits.

2dly, That if a wicked man flourish in outward prosperity, yet it is very momentary, and suddenly turns to, and ends in visible judgments in this life. And that if at any time a godly man be withered with adversity, yet it is very short, and suddenly (in this life) ends in visible blessings. The sum of this is, that a man greatly afflicted and held long under their pressure, is to be numbered with the wicked, though no other evidence appear against him, hence—



The peculiar opinion of Eliphaz, that all the outward evils which overtake a man in this life are the proceeds of his own sin, and so from the process of God's justice, chap. iv. 8. "They that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness," shall reap the same, which he applies personally to Job, chap. xxii. 5, 6. "Is not thy wickedness great?" &c.; the whole scope of his speech bends the same way, and is as if he had said to Job, "Though thy carriage has been so plausible among us, that we are not able to accuse thee of sin, yet those judgments accuse thee, and are sufficient witnesses against thee that thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought."

Bildad grants that afflictions may fall upon a righteous person, but if God sends not deliverance speedily, &c. Then upon the second ground of the fourth principle, such a man may be censured, cast and condemned as unrighteous. That such was Bildad's judgment is clear, chap. viii. 5, 6. and 20, 21. "Behold God will not cast away a perfect man," &c. As if he had said, I cannot assent to Eliphaz affirming, that every man that is afflicted is for his wickedness. I believe that a godly man may be afflicted for the trial and exercise of his graces. But as soon as he cries and calls, the Lord makes his habitation prosperous again.

Zopher differs from the two former, affirming that all afflictions are to be resolved into the absolute will and pleasure of God, &c. chap. xi. 7, 8, 12.; in the rest of his speech he comes nearest the opinion of Bildad, verse 14, 15, 16, and gives out as hard thoughts of Job as the other two, numbering him among the wicked, and assigning him the reward of an hypocrite, chap. xx. 29.

These, I conceive, are the characteristic opinions of Job's three friends about his case, all consistent with these four principles, which they hold in common, all equally concerning Job, and yet some difference among themselves.

But what says Job? He says that the providence of God dispenses outward prosperity and affliction so indifferently to good and bad, that no unerring judgment can possibly be made of any man's spiritual estate upon the view of his temporal. He declares this as his opinion, chap. ix. 22, 23, which is no way at variance with the three first principles, but only with the fourth, which he throughout refutes as unsound, &c.

In the strong-hold of this truth, Job secures himself against all the assaults, and scatters all the objections of his opponents, resolving to maintain it to the death.

That he is a sinner, he readily grants; that he is an hypocrite, he flatly denies.

That the Lord was righteous in all his dealings with him, he readily grants.

That himself was unrighteous, because the Lord had dealt so with him, he flatly denies.

He confesses that he needeth the free grace and mercy of God to justify him, but withal asserts that he was perfect enough to justify himself against all the challenges of men.

In these acknowledgments of his sinfulness and denials of insincerity, in these humblings of himself before God, and acquitting of himself before men, in these implorings of mercy from the Lord, and complaining of the unkindness of his brethren, the strength of Job's answer consists, and it may be thus summed up.

'Tis true, that through the extremity of his pain, the anguish of his spirit, and the provocation of his friends, some unwary speeches slipped from him, for which Elihu reproved him, and of which he repented, all which a gracious God freely pardoned.

Thus I have endeavoured to give a brief account of the argumentative part of this book, and to represent how far in this great controversy the answerer and his objectors agree in judgment, and where they part.

*April 28th, 1645.*

JOSEPH CARYL.

## CHAPTER IV.

*Ver. 1. Then Eliphaz, the Temanite, answered, and said*

*Ver. 2. If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? assay or try—commune.* It notes serious speaking, *wilt thou be grieved?* The word signifies to be extremely grieved, even unto rage or fainting. He seems to hint at Job's distempered speeches, *wilt thou fall into such a passion again?* but however thou take it.

*Who can withhold himself from speaking in such a case as this?*

From this preamble, observe, 1st, That reproof is a wholesome, yet a bitter pill, it needs to be wrapt up in gold and sugar, that, pleasing both eye and palate, it may be taken down the better.

2d, That it is no easy thing to bear reproof. To take a reproof well is as high a point of spiritual wisdom as to give it in a proper manner.

3d, That in some cases it is a duty to reprove however it may be taken. When we see God disbonoured, and the soul of our brother in danger, we must speak. In such cases we must adventure to save men by fear, plucking them out of the fire. But what is it that he could not forbear? It is, that he supposed that Job acted opposite to his own principles.

*Ver. 3. Behold thou hast instructed many.* The Hebrew signifies both to correct and teach, because they were usually joined, it is thou hast taught and directed, and (where need was) corrected many.

*And thou hast strengthened the weak hands.* That is those whose hands are weak, by reason of manifold trials, thou hast spoken words to them which have been as sinews to their hands, and strength to their joints. Heb. xii. 12. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down.

*Ver. 4. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.*

Some afflictions not only make us shake and totter, but either from their nature, number, or duration, are like to overwhelm us.

Weak, or hanging down hands, may denote a kind of despair of relief from evils felt, and feeble knees may arise from expected evil.

Job stood ready to uphold such as were ready to fall. Timely assistance and advice may prevent a fall, and strengthen for future trials.

Observe 1st, That to instruct and comfort others, is not only a man's duty but his praise.

Job taught many, though he had no direct calling to it. Now, what shall we think of those who neglect to instruct after they have solemnly engaged to be teachers?

Observe 2d, That charity, especially spiritual charity, is very liberal; and open hearted charity to the soul, is the soul of charity. When words are wisely dispensed, and accompanied with the divine blessing, what can they not do?

All that had witnessed Job's instructions, as well as Job himself, are called upon by Eliphaz, to observe the great change, behold thou hast instructed many.

*Ver. 5. But now it is come upon thee.* That is, thou art visited with afflictions, and thou faintest. The word signifies an extraordinary fainting, as when a man is so wearied and spent that he knows not what he doth. *It toucheth thee and thou art troubled.* That is a vehement trouble that fills with amazement.

Observe 1st, To commend a man with a *but* is a wound instead of a commendation.

Observe 2d, It is far easier to give instructions to others in trouble than to exemplify them in our own conduct.

It is as if Eliphaz had said to Job, "Art thou not ashamed to cry out of thy afflictions, after thou hast told others to be quiet and cheerful under theirs?"

The wisdom and patience which is seen in bearing afflictions is far better than that which is heard in exhorting others. The apostle, Rom. ii. 19. speaks of it as a matter of shame and blushing, that their actions run so cross to their professions.

Thus we have opened the minor propositions of the first argument, couched in the third and fourth verses, "thou hast instructed many," &c. "yet when trouble comes upon thee, thou faintest and art troubled." He then draws the conclusion, and from hence infers Job a hypocrite, as

*Ver. 6. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?*

The Vulgate reads it, "where is thy fear," &c. "what is become of these graces in this thy day of trouble?"

Mr. Broughton reads, is not thy fear thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope? or, is not thy religion thy hope, and thy right ways thy confidence; didst thou not think that they would have been thy protection? but thou art deceived.

Eliphaz seems to call Job to make a clearer proof of his religion, and tells him, thou art surely but an hypocrite, for if thy "fear" were true, it would have preserved thee from these impatient complainings.

"The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil." Therefore if thou hadst any genuine fear of God indeed, thou wouldest never have "cursed thy day."

The major proposition is plain in ver. 7. for the question, Who ever perished, being innocent? &c. is to be resolved into this negative, no innocent person ever perished, &c. And Eliphaz conceives this to be so clear a truth that he challenges Job to give one instance to the contrary: He appeals to experience.

*Ver. 7. Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?*

Some render, who ever saw the righteous plucked up by the roots, so as there should be no remembrance nor remainder of them?

The word for innocent signifies empty. Now a converted person is emptied of all sin, comparatively, not absolutely.

The righteous who are justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus cannot be cut off eternally, but in regard of temporal calamities they are on a level with others.

From Job's substance being destroyed, his children slain, his body diseased, and his mind distempered, Eliphaz not only looked on him as irrecoverably lost, but seems to conclude that Job had good reason to suspect himself a hypocrite on account of his present condition, and also seems to defy him to produce one good man ever being in such a deplorable situation.

From Eliphaz sending Job to former experience—*Note*,—That it is our duty, and it may be useful to record the dispensations of providence to both good and bad, and whether personal or public. The dealings of God may appear contrary to his word, but they can never be really so, for his works are an infallible commentary upon his word, and carefully to study them in their connexion with each other, would be a good means of obtaining a profitable knowledge of both.

Eliphaz having called upon Job to examine his memory, the storehouse of the soul, proceeds to produce his own experience.

*Ver. 8. Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same.*

He had carefully observed and duly considered what had occurred.

Those who plough or work iniquity, are such as sin industriously, and who have the art, and spare no pains to do wickedly. After ploughing comes sowing, and then reaping. It is mystical husbandry. Sowing is spoken of as giving to the poor, 2 Cor. ix. 6. To preaching the word, Luke viii. 5. To repenting tears, Psal. cxxvi. 5. and to any action, good or bad, Gal. vi. 8. Sin goes on gradually; a ploughing, a sowing, and reaping.

"Reap the same," that is in the issue and consequences of it. If God spared not his own Son, he cannot spare impenitent sinners, who will not accept of Christ. Observe 1st, That every sin persisted in shall have a certain sorrowful reward. They that go forth vainly rejoicing in bearing that poisonous seed, shall doubtless come again, and bring their sheaves of sorrow with them. Observe 2d, That the punishment may come long after the commission of sin. The sound of punishment is sometimes at the very heels of sin, but when it comes slowest it often treads hardest.

The punishment of sin shall be the same, not only in degree, but in likeness; and it often bears the image and superscription of sin upon it, so that we may read its name upon the affliction. Many, since Adonibezek, have had reason to confess, "As I have done, so God hath requited me." Eliphaz seems to have had store of instances, and having stated his general observations, that he had often seen the wicked perish, proceeds to illustrate it by an elegant description of the manner how they are cut off.

*Ver. 9. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.*

They who sow iniquity are often punished by reaping disappointments, which is the blasting of their hopes. They are not only a little withered, but they are utterly consumed, root and branch; some think this is a hint at the manner of the death of Job's children. The Septuagint is, "by the command of God they perish." It is all one with God to command and accomplish. He can, and sometimes does destroy his enemies, as easily as a man can breathe. Hag. i. 9. "I did blow upon it." It comes suddenly, invisibly, and irresistibly. "Who can stand before his anger, yea, who knoweth the power of his wrath, or blast?" This Eliphaz goes on to show.

*Ver. 10. The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions are broken.*

*Ver. 11. The old lion perished for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.*

The Hebrew has five several names for lions, and they are all here used, to set forth the terrible tearing power, fierceness, and cruelty of proud oppressors.

It is certain that the wicked in general, and tyrants in particular, expose themselves to the just vengeance of God, and he often scatters and destroys them in this world ; yet we find some of them live long and die quietly. They spend all their days in devouring others, and yet God suspends his judgments against some who, for cruelty, &c. are spoken of, Nahum ii. 11, 12. as lions.

Perhaps Eliphaz intended in this to reflect upon Job, as if the Lord had measured to him the same measure he had given others.

The remainder of the chapter contains the third argument, by which Eliphaz labours to convince and reprove Job.

Invented visions are intended to gain credit to the inventions of man. But this was a true vision, for it was for the confirmation of a truth contained in ver. 17. and the matter of the argument in it may be formed thus : That man behaves rashly and sinfully, who would seem more just and pure than his Maker. " But thou, Job, speakest as if thou were more just than God, therefore thou art acting very sinfully." He confirms this by an argument taken from divine authority, from ver. 12. to 16. and another from reason is grounded on the common logical rule of arguing from the greater to the less, verses 18, 21.

*Ver. 12. Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof,* (secretly brought) signifies to do a thing by stealth, so " thing" or word was brought in suddenly and silently, and my narrow ear could drink in but some drops of that ocean that was poured upon me.

The Hebrew word for " doctrine" signifies also " catching, receiving," and from the same root comes a word for " palate of the mouth," which hints that heavenly doctrine pleases the taste of a heavenly mind ; yet in the present state it is only a little they can take in of the truths of God. John xvi. 12. " I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Truth is just the mind of God, and that is infinite, and so we cannot comprehend it. Natural men are like sieves, so that every drop of truth they hear runs out ; and how can they hold forth the word in a pure conversation, who have not received it into a pure conscience ?

*Ver. 13. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep filleth on men.*

*Thoughts* in Hebrew signifies the boughs of a tree, and they are called boughs, because they spring from the mind and bear fruit, they are the first-born, the blossoms of the soul, and therefore the word is elegantly translated thought.

Prophets were called Seers, because in visions they had either an ocular, or an intellectual sight of the mind of God.

When a man is fatigued with labour and travel, sleep falls upon him in such a manner that he cannot withstand it. But God by his Almighty power makes a revelation of his will, and causes it to take effect not only when men are in a deep natural sleep, but even when they are under the power of spiritual death. Many not only mind earthly things all the day, but when they awake in the night they are still filled with earthly cares, and love to the world keeps them awake. Happy they to whom God communicates himself in a vision of love, mercy, and grace, and thereby enables them to comply with David's exhortation—" Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still," such may expect fresh discoveries of the love of God, and they will not complain of want of sleep upon their beds. We should have more from God if we thought more of him ; " God sends convictions in the night," chap. xxxiii. 14—16.

*Ver. 14. Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.*

This seems to be a preparation for this divine vision, he was deeply afflicted with it. Fear is caused by the apprehension of some evil. We should serve God in fear, and join trembling with our mirth.

*Ver. 15. Then a spirit passed before my face, the hair of my flesh stood up.*

That God who often makes angels ministers of his providence, sent this one to reveal his word. This spirit passed before him perhaps as swiftly as a ship moveth with a gale of wind, and produced another effect of fear and consternation, which discovers

a conscience of guilt at seeing a spirit pass. From which, learn 1st, That a manifestation from heaven is terrible to man ever since sin entered.

2d, That God usually humbles and lays low before he exalts with discoveries of himself and of his truth.

3d, To become as babes before God, is the best means of improving his revelations to the increase of true wisdom. Those who are high in their own conceits, give no evidence of having attained true saving knowledge.

*Ver. 16. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before mine eyes; there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying.*

He could not form an exact idea of it in his own mind, so he could not describe it. His conscience was to be awakened and informed, but not to gratify curiosity, before the message was delivered there was profound silence. When men are to speak for God, or to pray to him, it becomes them to make a solemn pause before they proceed. It is certainly very improper for a creature to appear in the presence of his Creator, with as little forethought or concern as a horse rusheth into a battle. After this solemn silence he proceeds to say he heard a voice which spake distinctly.

*Ver. 17. Shall mortal man be more just than God; shall a man be more pure than his Maker?*

No. It is impossible. Shall sinful mortals compare with the immortal, the invisible God? But suppose man as strong, wise, holy, and excellent, as at his creation, what is he when compared with his infinitely holy and righteous Creator? He is base, weak, foolish, and filthy. The words are a positive and flat denial of all comparison between God and man.

Observe, 1st, that the best men compared with God are evil, and the holiest are impure.

2d, That to complain of God's dealings with us, is to make ourselves more just and pure than God; we are allowed to make our requests known to him, but not to fret against him.

3d, That God in himself is most just and pure, and neither does nor can do wrong to any creature. Justice and purity are not qualities in God, they are his very nature; it is impossible for God to be unjust.

Lucifer says, Isa. xiv. "I will be like the Most High;" and it is said of the man of sin, "That he shall exalt himself above all that is called God." But however odious these are, the heart of man goes beyond them.

Some think Eliphaz infers, if there was not some great crime for which God thus punishes, then man would be more just than God, for no man would punish his servant without some just cause. Others think it is only a reproof to Job for his unreasonable speeches.

*Ver. 18. Behold he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly.*

Eliphaz having laid the dignity of man in the dust by these humbling questions in the former verse. *Behold*, is an affirmation that there is no comparison between God and angels. He did not credit or confide in these servants, and all the wisdom or stability they have is from the divine bounty, and they may be charged with folly comparatively.

Angels are servants, as they are messengers, guardians, who comfort and support the saints in all their distress, and carry their souls to heaven at death, and they will gather the elect together at the last day; and it is more honourable to serve God, than to rule the world.

Since God does not trust the angels, who excel in strength and wisdom, let us learn to trust in God alone, renouncing all dependence on the wisest and best of men. And how absurd and foolish must it be to court or confide in an arm of flesh, after the imperfection of angels is laid before us! Eliphaz prosecutes his argument. If angels, the chiefest and choicest of creatures, ought not to be trusted, what is man?

*Ver. 19. How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?*

This, and the two following verses, describe man as a material mortal substance, and points out the shortness of life, the imperceptible nature of death, and its lasting consequences; yet how stupid! he dies, no man regarding it. But man is more than dust and clay. But what then? doth not their excellency go away, and where is he? Even their wisdom decays while they live, and their learning cannot prevent death.

Now, if angels cannot approve themselves in God's sight, how much less can man, whose noble and spiritual substance dwells and acts in a body composed of corruptible clay? Yet it is called a house, because the soul lodges in it, and it is a comely fabric, so compact together, that the most curious buildings in the world are but rude heaps compared to it. Thus the infinite wisdom and power of God is displayed and magnified. But however beautiful man may appear, he is at his best estate but vanity, the foundation is in the dust. It is foolish to bestow much pains and cost to trim the body, to the neglect of the precious soul. Man is crushed as it were with a moth. Death seizes upon, and consumes us secretly and silently, Isa. l. 9. They are crushed as a moth, Psal. xxxix.

*Ver. 20. They are destroyed from morning to evening; they perish for ever without any regarding it.*

That is they are liable to destruction every moment. "They perish." The word is often used for the dissolution of soul and body; "for ever," that is, as long as this world lasts. It notes the utmost term of time, not (that which is without term) eternity. Death puts an end to the business of this world, and to both temporal and spiritual enjoyments, Isa. xxxviii. 18.

They perish for ever without any regarding, or without any laying it to heart. Solomon says, "the living will lay it to heart." He speaks, probably, that if any man will at any time lay death to heart, then surely he will, when he goes to the house of mourning. We make a stop at one that lies gasping and dying, but let a cloth be thrown over him and put into the grave, then we go to our business, buying and selling, yea to coveting and sinning, as if the last man were now buried. Thus men perish for ever without any regarding. Thoughts of death have life in them, when spiritualized and laid to heart.

*Ver. 21. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die even without wisdom.*

Not only the house of clay, but the excellency of beauty, wit, riches, honour, &c. all the goodness of it fades away; the adorning and polishing goes away. Psal. xlix. 16. "His glory shall not descend after him." One of the ancients standing by Cæsar's tomb, wept and cried out, "Where is now the beauty of Cæsar? What is become of his magnificence? Where are the armies now? Where are now the honours, triumphs, and trophies of Cæsar? All is gone; all is departed; his excellency is gone away."

Nothing will stay and go with us, when death comes, but the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

"They die even without wisdom;" that is, they prepare not wisely for death, they die before they understand what it is to live, or why they live. He that dies unprepared, dies foolishly. To live meditating on, and preparing for death is wisdom. But it is such a wisdom as is above man; therefore David, Psal. xxxix. 4, prays, "Lord make me to know mine end," &c. None can teach us this lesson but God himself; for we may preach, and you hear about death, &c. and yet remain ignorant of numbering our days aright. Psal. xc. 12. "So teach us to number our days," &c., as if Moses had said, I have been numbering my days, and I can tell no farther than three or four score; yet I cannot apply my heart unto wisdom. To number our days so as to apply our hearts unto wisdom, is a special part of wisdom.

## CHAPTER V.

From verses 1—5, contains the fourth argument.

He compares and finds Job very unlike the saints. Scarce any of them ever suffered such things as thou hast done. But none of them, under their afflictions ever behaved as thou dost; and when compared to the wicked he finds him like to them. Thou repinest and vexest thyself after the manner of foolish and silly wicked ones.

He would next prove Job an hypocrite, from his sufferings being similar to the judgments which God pours upon the wicked.

*Ver. 1. Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn.*

God hath given us examples to walk by. He saith, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," and Christ is not only the *principle of holiness*, but also the *pattern of holiness*. 1 Pet. ii. 21, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example;" and Matt. ii. 29, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." It is a yoke of affliction as well as of instruction. He calls it his yoke, not only because he appoints it for his people, but because, as a servant, he bore that yoke himself. It is not only, take my yoke upon you for the matter, but learn of me the manner how to bear it. Besides these unerring examples, the saints are held up to our imitation. Take, my brethren, the prophets for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. It was certainly a good advice to Job, to look to, and compare himself with the saints. From which of them have you learned to be proud, or earthly-minded, or impatient under the hand of God? That man hath reason to suspect he hath done evil, who does what a good man never did, or ever repented having done it. Thus Eliphaz ranks Job with the wicked, because (he thought) he could not find any of the saints like himself, and (in his opinion) he might see himself very like the wicked.

*Ver. 2. For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one.*

The word *fool*, signifies one who is either master but of little knowledge, or that which he has masters him. Eliphaz seems thus to number Job with fools, because he conceived him rash and intemperate, having no government of himself.

He speaks as if Job's complaints arose from these two impure and filthy springs, *wrath* and *envy*. As if he had said, Thou art wroth at thine own poverty, sickness, and sores, and envious at the plenty, health, and ease of others. And may not folly and simplicity challenge that man for theirs, whose spirit thus resents his own evils or his neighbour's good?

Every wicked man is a foolish and a silly man. Sin is pure folly. The wisdom of the wicked is in their own conceit, and "there is more hope of a fool than of such, that is, of those who are sensible of their own failings, and are willing to become fools that they may be wise.

To have an heart to bless God for bestowing blessings upon others, is itself a great blessing. Whereas an envious man stands always in his own light, and cannot rejoice in his own mercies for grieving at the good of others. Eliphaz had said, chap. iv. 8. "I have seen," &c. and now he applies to Job, both in his rise and fall, another part of his own experience, which seems to answer an objection that might be made against what he said he had seen, viz. Many wicked men plough iniquity enough, and sow wickedness abundantly, and yet they reap a full harvest of riches, &c. I grant it, saith Eliphaz, but this does not weaken my former assertion, for

*Ver. 3. I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation.*

He flourishes and takes root, but he withers and is quickly pulled up. The worst of men may enjoy the best of outward comforts, and in their greatest fulness and abundance. But outward things are to us as we are. To a good man they are good, and to a fool they are not good, because he is not good himself. Observe, the difference of spiritual good things, though they find us not good, the possession of them will make us good; they have a transforming influence: but worldly good things have injured many a good man. The enjoyment of outward good things is no evidence of being good.

*And suddenly I cursed his habitation*, that is, I have smitten his habitation quite through with a curse. The curses in the Psalms are often predictions from the Spirit of God, not maledictions from David; these curses are prophecies, not prayers; they foresee and foretell evils, but they desire them not.

While thousands admire and envy wicked great ones, and think none happy but such as they are, a godly man looks through all their outward glory, and pities and mourns over them as miserable creatures.

*Ver. 4. His children are (or were) far from safety.* That is, they are in extreme danger and peril; they walk in the regions of trouble continually.

*They are crushed in the gate*, which intimates the publicity of their destruction, and that all business shall go against them.

*Neither is there any to deliver them.* None shall be found either able or willing to rescue them from oppressors, or protect them from danger.

*Ver. 5. Whose harvest the hungry eateth up.* That is, all he hath gotten by-right or wrong; by industry or by deceit; by secret practices or open violence; he shall

not reap what he sowed; the labour shall be his, and the benefit shall be reaped by others. The hungry shall eat up his harvest.

The man who fraudulently takes from others, and hoards up for himself and children, shall be deprived of it by others.

*He taketh it even out of the thorns.* When a man seeks riches with much care and anxiety of mind, it may be said he gets them out of the thorns. Or rather, when a hungry man comes with a commission from God to eat the harvest of the foolish, he will press through thorns to obtain them, that is, notwithstanding all the care of the worldly wise man to protect them.

A godly man's care is to maintain communion with Christ so as to grow in grace; and yet their spiritual harvest would be ruined, and their prayers and cares prove unavailing, if Christ did not keep it for them. His care of his people's spiritual welfare is such a *thorn hedge* as the devil cannot break through. We are kept by the power of God as with a garrison, 1 Pet. i. 5.

*And the robber swalloweth up their substance.* Some translate, The thirsty shall drink or swallow up their wealth. So there is both the hungry and thirsty to consume their substance.

To show a man his condition by representing another, and to seem relating the history of our foreign observations only, when we mean the person to whom we speak, is a forcible way of giving instruction and admonition.

Thus Eliphaz, in the fate of the foolish man, would represent to Job the desolation brought upon himself by those troops of hungry and thirsty robbers, who swallowed all his substance at one morsel, and supped it up at one draught.

Eliphaz, having thus reproved and tried to convince Job, now exhorts him. First, from verse 6—16 inclusive. The sum of which is, That he would earnestly beseech him to beg pardon, seek unto, and commit himself and his cause unto God. The second branch of the exhortation is from verse 17 to end, and the scope is, That Job would humble himself, and patiently submit unto and under the correcting hand of God, and quietly wait his time of deliverance.

He produces two arguments to enforce his exhortation, the matter of which is contained in verse 8. The first is taken either from the efficient or meritorious cause of his afflictions in verse 6, 7.

The second argument is contained in verse 9 to 12, and is founded on the power wisdom, and goodness of God; as if he had said, Who would not seek unto a God who is infinitely able to deliver? Who would not commit his cause unto him who is gracious and ready to deliver, and who is infinite in wisdom to find out ways and means of deliverance, even when to the eye of sense and reason, our condition seems altogether desperate.

*Ver. 6. Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.*

The word for affliction signifies also iniquity; the soil where it grows is man's heart: the effect is mentioned, affliction. The cause iniquity is supposed, the mother and the daughter are called by the same name.

Trouble properly signifies toilsome labour as a fruit of sin. Thy troubles are not like these herbs that grow spontaneously out of the earth. There is some hand or other that both plants and waters them. Man weaves a spider's web out of his own bowels, and then he is entangled in the same web. The troubles which seize upon him are twisted with his own fingers. As if Eliphaz had said, the sin wherein thou wast born hath given conception to all the sorrows of thy life; wherefore, then, dost thou complain of the day wherein thou wast born?

*Ver. 7. Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

As the sparks have a principle in themselves by which they ascend, so it is a natural course for man, as soon as he is born, to sin and work his own sorrow. He needs no tutor; sinning and sorrowing are not his art but his nature. Sorrow and sin are the portion, and all the portion, that man hath by nature, and these we are possessed of as soon as born; we need not wait the death of our parents for the inheritance, they divide it all to every child, and yet keep it all to ourselves.

*Ver. 8. I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause.*

This verse is an application of the doctrine contained in the two former verses. Heb. Unto God I would put my word or turn my speech. The committing of our cause to God, supposes first a resignation of ourselves unto him. I will lay myself down at his



feet, and tell him my case, then let him do with me as seemeth good in his eyes. Unto God, the great and impartial judge of heaven and earth, I refer myself to his arbitration.

From Eliphaz reproving and then exhorting Job, learn, That as it is our duty to reprove, so we ought to advise and exhort our brother with meekness.

Under affliction we should seek unto God, to know the cause; to obtain strength and patience to bear them; for mitigation under or deliverance from them; but especially, that we may have the blessing of God with them. We have as much need of his blessing with our daily rod as with daily bread.

Sorrows as well as sins are too heavy for us. Let us, therefore, cast our burden on, and commit our cause to God, which is at once our duty and safety. When in great distress, David committed himself and his cause to God very pleasantly, 2 Sam. xxv. 25, 26. He that suffers in a good cause, and hath a good conscience, may commit all his causes to God, and in the mercy of the Most High he shall not miscarry. But God will not accept the trust of a bad cause.

*Ver. 9. Which doeth great things, and unsearchable marvellous things without number.*

From this general assertion, Eliphaz, in a variety of particulars, shows, that God is infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness; and, therefore, we should seek unto God; and this contains the second argument to support his exhortation. He speaks of his power, 1st, In natural things, verse 10. 2d, In civil things,—in destroying the plots of the wicked, verse 12, 13, 14; in protecting the poor, verse 15; and in the end aimed at in these mighty works, verse 11; and by the future benefit of them, verse 16, is the goodness of God shown forth.

In this description of the great and marvellous works of God, Eliphaz intends, 1st, To prove what he had said, verse 6. 2d, To humble Job and silence his enquiries. 3d, To exhibit God as able to deliver him, seeing he had done such wonders, and thereby to comfort him.

*Which doeth*, notes not only a perfect but a continued act. Let us manifest our zeal for and love unto the Lord, by doing great things for him, as well as by expecting great things from him.

The causes and end of many of God's works are *unsearchable*; they are hid from us. We need not search to satisfy a vain curiosity; but we may search, with a view to honour, adore, and trust in God, and to reverence and submit to all his dispensations.

Things are marvellous whose cause cannot be found. And God has done so many marvellous things, that it may well be said they are *without number*. We at once provoke and dishonour the Lord, by imagining that he is not able to supply our need. Men soon weary of those that come often for favours. But our Lord says, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing."

Christ speaks with admiration: "O woman! great is thy faith." O that the people of this nation would make him say, O great is thy love, thy faith, repentance, and zeal! How glorious is thy reformation!

His pardons also are without number. He multiplies to pardon, Isaiah lv. The argument of Moses is truly admirable; it is not as is usual with men, "Lord, this is the first fault;" but it is, "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now." As if he had said, "Lord, because thou hast pardoned them so often, therefore, I beseech thee, pardon them now." It is a most wicked argument to sin because God will pardon often. But when we have sinned, it is a holy argument to move God to pardon again, because he has done it often before. Let us do great things for God, and good things for one another, without number.

*Ver. 10. Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields.*

Every shower of rain drops down this truth, "That God doth great things." By the rain, we are to understand all those supports of natural life which are fruits of rain. It is a great, wonderful, and unsearchable work of God to send rain. The fullest clouds distil no more than the rock in the wilderness, till the Lord speak to them, Jer. x. 13. It rains by appointment, Amos iv. 8. We ought to observe and own a special hand in giving it. "Can the heavens give rain?" Let this check our natural atheism, in looking only to the motion of the winds, or changes of the moon, for rain.

And since we must depend on God for natural blessings, how much more for spiritual? if for the rain of the clouds, how much more for the influences of the Spirit to accompany and make effectual the word on the heart.

*Ver. 11. To set up on high those that be low; that those who mourn may be exalted to safety.*

This is a hint to Job, That if he would seek unto, and commit his cause unto God, though he was now very low, yet he might soon be exalted to joy and safety. For the power, wisdom, and goodness of God are usually displayed in raising up the meek.

The low are either those that are low in their own eyes, or are made low by others. Grace is the cause of the former, and oppression of the latter. The former are humble, the latter are humbled. The Lord sets both these on high.

The Hebrew word for exalted implies safety; but it is added, to show that it is a full and perfect safety to which God exalts his mourners and oppressed servants, they that are low and mourning are nearest to exaltation and safety. God can and will raise his people beyond the reach of all enemies. But the wicked are also sometimes exalted. God exalts them to a high place though they know it not. But does he exalt them to a safe place? No. Psal. lxxiii. "Thou hast set them in slippery places." Though the people of God have many cruel and subtle enemies, yet they shall be exalted to safety.

For, *Ver. 12. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty; or he defeateth the purposes of the subtle.*

The crafty lay fine plots and projects, but the Lord breaks them; then they are defeated and disappointed.

*So their hands cannot perform their enterprise.* Every business requires invention and action; their crafty heads were at work before, now their hands are employed, what they devise craftily, they would act industriously; but they cannot accomplish it. It is a great and wonderful work of God to disappoint the devices, and stop the enterprise of crafty men. Craft prevails no farther and no longer on earth, than serves to accomplish the counsels of heaven, and fulfil what infinite wisdom hath devised; therefore when you see any devices of the crafty thrive, know that God is serving himself by them, and that they are but acting what his hand and counsel hath determined before to be done, Acts iv. 28. No sinful device of man ever did or ever shall prevail, beyond a contribution to the just and holy purpose of God. All their successes are disappointments, who intentionally oppose, though they really accomplish, the good pleasure and purpose of God. Thus we see their devices defeated; and now we shall see them entangled in their devices, and ruined in their enterprise; for

*Ver. 13. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*

The Hebrew imports a taking by force, and also by skill or stratagem. He binds them as with a chain; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh, &c. 1 Cor. iii. 19.

Their craftiness is the very means and instrument by which God apprehends them. No wisdom or craft of man, can stand before the wisdom and power of God. He turneth the counsels of wicked men against themselves.

Not only are their devices disappointed; *But the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.* The original word signifies to hasten, and thence to be precipitate, rash, or foolish in counsel.

They who will not take time to consult about what they do, may have time enough to repent of what they have done: and they who will not take the time and trouble to do what, upon deliberate investigation, they found proper to be done, lose all the time they took for such consultation.

There is a farther aggravation of the misery of crafty froward counsellors.

*Ver. 14. They meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon-day as in the night.*

They are puzzled to find out and discover those things, which are as clear as the light, or the darkness of trouble falls on them in the day of their prosperity.

To grope is the description of a blind man. His hand is instead of an eye to direct his way. It is a sore judgment not to see when there is light, when abused light is punished with want of sight, or when light is sent, and eyes taken away, Isa. vi. 9, 10. Mysteries are plain when the Lord opens, and the plainest things are mysteries when he shuts the eyes of our understandings.

Thus Eliphaz hath set forth the power and justice of God against crafty counsellors ; now he shows the opposite effect of his power and goodness.

*Ver. 15. But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty.*

These are God's poor, the wicked poor are no more under God's protection than wicked oppressors. The Hebrew for poor is from a root signifying desire, and poverty of spirit is pronounced blessed, because the poor in spirit are full of desires after spiritual riches. Both the civil poor man, and the spiritual poor soul, would fain be enriched ; therefore, for the oppression of the poor and the cry of the needy, the Lord arises, and he saves his poor from the slaying sword, the slandering tongue, the oppressing hand ; to be saved from all these destructions is complete salvation. Why is it said God saves the poor, when he will save all who fear him, high and low, rich and poor ? because the poor are most easily oppressed, and are usually most oppressed.

Thus Eliphaz hath shown the great, marvellous, and unsearchable works of God. 1st, To wicked crafty oppressors ; 2d, To poor helpless innocents. He shuts up this narration, showing the effect on the poor, namely, *hope* ; and, on the wicked, shame and confusion of face.

*Ver. 16. So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.*

This Hebrew word for *poor*, signifies empty of comforts, drawn dry. In allusion to ponds or rivers that surround forts or cities for defence, being drawn dry, Isa. xix. 6. and this explains Isa. xxxiii. 21. that the Lord will be a perpetual defence.

*So the poor hath hope.* The wonders which God doth is a ground of hope, and God's poor know that it is no vain thing to hope in God for good, even when health, wealth, and friends leave them ; Christ their hope will never leave them, and therefore they may live upon him for every promised blessing. Eliphaz doth not say, now they have liberty, prosperity, &c. but so they have hope, which is a better possession than all the great and good things of this world.

*Iniquity ;* for men of iniquity stop their own mouths ; that is, the wicked, seeing these wonderful works of God, have not a word to say, nor a counsel to give, against the godly ; or their mouths are stopped from shame, and they stand speechless at the marvellous works of God, Isa. lii. 15. Psal. cvii. 42.

The saints ought to live so holily, as to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

The wicked by unrighteous acts have stopped other men's mouths ; so God, by terrible things in righteousness, will stop their mouths.

*Ver. 17. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth.* This calls for attention and admiration. Truly it is a strange sight ; an afflicted man, a happy man, a bush burning and yet bearing fruit, the taste of which makes a heaven on earth. Happiness is the enjoyment of good equal to all our desires ; among all the notions and devices of happiness, no natural man would ever think of this in the text ; it is a paradox.

Some read, behold the blessedness of that man whom God corrects. Do not think that every afflicted man is happy ; many are at once corrected and miserable. Afflictions in themselves are grievous ; and if God did not correct our corrections, they would prove poison instead of medicine. It is not correction, but the presence and blessing of God in it and with it, which gives happiness.

When a man is in no danger of losing his soul nor his Saviour, he cannot be unhappy in the worst condition, much less under the correcting hand of his heavenly Father.

The word *correct*, signifies to reprove, convince or argue a man out of any error, by the force of reason or divine authority. The inference is, " Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."

*Despise*, signifies to reject or cast off a thing with loathing ; 2d, As useless and unprofitable ; 3d, As slighting it as unworthy of notice. As a good man will not despise the least comfort, so he will take notice of the least cross.

Despise not, &c. that is, highly to esteem the chastening of the Lord. We must put afflictions among our comforts, and rank them with our blessings.

*Chastening.* The original verb signifies to instruct. God mixes a rod with his word, and chastening with teaching ; and therefore it is sometimes used for teaching, and sometimes for chastening.

Chastening properly belongs to children, and hath a double aspect ; 1st, Upon our privilege and relation to God as our Father ; 2d, It views us as foolish unruly chil-

dren, and therefore we go almost all our days with a rod at our backs. And seeing he is the Almighty, possessed of power to accomplish all his purposes, all-sufficient to support under every trouble, the all-nourishing God to comfort and cherish his children; therefore they must not despise his chastenings.

*Ver. 18. For he maketh sore and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole.*

Here is God as a judge *wounding*, and as an all-sufficient friend binding up; as if the very act by which God smites had an influence upon the healing, and a tendency to restore his afflicted ones.

This verse shows why we should not despise the chastening of the Almighty. If you will not allow that a man is happy when he is sore, will you not allow that he is happy when bound up by such an hand? If you will not grant that a man is happy when wounded, you cannot deny that he is happy when thus healed. It is true of God, above all others, that one and the same hand smites and cures.

Observe, 1st, That when God wounds, it is preparatory to his healing his people.

2d, That however deep wounds God inflicts on his own servants, he never makes a wound too deep for his own cure; yea, he can heal the deepest wound which the malice and power of man can make.

Eliphaz speaks this in general; but he now addresses Job in particular; and, in prosecuting his argument, gives a promise of deliverance.

*Ver. 19. He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee.*

*To deliver*, notes the snatching of a man out of the hand of an enemy, out of the mouth of danger, out of every strait, which is the meaning of the word trouble here.

*In seven there shall no evil touch thee.* The evil of sin shall not pollute thee; thy trouble shall purge, not defile thee; and he shall preserve thee from the evil of punishment. To be kept from the evil of trouble, is a deliverance from trouble, even while we endure it. It is as if Eliphaz had said, I will descend to particulars, and reckon up the greatest outward evils that befall the sons of men or the children of God, and I affirm that the Lord will deliver thee.

*Ver. 20. In famine he shall redeem thee from death, and in war from the power of the sword.*

This may not only refer to a deliverance from famine, by a supply of provisions, but a rejoicing in God in the absence of earthly supplies; like Hab. iii. 17. who triumphs in God while he supposes the world starving; he sees and enjoys all things in God, though the world should afford nothing. That person is well fed and taught, who can rejoice while starving.

And in the second evil, war, when surrounded with instruments of death, in the hands of infuriated men, worse than wild beasts, God can put a covering on the head and protect those that trust in him. But though the servants of Christ should fall by these common calamities, yet he knows how to distinguish his children when sword and famine do not; and if they are not delivered from them they are delivered by them, and when overcome by one instrument of death they conquer all.

*Ver. 21. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.*

To detract, traduce, or slander, is the same to the credit of a man that a scourge is to the back. The tongue of an open slanderer is compared to an arrow by day, and to a serpent that comes behind, when it is done secretly.

It is said a bishop must be no striker; but the apostle could hardly think that sons of violence should be so much as admitted to a probation about that office, but it may signify striking with the tongue: therefore let not a bishop be a striker with his tongue in passion, much less in spleen or for self ends. "The tongue is a terrible engine." It is a sad thing when the people of God are wounded by the tongues of wicked men, but it is much worse when the people of God scourge one another. It is a great mercy to be preserved from the scourge of the tongue, Psal. xxxi. 20.; let all learn to bridle the tongue, for they that smite with the tongue shall perish with the tongue.

*Destruction* means a confluence of all kinds of evil meeting together; but when it comes thou shalt have this privilege, not to be afraid of it.

*Ver. 22. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh.* But is it not sinful to laugh at these? there is a sinful laughter which arises from unbelief, Gen. xviii. 12.; from

contempt and slighting of counsel, 2 Chron. xxx. 10. "But they laugh them to scorn."

Commendable laughter springs from faith, Gen. xvii. 17.; from holy courage and well-grounded confidence; from an assurance of shelter and protection from, or support under the greatest dangers, even in famine and destruction. This can only be obtained, by fixing on such a promise as Psal. xxxvii. 19. "They shall not be ashamed in the evil day, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." Hence the apostle says, "We glory in tribulations; and are more than conquerors;" and when speaking of the last enemy, he brings in the believing soul in a holy triumph, laughing at, and even jeering death, O death! where is thy sting? &c.

*Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.* Thou shalt not be afraid of the natural cruelty, the casual hurtfulness, or the judiciary rage of beasts, when sent by God to punish the beastliness of men. How it comes to pass that beasts of the earth hurt not godly men, is expressed in the next verse.

*Ver. 23. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field.* The promise was to be delivered from the fear of beasts, but to certify thee of it, God will not suffer so much as a stone to do thee hurt. God can do us good by any thing, and nothing can do us good without him; and God can produce our comforts out of impossibilities to nature; even when Stephen was killed by stones, he might be said to be in league with them,—God turned these stones into bread for him, and made every stone a glorious diamond in his crown of martyrdom.

*And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.* That is, by the power of God they shall be made peaceable to thee. This is the same in proportion with being in league with stones. It was the privilege of man by creation to have power over the beasts; and it is the ordinary privilege of every believer to be at peace with them, and the most flourishing state of the church is represented under this notion, Isa. xi. 6.

Observe, that every creature by sin is made dangerous and hurtful to man; but when God becomes our friend, he can quickly make all other things friendly to us; also he can make men who have as little sense as stones, and less reason than beasts, to be peaceful and useful to his people.

At ver. 19. we had a promise of deliverance even in six or seven troubles. From ver. 24—27. we have the result of all, an assurance of a fourfold blessing, every one confirmed as a truth in itself, and brought home to Job, ver. 27.

*Ver. 24. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace.* That is, thou shalt experimentally know that thy whole estate and family shall be in peace; that is, thou shalt neither be invaded by foreigners, nor have any insurrection in thy borders, nor any unkind contentions in thy family.

Peace in a large sense is opposed to any kind of trouble or adversity. It gives sweetness and beauty to all our blessings; without peace, riches are but golden thorns, honour is but higher misery, health but stronger afflictions: pure ordinances and a peaceable habitation are Jerusalem's perfection on earth.

Observe, 1st, That all outward blessings are in themselves but fading and perishing. 2d, To be assured of a mercy, is better than the enjoyment of it; he saith not only thou shalt have peace in thy tabernacle, but thou shalt know it.

To be delivered from perishing, is the first part of that great blessing we receive by Christ. The second consists in the conveyance of good to us, as pardon of sins, &c. But the third consists in our everlasting assurance to enjoy all this; this is the perfection of bliss.

*And thou shalt visit thy habitation, and not sin.* It is a greater mercy to be delivered from one sin than from sword and famine. Grace is better than peace, and holiness than abundance; riches, honour, and health, are all obscured in this one blessing, a holy humble heart.

Thou shalt, as a master, view and direct, and call to account thy family, and not sin, namely, by winking at the characters of any of thy domestics, and yet thou shalt have peace.

*Ver. 25. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth.*

It is supposed that Eliphaz aimed at the death of Job's children. Thy children perished miserably, but if thou wouldst return, that blessing should be restored; thy posterity should be as the grass for beauty and multitude. Neither grace nor blessings of any kind doth infallibly run in blood, yet the children of the godly have many pro-

mises made to them. As parents are afflicted in the afflictions of their children, so they are blessed in their joys. Relations share mutually in both comforts and crosses. A flourishing numerous family is a great outward blessing. But some have the choicest of blessings who want them. Sons and daughters are greatly prized, but they are not the best blessing. 'Thou shalt have a name and a place better than of sons and daughters.' Isaiah lvi. 3.

*Ver. 26. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.* This includes a willingness to die. Thou shalt not be hurried to thy grave as the foolish rich man was, Luke xii; and likewise the honour and solemnity of burying like Abijah. He only shall be buried with honour.

*In a full age,* may be to the utmost length of human life, or one that liveth long and comfortable like Moses, whose eye was not dim, &c. Though all good men do not live to grey hairs, yet it is an universal truth that they all die in a good old age; that is, their work is done, and they are ready for death; it is harvest time with them though cropt in the prime of life; they are not taken away till they are ripe: whereas a wicked man living an hundred years hath no full old age, much less a good old age; he is ripe for destruction, but never ripe for death. A happy death is the close of temporal, and the commencement of eternal happiness. 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.'

Eliphaz next calls upon Job to attend to the sum of all he had said.

*Ver. 27. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.* He asserts the truth of what he had spoken, *so it is*; then he asks Job to *hear it*. He began and now concludes in the plural. He supposes he had spoken agreeably to the mind of his two friends; we have not taken these things on trust, we have learned them by experience, after careful examination.

*Hear thou it,* that is, believe and obey. When God hears man he grants their requests, and when man hears God, he yields and obeys.

*And know thou it for thy good.* Hebrew, for thyself, that is, for thy profit. The great end of knowing is, that we may thereby become holy and obedient.

Observe, 1st, That truth deserves a most serious investigation; and, having found it by searching the Scriptures, and attending carefully to the book of providence, we may with confidence communicate it to others. 2d, That it is necessary to make particular application of general doctrinal truths, for we may know much without being led to a corresponding practice. 3d, That a godly man may make a profitable use of any truth of God; for all truths are intended to furnish the man of God for every good work. Eliphaz says, "Know thou it for thy good. If thou art a godly man, all the good things I have spoken belong to thee; all the delicious promises of the pardon of sin, the love of God, &c. yea, Christ himself, will be all in all to thee." But unbelievers are strangers to the promises; they know not a letter of scripture for their good; the very promises are threatenings to them. It is not enough to hear and know the truth, but we must improve it, and be made wiser and better by it; receive the impression of it, and submit to the commanding power of it; know it for thyself, that is, with application to thyself and thy own case; not only, this is true, but this is true concerning me. That which we thus hear and know for ourselves, we hear and know for our good, as the meat we digest we are nourished by, and that is indeed a good sermon that doth us good. The whole of this discourse is to convince and humble Job under the hand of God.

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## CHAPTER VI.

From ver. 1—7. is Job's reply, and is as if he had said, It is easy to say others complain too much when we feel nothing. But is it any wonder to hear a man groan who hath an oppressive load upon his back? or to hear a man complain whose flesh is filled with poisonous arrows shot from a bent bow drawn by omnipotency? Dost thou not see that all my comforts are taken from me, and if thou hadst duly considered my case, all thy reproofs might have been spared, and they may be justly retorted upon thyself?

*Ver. 1. But Job answered and said.* As a man ought to give a reason of the hope that is in him, so he should be able to produce a reason of his sorrowful complaints. Silence when we are charged either makes a full conviction, or strengthens suspicion. And if Job had held his peace, he had either confessed himself guilty, or caused his

friends more and more to suspect his sincerity. To right ourselves is not a matter of indifference but of duty.

*Ver. 2. O that my grief were thoroughly weighed.* Weighed so exactly as that there might be a clear discovery how heavy my sorrows really are, Job desires to be weighed in an even balance.

*And my calamity laid in the balances together.* It is our duty to weigh all the circumstances of our brother's affliction thoroughly, and put ourselves in the case of the afflicted, and thereby make another's grief our own. Until this is done, we should neither judge nor censure any person.

Observe, that no man who is not, or hath not been afflicted, can conceive what another suffers who is under affliction. Job seems to have thought that his friends had not duly considered his afflictions; for if they had he adds,

*Ver. 3. For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea.* Who can tell what that is in weight which is heavier than the heaviest? For although the sand of the sea were laid into one heap it would not be so heavy as my present distresses.

Hence observe afflictions are heavy burdens. The judgments of God are often called burdens. As man by sin burdens God, so God by affliction burdens man. Sins are heavy burdens to the godly. Job's pained body was a heavy affliction, but the distress in his mind seems to have been still greater.

*Therefore my words are swallowed up.* That is, I want words to express my grief; and not to be able to express our grief is a great aggravation and increase of it. Some afflictions exceed all complaints and are too big for expression. Someread, "Therefore my words are bitter, I feed upon gall and wormwood, and no wonder if my words taste of them."

*Ver. 4. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.*

Job compares his afflictions to an arrow for sharpness, and to an army for terrible-ness. Afflictions are like arrows, swift, sharp, secret, killing; they are called the *arrows of the Almighty*, because they are sent home to the mark with a force that shows that his arm bends and draws the bow; besides those shot into Job are compared to poisoned arrows which kill by infection. The word for terror signifies the most terrible affrightment, they are the same. The arrow is the affliction of itself, and the terror is the consequence of it. The providence of God observes a rule, and is harmonious even in those things that appear to us a heap of confusion. The word is applied to the marshalling of an army. So when Job says, the terrors of God are set in array, it intimates that God determined to afflict him by a regular attack.

Observe 1. When God by a multitude of afflictions appears as an enemy to his servants, they can hold out no longer. 2. These wounds make our hearts bleed most, which we apprehend are from his anger whom we have chosen as our only friend. The apostle, 2 Cor. v. 11, says, "knowing experimentally, or by faith, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." Oh take heed; provoke not the terrors of the Lord against you! The troubles and terrors which are upon the spirit far exceed all other distresses. Sinners, and secure ones, what will you do when God brings armies of terrors to charge upon you? Isaiah xxxiii. 14. "If those who have a shield of faith to keep off these arrows, and Christ for a refuge to flee unto, are thus afraid when these terrors are arrayed against them, what will become of you who have neither shield nor shelter?"

*Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder?*

This is as if Job had said, both wild and tame creatures are content when they have plenty of suitable food; and thereby owns that he would be more unreasonable than the brute beasts if he complained without sufficient reason.

Those who bray and low over their grass and fodder, discover the want of a gracious principle; for true grace will not bray or low even when there is no grass or fodder; spiritual enjoyments will make a good man put up with temporal inconveniencies.

*Ver. 6. Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt, or is there any taste in the white of an egg.*

Unsavoury refers to indiscreet speeches, which want the seasoning either of wit, wisdom, or truth, which gives a seasoning to words, as salt gives a relish to meat.

The white of an egg is an emblem of things without taste; and so the sum of all is, that Job said he had very insipid, tasteless things presented to him.

*Ver. 7. The things that my soul refused to touch, are as my sorrowful meat.* Some say the sorrowful meat is a representation of his afflictions from the hand of God. Others that they refer to the reproofs and counsels of his friends. I am made to feed upon that which I would not willingly come near, sores and sorrows are my compau-

ions ; or Job alleges that the speech of Eliphaz was misapplied and unsuitable. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Col. iv. 6. Not only with the salt of truth, but with wisdom and discretion, and therefore it is added, "that ye may know how to answer every man ;" that is, that what you say may be fitting his case and present condition.

Observe, that not only untrue, but also misapplied words, are unsavoury, and may be hurtful.

Job having defended his former complaint of life, and desire of death renews his request and enlarges his reasons for it.

*Ver. 8. O that I might have my request!* Hebrew, who would give me that my request? the word notes a strong desire and prayer. Christ uttered strong cries to be delivered from death, and Job sent up strong cries for death.

*And that God would grant me the thing that I long for.* From this it appears that Job was satisfied that his comforts should not end, though his life ended before his earthly comforts were restored, and thus he seems to answer Eliphaz who made great promises of outward felicity.

*Ver. 9. Even that it would please God to destroy me.* Some read, that he who hath begun, would make an end in destroying me. All on a sudden, some express a wish to die ; and hastily call for death ; but Job repeats his request ; *That he would let loose his hand and cut me off.* The word signifies to loose the bond.

Observe, That assurance of a better life will carry the soul through the bitterest pains of death with joy. We have no reason to think that stoical apathy begat this desire in Job ; but, like Paul, he knew that he had Christ while he lived, and should gain at his death ; this formed his request, and now he shows the effect.

*Ver. 10. Then should I yet have comfort, yea, I would harden myself in sorrow.* Notwithstanding my sorrows, the very hope that death is near could revive me. Job having taken up this hope that he would have comfort, says, let God do what he pleaseth.

*Let him not spare.* There is preventing and delivering mercy, and David, Psal. xxxix. prays for sparing mercy ; O spare me, &c. that is, abate and mitigate my sufferings that I die not ; but Job prays not to be spared at all.

*For I have not concealed the words of the Holy One,* either by my own silence, or imposing silence on others, or by any corrupt glosses, nor by corrupt practice or conversation. The lives of Christians should publish the word of life. The best way of preaching the word, is by practice ; that man speaks enough for his willingness to die, who lives speaking and doing the will of God ; and he is in a very miserable case who hath no other reason why he desires to die, but only because he is in misery. God is the holy One, all holiness is in God, and God is so holy, that properly he only is holy.

Observe, That true holiness consists in conformity to the nature of God, so believers are said to be partakers of the divine nature, and also in conformity to the will of God. From these passionate words, which had better been spared, let us

Observe, That we should soften ourselves in sorrow, that our hearts being made tender may be made better ; but if we harden ourselves, we provoke God to proceed in his controversy ; for *when he judgeth he will overcome.* And it is great presumption to dare the Almighty and to say, *Let him not spare.* We are much indebted to God for sparing mercy, and instead of despising, we should improve it.

*Ver. 11. What is my strength that I should hope?* or what is my strength that I should bear? but there is little difference, for hope is the support of the soul. It seems a reply to Eliphaz, do you think I have endured these afflictions in my own strength? surely I have prayed to God, and he hath held me up by his power. God loves to manifest what his strength can do in a weak creature, as well as what his grace and mercy can do for a sinful creature. I have no reason to expect to see such good days as you speak of; not that Job rested all his hope upon his own strength, for we find him resolving that he would trust or hope in God though he died, therefore he did hope while he lived ; but he here expresses his grief and pain, as an answer to the sour reproof and sweet promises of Eliphaz.

But *what is mine end, that I should prolong my life?* or my desire of life? what is the fag end or winter of a man's life, but clouds and darkness? or rather, what is my death, that I should desire to live? I know not what should make me afraid of the end of my life ; why then should I not desire death? and why should you be so angry with me for desiring it?



When the Psalmist describes the troubles and conflicts of a godly man, together with the flourishing outward pomp of the wicked, he concludes, "Mark the perfect, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." The lengthening of our days is the shortening of them, and all the time we live is but a passage unto, and should be a preparation for death.

*Ver. 12. Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass?* Those words may refer to the former part of ver. 11; "Am I made of such hard metal, that I am able to stand this trial? only stones can thus be trampled on, and brass thus hammered, without pain and dying. The spirit of a man, that is, his courage and resolution, is far stronger than his flesh; namely, his natural temper and constitution; and yet that cannot hold out for ever, *for the spirit should fail before me.*

*Ver. 13. Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?* Both this and the next verse is of very difficult construction and understanding: for there is no man that hath help in himself for any natural work, much less for any spiritual work, especially for a holy carriage under affliction, or to deliver himself out of it. Some read, "what though I have not help in me, is wisdom driven quite from me?"

Observe, That a godly man in the darkest night of affliction and sorrow, finds a light of holy wisdom to answer all the objections of his enemies, or the suspicions of his friends.

Do you think I have nothing to reply by way of apology for what I have spoken or done? It is true, my worldly comforts are quite driven from me, but it is a mercy that wisdom is not departed from me. I am afflicted, but you should not on that account suspect, but pity me.

*Ver. 14. To him that is afflicted, pity should be showed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.* The word signifies, him that is melted; to be afflicted and melted is the same, Psal. xxii. 15. *Pity* imports the strongest affections, and all kind offices done in love, in times of trouble, and in cases of extremity. Eliphaz having said, chap. iv. Is this thy fear, or where is thy religion? it is likely that Job retorts, Is this your religion to deal so harshly with a distressed friend? surely you have forsaken the fear of the Almighty.

Observe, That it is the common duty of friends, and the special duty of godly friends, to pity and help one another in affliction; and the fear of God is ever joined with love to our brethren, 1 John iv. 20. In affliction, the love of man to man is made most visible; a true friend can hardly be discovered in prosperity, and a false friend can hardly be hid in adversity. Job having charged his friends with unkindness, proceeds to illustrate it by a similitude, which he states, verse 15; explains, 16, 17, 18; confirms, verse 19, 20; applies, verse 21. The sum is, that Job had found his friends like those brooks that have least water when there is most need of it.

*Ver. 15. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away.*

It imports perfidious dealing of any kind. To pass away, signifies motion and consumption: so violent torrents come to nothing; their motion spends them.

Observe, that it is painful to be deceived by any; but to be deceived by a brother in the faith is worst of all. It is double unfaithfulness. Psal. lv. "To be reproached and wronged by my guide, &c. lies heavy upon my spirit."

*Ver. 16. Which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid.* Job compares those friends who administer no comfort in time of trouble, to brooks that overflow with water when we have no need of it; but in cold winter weather are locked up with frosts, or in summer are exhaled and dried up by the sun, as it follows.

*Ver. 17. What time they wax warm they vanish; when it is hot they are consumed out of their place.* When you saw them frozen, you might think them lasting streams, but at the next thaw they are consumed; as soon as heat comes they are dissolved, and soon become dry. Such friends I have, (might Job say,) and indeed such is the friendship of mankind, unless so far as influenced by divine grace, and delivered from its natural baseness.

*Ver. 18. The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing and perish.* That is, these streams are as if they had never been, the rain filled them, but having no spring to maintain them, the cold froze them, and the warmth of the sun emptied them. *Turned aside*, signifies to gather up or contract into a narrow compass. *They go to nothing*, &c.; an idol is expressed by the same word, 1 Sam. xii. 21; and the apostle, 1 Cor. viii. says "an idol is nothing in the world," and that which is useless, is as good as nothing.

*Ver. 19. The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them.*

Observe, That a probability of finding, is ground enough for seeking. A fig-tree having leaves, shows that it may have fruit growing, and the time of gathering figs not being past, were sufficient reasons for the Lord Christ to go and seek fruit upon it; for in this he acted according to the rules of human reason, not of divine omniscience.

None that seek the water of life, and wait upon Christ for it, shall be disappointed; for he is the living fountain, whose waters fail not.

*Ver. 20. They were confounded, because they had hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed.* They were ashamed, because they were disappointed; the word signifies to dig, that we may hide a thing. A man that is ashamed, cannot endure the pain of being seen. Jesus Christ shall so abundantly satisfy the desires, and so fully supply all the wants, of every believing soul, that it is expressed by this word, "Who-soever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. Hopes delayed trouble us, but hopes deceived confound and make us hide our heads.

Now we have the application of this similitude. In the delineation I have given of these inconstant and unfaithful streams of water, I give a representation of your conduct, O ye my friends, towards me.

*Ver. 21. For now ye are nothing; ye see my casting down, and are afraid.*

*Casting down* is from a word that signifies dejection and consternation of spirit. Ye see how all is broken and lost, and what is the help ye give me? ye are of no more use to me in the way of refreshing, than those deceitful streams were to the troops of Tema. Do ye supply me with comfort or counsel? no; ye are afraid to come nigh me, lest ye catch my distemper; and though ye have come to see me, yet ye are not moved with compassion, so as to give me any assistance.

Whatever complacency we may take, or whatever confidence we put in creatures, one time or other we shall say of them, *now ye are nothing*. Perhaps God suffers men to be unfaithful to one another, to teach all to trust in him alone, who only hath preserved this honour without a stain; never to forsake them who trust in him, however forlorn and miserable their condition may be.

Job having by an elegant similitude pointed out the unkindness of his friends, and the severe disappointment they had given him, now upbraids them, and appeals to themselves if he had asked any favours. He no doubt would be glad to see them, expecting their sympathy; but he says,

*Ver. 22. Did I say, bring unto me, or give a reward for me of your substance.* As if he had said, I have not requested any loan or contribution from you to compensate, or in the smallest degree to alleviate, the losses I have sustained. Although I might urge the total ruin of my estate, which is come upon me by the hand of God, and not by any fault or folly of mine; and that I was always ready to help any that was in distress.

A good man is very reluctant to give his friends any trouble on his account, even when his troubles are very great.

All that I expected from you was comfort and counsel, and that would not have put you to much expense; or if you could not have administered any comfort to me, yet you need not have added so largely to my sorrows, by charging me with impatience and hypocrisy. Or did I say,

*Ver. 23. Deliver me from the enemy's hand, or redeem me from the hand of the mighty?*

*To redeem*, signifies to bring back a thing by price or force. Did I desire you to levy an army, to recover or make reprisals on the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or to purchase from them what they had robbed from me?

If I had called upon you to assist in recovering my estate, then you might have supposed that the loss of it was the cause of my impatience. But Job's not seeking their aid, does not excuse them for not giving him that help they saw he needed, and they were able to afford. Even when we expect little from men, we may get less; but when we expect much from God, we have abundantly more than we can ask or think, Eph. iii. 20.

Job now professes his resolution to attend to what they had yet to say, and expresses his readiness to yield to conviction.

*Ver. 24. Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred.* Job promises silence, that he might hear and consider what

they should say to him. To be swift to hear, and slow to speak, is the best way to attain wisdom. That man is in a fair way to discover truth, that acknowledges he may err.

The word signifies to convince, by reason or argument, and whenever you, by plain instructions, make me to understand my error, I shall readily acknowledge my fault, and resolve to do so no more. It is the desire of every honest man to discover truth; and so soon as arguments used appear conclusive, however opposite to his former views, he embraces them as right and acceptable words.

*Ver. 25. How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?* Words are right in the matter, when they are true; in the manner, when they are plain; and in their use, when properly applied; and when these meet together, how forcible and strong are such words! Fair reasoning has a commanding power; but all that you have said, does not deserve the name of an argument.

Job having expressed willingness to hear what they had to say, and to yield to the force of any argument they might produce, proceeds to expostulate with them for making so light of what he had said.

*Ver. 26. Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind?*

The word for *imagine*, notes a very curious, exquisite, and elaborate invention of any thing. Job seems to refer to the opinion that his friends had of his words; do you think that your words are strong and full of reason, and that mine are but idle talk? Is it fair to take some of my passionate expressions as proofs of impiety? Should any man's state be judged by some hasty words, which a sudden and great affliction may extort from him? A small degree of charity would have made an excuse, at least it would have prevented such severe censures—you would not like to have been served so. He next states two things that aggravated their unkind treatment.

*Ver. 27. Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend.* Thus he sets forth their cruelty towards him in a very odious light. Orphans and fatherless are usually full of sorrows, and therefore to be left fatherless and to be comfortless are the same. In this large sense, Job says, ye overwhelm me, who am poor and desolate, without a friend to succour or sympathize with me.

The sin of oppression is greatly aggravated when it is practised upon the fatherless and helpless, who are not able to defend themselves. The more duty or respect we owe to any man, the greater is our sin when we neglect or contemn him.

You are not only unkind to me, but, under colour of friendship, you ensnare me; when you came to see me, I thought I might speak freely, and that the more bitter my complaints were, you would have the more readily sympathized with and tried to comfort me. And this freedom of speech which their apparent concern for him made him use, exposed him to their censures; and so they might be said to dig a pit for him. Job seems to suppose that his friends intended to cast him down into the pit of despair, by charging him with hypocrisy.

*Ver. 28. Now, therefore, be content to look upon me; for it is evident unto you if I lie.*

*To lie*, is to speak what is false, with intent to deceive, or to fail and come short of that which we have given others reason to expect from us. Truth is the daughter of time, and so is a lie; for time will bring to light that work of darkness.

I am not afraid to look you in the face; you shall read nothing in my countenance either of fear or falsehood. Integrity is very bold. Or rather, look upon my ulcers, and see that I do not lie; that is, that I do not complain without cause, nor quarrel with God, by calling my condition worse than it is; therefore do not turn away from me in disgust; let us have a little more discourse, and the truth will appear.

*Ver. 29. Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea, return again, my righteousness is in it.*

*Return*, that is, weigh the matter better; consider whether I speak not as one constrained to this seeming impatience from real sorrow, rather than professed hypocrisy.

Some translate *there shall not be iniquity*, that is, in my words, or in what I shall speak; so it is connected with *my righteousness is in it*; that is, that I am in the right, and free from blame in this business; *yea return again*. He doubles his advice, to show his earnest desire that they would coolly consider his case, and what he had yet to say in his own defence. Job doth not rail upon his friends, but beseeches them to be better advised; and, seeing we must give an account of every idle word, much more

of every unjust censure, it is necessary to give strict attention to what we have said ; for the more a good cause is searched into, the better it will appear. A godly man is not gilded, but gold : whereas an hypocrite may be gilded over with good words ; but search him to the bottom, and all is rottenness.

*My righteousness is in it*, that is, I am in the right in this matter ; and that, though I have not kept my temper as I ought, yet I keep my integrity, and have not said, or done, or suffered any thing, that will prove me not an honest man.

*Ver. 30. Is there iniquity in my tongue ? cannot my taste discern perverse things ?*

This concludes the directory to his friends, and is a preparatory to what he intends in the next chapter.

*Is there iniquity in my tongue ?* Have I spoken any thing that could infect or poison you, or dishonour God ?

The taste, or palate, is that faculty of the soul whereby we distinguish truth from falsehood. Here Job speaks of doctrines or actions. If a thing be perversely or properly spoken, cannot I taste it quickly ? Hence the word of God is compared to milk and strong meat ; that is, easy and more mysterious parts of truth. False doctrine, or true doctrine falsely applied, is a perverse thing ; it perverts reason, scripture, and the souls of men. Holy doctrine draws men to God, but that which is perverse in its nature is perverting in its effect.

*Is there iniquity in my tongue ?* This is an assertion, that there is no iniquity in my tongue, that is, none of that iniquity that you charge me with. The tongue often discovers the iniquity of the heart. Job perseveres in justifying himself against men, though he had not a word to plead for himself against God.

## CHAPTER VII.

Job, having refuted Eliphaz's arguments, and expostulated with his friends about their unkindness, and admonished them, proceeds to confirm his request to die : 1st, From the general condition of man's life, verse 1. 2dly, From the peculiar condition of some men, 3dly, From his own condition : from which he apprehends nothing but death could relieve him, verse 3—6. He turns to his former complaints, and abases himself before God ; and concludes confessing his sin, and desiring pardon.

*Ver. 1. Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth ? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling ?*

Heb. Is there not a *warfare* to man upon earth ? Our life is fitly compared to a warfare, on account of the travails, dangers, and either victory or triumph, or slavery and death, as the issue of our lives.

The life of man is a continual bickering with a world of enemies. Observe, That the life of man is measured out by the will of God. That man, Luke xii. is termed a fool, who resolved upon many years to live, and yet could not live till next morning. But this must not lessen our care to preserve our lives. As it is in spirituals, so also in temporals. Though only the elect are saved, yet none are saved by their election. Infants are not saved barely by election ; they must be united to Christ, or else they cannot be saved. But they who grow in years must also grow in the graces of sanctification, otherwise they are not saved by the grace of election. Since there is an appointed time, we should learn patiently to wait upon God ; willing to die at his call. As to disobey what God commands, so to be unwilling to live all the time God pleases, is equally sinful.

An hireling is one who works a certain time for a specified reward. This clause is much the same in sense with the former. He speaks of mankind in general ; of the master as well as the servant. His days are like the days of an hireling.

When I have so many evidences and symptoms of death before me, why should I not think the period of my life at hand, and desire that my days were summed up, and that I may see the end of these troubles ? And why shouldest thou, Eliphaz, try to prevent my complaint against my life, or my desire of death, by giving me hopes of many prosperous days in this world ? Or, pray mistake me not ; as if I thought the time appointed of God could be anticipated. No ; I know it cannot ; though I take the liberty, in such language, to express my present uneasiness.

*Ver. 2. As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work.*

The shadow means that which is most refreshing and desirable to a labourer. The same word signifies desire earnestly; and also to gape and draw in the air pantingly. Christ gives the character of the hireling, John x. His remark is the object he has in view. But he that works for Christ finds his reward in his work, and his eye is upon his work as a reward. Now, saith Job, as a servant earnestly desires the shadow, and the hireling waits for his wages at night, so, and for the same reason, I desire death.

*Ver. 3. For I am made to possess months of vanity.* The word signifies, to possess by inheritance; and notes also their continuance. *Months of vanity*; that is, his days were useless, and had been so a great while. They are empty moons, always in the wane, or ever in the eclipse. I am tired out with, and have no sensible benefit of, my troubles; my hopes are frustrate, and my expectations of relief disappointed. And *Wearisome nights are appointed unto me.* This seems to be as if Job had said, when the servant is weary with his work he can lie down at night and rest himself; but I, who am labouring in the heat of this affliction, and would be glad of some repose, yet the night is as troublesome to me as the day; and as the hireling receives his wages, so I would like to see the end and issue of my troubles; but my wages are nights of vanity, and my reward nights of trouble. It must very much increase the affliction of sickness and age to a good man, that he is thereby forced from his usefulness. He insists not so much that he hath no pleasure, as that they are days in which he doth no good. Observe, That sleep gives some intermission to the cares, and pains, and groans that afflict us; but poor Job could not gain this relief.

The next verse is a most exact description of a wearisome night.

*When I lie down, I say, when shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day.*

What a pitiful plight, to be so full of trouble and torture, and so tossed, as to have no rest night nor day; and what an addition to his affliction, as not to be able to obtain a nap in the morning!

Observe, It is common for a man in pain to look for relief from change of position, or even from change of time. Let us remember how distressing it is, through pain of body or agitation of mind, to lie all night telling the clock, and wishing for the day; and to be in this situation day after day, and no hope of recovery, is very trying. While we bless and thank God for good nights, let us pity and pray for all who are suffering adversity.

He goes on to show what a pitiful spectacle he was, and that it was no wonder he had restless nights and mournful days.

*Ver. 5. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken and become loathsome.*

Job is in his grave-clothes before he dies, and he accounts himself as good as dead; or, like Heman, *free among the dead*, a member of that corporation already; for he was now in that habit or livery, a gown of worms, set or embroidered with clods of dust. His worn out skin had many rents in it that needed mending, and he was so filthy as to need washing.

Seeing our bodies have in them the principles of corruption, and that they may soon become so loathsome, that we may wish to get rid of them, how foolish to pamper or be proud of them, and deck them with fine attire! He carries his complaint still farther.

*Ver. 6. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.*

The speed of the shuttle is proverbial for all things that are quick and transient. By his days here, we understand his days of comfort and prosperity; but now every hour seems a year, and the remembrance of former times aggravates my present distress. Job said, *My days are spent*; and, what is still more, my hope is spent; for I have no expectation of recovery from this disease. There are many hints of the quick invisible motion of time in this book, and this a point so universally known, that every man assents to it; but alas, very few believe it. Hence observe, that common truths neglected, are apt to lead us to make light of every truth. Since time once gone cannot be recovered, we should carefully improve it as it passes along. It moves along at an equal rate; though, according to the circumstances in which we are placed, it appears either tedious or quick.

It is true, that hope is the anchor of the soul, &c. and while hope holds, comfort continues; but even a godly man's hope may lie prostrate, and then all is gone.

Job having thus complained of his condition, and vindicated his desire of death,

now turns, from his friends, and betakes himself to God. The next words are generally understood as an apostrophe to God.

*Ver. 7. O remember that my life is wind ; mine eyes shall no more see good.* Here he turns to God, and speaks to him. If men will not hear us, God will ; and he can help when men cannot. He here represents himself to God as surely and speedily dying ; and I shall then be beyond the smart of earthly sorrows, and above the sense of earthly joys ; for mine eyes shall no more see good. When Hezekiah said, I shall not see the Lord, &c. he means, that he should not behold God in his great works or in his ordinances.

Observe, that God is usually the last, but always the best refuge. 2d. It is an argument moving the Lord to compassion, to mind him of the frailty of our condition. It is said, Deut. xxxii. 36, "The Lord shall repent himself for his servants ;" but when will he do so ? "when he seeth that their power is gone." &c., that is, when they have no strong place to defend themselves, and are ready to sink, then the Lord takes this both as an argument and season for him to change the way of his administration to them. 3d. That however good worldly things are, they will be of no use after death, therefore be so wise as to improve this time, which passes like a shuttle and a blast of wind ; to lay up such good things as your eyes shall see when you are laid in the grave, even such things as eye hath not seen.

*Ver. 8. The eye of him that seeth me, shall see me no more.* Death takes us from seeing, and from being seen ; as all the good we have seen will be hid from our eyes, so all our glory and excellency will be obscured from the eyes of others in the grave.

*Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not.* Lord, if thou defer but a little to help me, I shall be laid in the grave, and then help will be too late. Death sweeps all that appears of man into the grave ; the world shall no more enjoy him, nor he the world. This is what is meant by *I am not*, or man's not being. We must shortly go to converse with things that are not seen, that are eternal. Thou canst look me into eternity, and frown me into the grave when thou pleasest.

Should'st thou displeased give me a frowning look,  
I sink, I die, as if with lightning struck.—SIR R. BLACKMORE.

In the two following verses, Job explains the above by a similitude.

*Ver. 9. As the cloud is consumed and vanished away.* Hebrew, *It goeth or walketh away.* The sins of believers are compared to a cloud, and the consuming of them is similar to pardoning them, Isa. lxiv. The sins of natural men are as an abiding cloud ; but the sins of the saints are a vanishing cloud. Nothing can consume a cloud of guilt but the power of mercy, and a gale of love breathing through the covenant of grace. Man's life is like a vapour that vanisheth away.

*So he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more.* That is till the general resurrection. Dying is a work that is to be done but once, and therefore it has need to be well done ; happy, and only happy, are they that die in the Lord.

*Ver. 10. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.* For as the little hills are said to rejoice at the showers, so, when a man comes home, his house and all that he hath may be said to have a tongue to bid him welcome ; but when he dies, he shall return no more, and then his place shall know him, that is, receive him, no more.

From these two verses, observe, That the wind, the vapours, and the clouds, at once show forth the majesty and glory of God, and the meanness and insignificance of man. Out of the same text of the creature, we should learn the infinite wisdom and power of God, and the frailty and mortality of man. This consideration should excite us to adore and trust in God, and abase ourselves before him.

*Ver. 11. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.* As if Job had turned all his reason into will, and his will into passion, he repeats, *I will*, three times in this verse.

Since death, by the appointment of God, is the end of outward trouble, I will yet farther lay open my miseries before the Lord, and beg of him to hasten me through this land of sorrow, that I may see an end of these troubles, so I will take my fill of complaining. The word rendered complain, signifies to meditate, and implies a forming of what we would say in our thoughts ; prayer is expressed by the same word, because it is first formed in the heart. A pained body causes the soul to complain, but instead of relief, he usually gets a fresh wound, who is either too loud or too long in

his complaints, as it is too evident Job was, notwithstanding his great distress. It is better to die praying and praising, than quarrelling and complaining.

*Ver. 12. Am I a sea or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?* Job seems to allege, that God was dealing with him in a way not common to man, but as if he needed to be restrained, or tamed, like the boisterous ocean, or outrageous whale.

The word watch, signifies to guard a thing so narrowly, as that it can neither escape nor do hurt; in Psal. xxxix. the same word is used for setting a watch on the tongue. There is great need to set a watch, and also to pray to God to set a watch on it to prevent us from swallowing our neighbour's good name, or injuring ourselves by it.

Some render, *Am I a sea or a whale, that thou shouldest inclose me in a prison?* As man is compared to a sea for boundless desires, constant motion, &c. so for casting up mire, every wind of temptation stirs up the filthiness of the heart.

Our fretting and repining under the afflictions he appoints us, shows that we think there is no occasion for them; whereas we are never in heaviness, but there is a need for it in the sight of God.

*Ver. 13. When I say my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint.*

The word for comfort, signifies also to mourn and repent; because godly sorrow precedes true comfort. There is a special promise to the sick, or rather to him that considers the poor, Psal. xli. "God will make his bed easy and comfortable in his sickness." Common mercies are to some special blessings. As some enjoy riches and honour by common providence, while others have them by a particular and special promise, and so it is with sleep. The bed is said to comfort, because it is well calculated to recruit and refresh the languishing. But from hence observe, that the most proper means cannot give either ease or comfort of themselves; it is only the blessing of God along with the best means that can render them beneficial. So we see that Job had neither comfort in his bed, nor ease in his couch; for,

*Ver. 14. Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions.*

*Scarest* is often rendered contrite, which implies breaking of the heart by godly sorrow. So I am, as it were bruised, and broken by dreams; for if I have any sleep, it is so far from refreshing, that I am terrified through visions. An image or similitude is always represented to, or formed in, the fancy, or it cannot be a dream. Our sleeping, as well as our waking times, are in the hand of God; so without leave, Satan cannot disturb by night or by day. Let us pray to God, that we may neither be defiled nor disquieted by dreams. God can easily make that our punishment which has often been our sin, as by the roving of an unsanctified fancy we often contract guilt. Let us seek refreshing sleep from God, and bless him when he bestows it. What awful impressions dreams and visions made on Job's mind, is apparent from

*Ver. 15. So that my soul chooseth strangling and death, rather than my life.* Job gets more and more immoderate in wishing for relief from his present distress; so that he would prefer a violent death to his life. But surely this is his infirmity; yet he still perseveres in the same style.

*Ver. 16. I loathe it; I would not live alway; let me alone, for my days are vanity.*

To *loathe*, signifies the greatest aversion possible. And what a man loathes he longs to be rid of; and trouble makes a little time seem long.

*Let me alone.* Deliver me from this woful condition, either by a recovery or by cutting me off: *for my days are vanity*; that is, they are inconstant, unsatisfying, and disappoints our expectations. Let us, therefore, set our affections on things above, which indeed like this world promiseth much, but is very different as to performance: for it will far exceed the promise, and go infinitely beyond the highest expectation of the believer. It is said, Christ shall come to be admired of his saints; the enjoyments shall go so far beyond their apprehension, that they will be swallowed up in admiration; and there is a something in the joy and peace in believing, that will make every soul who has experience of it to say, *I would not live alway*; and though he would choose death rather than sin, as the martyrs did, yet he will not chuse it rather than life, but be content to live as long as God pleases; because life is our opportunity of glorifying God, and preparing for glory.

Job proceeds to reason with God concerning man in general.

*Ver. 17. What is man that thou shouldest magnify him?* The question implies a low estimation of man, and a wonder that God should regard him, and even magnify him, by taking such notice of him as to correct him.

All the victories of Joshua and David have not rendered them so famous as this conflict hath done Job ; his afflictions have magnified him more than all his other greatness, he would never have been heard of as the greatest man of the east. Hence observe, that God magnifies his people as well as glorifies himself by correcting them, and so makes their afflictions work for them an exceeding weight of glory.

*And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?* That thou shouldest honour, show kindness to, and take such notice of him, so as to rebuke and chasten him because thou lovest him.

There is Psal. lxii. a caution against setting the heart on riches when they increase ; that is, neither to desire to have more, nor to love them, so as to be loth to part with what we have. He is the truly rich man, who has his affections set on Christ and divine things, and who is ready to use his wealth and influence in his service.

Here follows two things, more connected with the question, What is man ?

*Ver. 18. And that thou shouldest visit him every morning and try him every moment?*

*To visit*, signifies to show mercy, refresh, deliver, &c. God is as careful to correct as to feed his children : if they are watchful over their ways and the dealings of God with them, they will find, that as sure as the sun riseth, they will find some rod of affliction upon them every day. Afflictions are God's searchers ; and by them he calls upon us to search and try ourselves and our ways, and turn unto him.

What is man, that thou shouldest try him every moment ? God perseveres in his work till he accomplish his purpose ; he sends a variety of adversity and prosperity, to prove and try, to know all that is in the heart, whether they will keep his commandments or not.

The account that God gives of man, that he is grass, vanity, a lie, &c. is calculated and designed to humble him ; yet man flatters himself, and they flatter one another, which renders new experiments necessary every moment to try and humble him.

*Ver. 19. How long wilt thou not depart from me?* wilt thou not yet rebuke the rod, or at least mitigate my affliction? Some translate, How long dost thou not spare me? and the next clause favours this view of it.

*Let me alone till I swallow down my spittle ;* the word signifies to loose or untie that which is bound or straitened, and so to deal more gently and tenderly than before ; the word is used, Josh. i. 5. "I will never leave thee, or let thee loose from me." Job's desire is, that God would loosen the bands of his affliction, and release him from his trouble ; O let me have a little intermission, that I may have as much respite as to be able to swallow my spittle.

Observe, that since afflictions that are only for trial are so grievous, what must those be that are penal and proceed from wrath? 2d. That a conviction of having neglected to improve the gracious presence of God for our sanctification, adds greatly to our pain in any trouble, and should lead us out to a hearty confession of our folly.

*Ver. 20. I have sinned.* As affliction brings sin to remembrance, so a sense of sin should prevent our fretting under afflictions, and it is a proper season to confess our sins : but this of Job's was only a general confession, and is that sufficient? Answer, It may be a sound one. It is one thing not to express particular sins, and another thing purposely to conceal them. Good and bad men speak often the same good words, but from very different principles, such as, 1st, A saint confesses freely, but it is extorted from a wicked man. 2d. He confesses feelingly ; he tastes the bitterness of sin while he confesses : whereas it is the fear of punishment that makes a natural man feel. 3d, A good man confesses sincerely, and is in earnest both with God and his soul. The other casts out his sin as seamen do their goods in a storm, which they would wish back whenever it is over. 4th, A believer mixes faith with his sorrows in his confessions, which no other man ever did.

Observe, 1st, That the holiest man has cause to continue confessing his sin. While the ship leaks, the pump must not stand still. 2d, As the very best are in danger of being lifted up above measure, they have cause daily to engage in the soul-humbling duty of confession. 3d, Every confession of sin is a fresh obligation to do so no more, and as it gives the soul a taste of the bitterness of sin, so of the sweetness of forgiveness through Christ. 4th, Confession of sin exalts Christ in our hearts and affections ; for we thereby declare our belief of the riches of Christ, and his ability and willingness to take away our sins, and this at once encourages us to confess our enormous load of debt, and increases our love to him who gave his life a ransom for us ; and how doth



it commend the healing virtue of his blood, when we open to him such mortal wounds and diseases, which he only and easily can cure. Lastly, Confession of sin gives glory to every attribute of God, as it owns a debt and our inability to make payment; and all that we enjoy or ever shall receive, must run us deeper in debt to free grace. *What shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?* I can neither escape from, nor satisfy thy justice.

Observe, That the holiest man cannot atone for one sin, by either sufferings or obedience. All that he can do is imperfect and defiled, and besides, it was a debt before; neither has God any where appointed man's righteousness to be a satisfaction for his sins.

Observe 2d, That pardon and forgiveness of sin, must come in at the door of free grace. A good work trusted to, is as destructive as sin unrepented of. None but God has either power, patience, or wisdom, to be the preserver of foolish, helpless, erring man.

*Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee?* It is reasonable to inquire the cause why the Lord smites, and it may be profitable to know. If saints knew what good God intends them by their afflictions, it would enable them to bear them, not only with patience, but with joy.

*I am a burden to myself.* The removing of health and other comforts, as well as fears, cares, and pains, are burdens that oppress the spirit. Happy those who obey God's call, and cast them all on the Lord. But a believer can bear all the changes and assaults of creatures with comparative ease, till he apprehends that God is against him, and views him opposing and wounding him through the creatures. Then he feels a weight which is too heavy for the strongest saint to bear; and when this is accompanied with a fear that his sins are not pardoned, it adds an intolerable weight to all his other burdens. Job seems to point to this with the last words of this answer, as he earnestly begs for pardon.

*Ver. 21. And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? &c.* Job, having confessed his sin, and inquired of the Lord a reason of his continued sorrows, now applies for pardon of his sins, and of course for the removal of his afflictions, and he desires an answer to his suit speedily, lest help come too late: for he cannot hold out long, he must soon make his bed in the grave, and then being sought for, he shall not be found. The Septuagint reads it, "Why dost thou not forget my transgressions? but it generally imports the *lifting up* that which lies heavy upon us, and because pardon is the lifting off of sin, therefore it is often put for the act of pardoning. The word for *take away*, signifies to pass away, or to pass by; and *transgression* notes a violation of the commands of God with a high hand, or a rebellion of the mind, when pride of spirit shews itself. *Iniquity* denotes sin when committed from a crooked purpose.

*God only can pardon sin.* When the name of the Lord is proclaimed, Exod. xxxiv. —forgiving iniquity and transgression; and sin is mentioned last, to show that none can pardon, but he who is invested with all those glorious titles; and, therefore, God only can forgive sin. The greatest sins fall within the compass of God's pardoning mercy, and when sin is pardoned, the punishment is remitted. Though corruption is mortified, and the actings of it abated in pardoned persons; yet, properly speaking, pardon only takes away guilt, which is the obligation to punishment, and thereby punishment is taken away too. The pardoned sinner in God's account, is as if he had never sinned; yet he must continue praying for pardon. Nathan told David, that "God hath put away thy sin," yet David, Psal. li. prays, (O how earnestly!) for pardon again and again. Christ knew that his sheep should continue for ever, &c. yet how abundantly doth he pray that they may be kept from evil, John xvii. 15. 'I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.

*For now shall I sleep in the dust.* Only he who hath his treasure and his heart in heaven, can comfortably think of laying down his head in the dust. Job complains of restless nights; yet he could think of a time when he should lie quietly in his bed, and not have so much as a waking moment or distracting dream, till the morning of the resurrection.

*Thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.* This is a reinforcement of what he said, verses 7, 8; here he speaks the same thing in a variety of words. The severity of my sickness threatens to prevent thy earliest preparations for my relief.

Lord, pardon my sins, and give me the comfort of that pardon, and then I will easily bear my afflictions. Matt. ix. 2, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;" Isa. xxxiii. 24, "The inhabitant shall not say I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity. Whenever God removes the guilt of sin, it breaks the power of sin. If my sins be not pardoned while I live, I am lost and undone for ever. The consideration that we must shortly die, and may die suddenly, should make us very desirous, not only for our sins pardoned and our iniquities taken away, but for the comfortable sense of it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, &c.* Job having endeavoured to vindicate himself from Eliphaz's rash charge of hypocrisy, is next attacked by Bildad for having impugned the justice of God; and, by threatenings and promises, excites him to repentance.

He 1st, censures all that Job had spoken, verse 2. 2dly, He proposes a question concerning the justice of God, verse 3. 3dly, By the example of Job's children, and his own present condition, and the probability of his deliverance, he asserts the equity of God, verse 4—8; and, from the testimony of antiquity, he draws another argument, verse 8—10; and a third argument from similitudes, *first*, of a rush, verse 11—13; 2d, of a spider's web, verses 14, 15; 3d, of a flourishing tree, but soon plucked up.

He then sets forth the favour of God to the faithful and sincere, and proclaims the goodness of God to sinners, and even hypocrites, when they truly humble themselves and repent before him.

*Ver. 2. How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?* Thus Bildad undervalues what Job had said, as if it was so contemptible as to be a trouble to hear it, and perhaps in allusion to what Job had said, chap. vi. 26. He speaks of his words as a strong wind, a tempestuous dangerous wind. The wind of words blows both good and evil to the world.

Observe, That reproofs are often founded upon mistakes. Bildad clothes Job's speech in a sense that he abhorred, and then censures accordingly. Bildad prefers a special charge against Job; and to give it the greater emphasis, and a strong negation, he turns it into a question.

*Ver. 3. Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?* Far be it from him that he should, and from us that we should suspect him. The Lord God is most exact in judgment; he is righteous in all his ways, though his ways are past finding out. He proceeds by the evidence of the law as well as by the fact, and is as ready to acquit the innocent as to condemn the guilty.

*Ver. 4. If thy children have sinned against him, and he hath cast them away for their transgression.* Job would acknowledge that God could not pervert judgment, but he would not admit that therefore his children were cast away and perished, on account of some great transgression. As both parents and children are transgressors, they should justify God under every affliction. For although every sin cries for vengeance till either God put the sinner into the hands of sin, that he may at once receive pay for and from his own folly, or he receives forgiveness through the blood of Christ; yet extraordinary suffering is not always on account of heinous transgressions, but for the discovery and trial of grace.

Having, in an indirect way, advised Job to take warning by the fate of his children, he now admonishes him to apply to God by prayer.

*Ver. 5. If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty.* This is as if Bildad had said, Plead not thine own integrity, but cast thyself at the feet of mercy, not only as a beggar but as a rebel who has exposed thyself to the just displeasure of God. Seek unto him diligently, and without delay. Though he is found of some who sought him not, yet we never read of any finding him who sought him negligently. As the judgments of God on children are a correction to the parents, so they should humble themselves under each other's afflictions. As our sinfulness cannot prevent, so our obedience cannot procure, the mercy of God. In all our duties we should lie in the dust, and lay our best services in the dust. A thought of our own worth is inconsistent with a supplication.

*Ver. 6. If thou wert pure and upright.* Purity refers to holiness of life, and uprightness to inward sincerity. None but holy persons can perform holy duties; so the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. But fervency effects nothing unless the person praying be righteous.

It is no way contrary to the doctrine of free grace to say, we must be holy if we desire and expect to be heard. To make supplication to God with a reserve to go on in sin is awful impudence. Bildad seems to mean, *If thou wert pure in thy ways, and sincere in thy ends, surely now he would awake for thee.* It signifies both to awake and arise. God's providential sleeping and waking are the steps and visible motions of his power, mercy, and justice in the world. This teaches us that prayer is the best mean to awaken, and that it shall certainly be heard. And O how quietly and confidently may they sleep, for whom God wakes. They are secure and happy; for *he will make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.* Prosperity is in the hand of God, and a righteous habitation shall be prosperous. When kingdoms are holy habitations, they will soon be quiet ones. Nations may be said to be habitations of righteousness when right is done without delay, and with impartiality. No notice must be taken of the persons but of the cause; and unnecessary and designed delays are great injustice.

Righteousness cannot act without a rule, and the best of rules, without good magistrates to execute them, can never make a habitation of righteousness. Bildad next encourages Job.

*Ver. 7. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.* This is the third gradation. God will not only awake for thee, and give prosperity, but will greatly increase thee.

Observe, That though the Lord is able to deliver at once, yet he usually raises his people by degrees. When God makes some little repairs of outward comforts, do not despise them, but receive them as beginnings of greater things to follow. Remember Elijah's little cloud; and when the day breaks we know that high noon will come in due time, and so wait patiently for it.

Bildad proceeds to a second general argument, by an appeal to the ancients.

*Ver. 8. For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers.*

*The former age* may include all time past. The fathers were dead, but they lived in their traditions and monuments. These he must search. It is in vain to expect to find truth but by careful and persevering investigation. And, 1st, In the exercise of humility a lowly mind is prepared to know the mind of God. 2d, By a holy submission to the truth, and yielding obedience to it, so far as we know, is a good means of preparing for the further reception of it. And, 3d, We must search for truth with a genuine love to it; and we ought, 4th, To add to all these earnest and believing prayer, Jas. i. 5. "Let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally."

*Ver. 9. For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing; our days upon earth are a shadow.* It well becomes us to have humble thoughts of our own knowledge. The frailty as well as the shortness of our lives, but especially our misimprovement of our time, is the great cause of our ignorance of divine things. Our life here is but a fleeting shadow, and O how foolish is it to spend our few days of uncertain duration in the pursuit of the vanities of this world, to the neglect of the study of that knowledge and enjoyments that will last for ever.

*Ver. 10. Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?* This is as if he had said, thou shalt not lose thy labour; they will not speak rashly and indiscreetly as thou hast done. But from their heart they speak things of weight. And while we seriously consider what they have said and done, it is as if they now spake. Heb. xi. 4. "Being dead, he yet speaketh." It is said, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. But much more may we say, we have Christ and his apostles, whom we ought to consult and obey in all things. Truth is not only a revelation from, but of God, and therefore we should manifest our high estimation of, and desire after more acquaintance with it, by laying it up in our hearts, and living under its influence.

*Ver. 11. Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow up without water?* They cannot. The rush can no more grow without mire, nor the flag without water, than a man can live without food. They must quickly wither, as Bildad says plainly.

*Ver. 12. While it is yet in his greenness,* which implies his beauty and strength.

*And not cut down*, that is, before it is cropt or is fully ripe. *It withereth before any other herb*, that is, more speedily than any herb of less show, but better rooted. Bildad applies his similitude.

*Ver. 13. So are the paths of all that forget God.* Our actions are compared to a path because of their frequency, and they lead to a certain end; some to life, and others to death.

God is not in all the thoughts of a wicked man to obey or honour him, neither is he in the thoughts of God, to bless or pardon him. To forget God is to neglect to think of him. To despise and disobey his commands, and depart from him. It is to live on earth as if there were no God, either in regard of mercy to be received, or of duty to be performed.

Observe, 1st, That to forget God is a heinous sin, and the cause of all other sins. Whether is it the greatest wonder, that God should mind us at all, or that we should be unmindful of God? 2d, That all that forget God, however flourishing they appear as to profession or talk about religion, shall quickly wither; for neither grace nor comforts can exist but in fellowship with Christ, the fountain of life.

*And the hypocrite's hope shall perish.* The word hypocrite comes from a root that signifies close and covered, and, by a metaphor, polluted, &c. So, in a large sense, all are hypocrites who try to hide their sins. But properly a hypocrite is one who has God and heaven in his mouth, while he loves the world in his heart, and in secret can commit any species of wickedness.

Observe, That though hypocrites may deceive themselves with false hopes till death, they will then be awfully disappointed.

*Ver. 14. Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.* Hope and trust are often taken promiscuously. There is a gradual but not an essential difference between them. The word signifies a very quiet secure trust; and, where it is genuine, it has a double effect.

1st, It confirms and strengthens the heart against all opposition; and, 2dly, It encourages and supports against all dangers, and the want of these discovers the falseness of the hypocrite's hope and trust. Trust brings God and the soul together; but the hypocrite never comes near God; and no marvel that he is afraid to come near danger. Why is the trust of the hypocrite compared to a spider's web or house? Because the profession and all the labours of an hypocrite are weak and unstable, and shall perish like the spider's web. Besides, it is a snare to catch flies, and so is his profession; for he would count godliness a poor thing if he did not make a gain of it; and having put on the cloak of a profession, he thinks himself safe in it, like the spider in his web.

*Ver. 15. He shall lean upon his house.* The wealth of the world, and the favour of the men of the world, may be a hypocrite's support, yet I think Bildad rather means, that a hypocrite leans upon his spiritual gifts, duties, and supposed graces. Upon all these, and out of these he builds, and thinks he hath made an house that will stand for ever. These three bear witness to the hypocrite, and they agree in one to deceive. He having a witness within himself, a certificate under the hand of Satan, and commendatory letters from the world, all which give hope that his house shall stand for ever. But behold the issue. *It shall not stand.* All the objects of hope and trust shall deceive and disappoint the hypocrite at last.

When we depend upon any duty, we give the honour to ordinances that is due to God alone. We can derive no more benefit from such trust to ordinances than by the neglect of them.

Nothing is of sufficient strength for us to stay upon but the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. The next clause is of the same import.

*He shall take hold of it, but it shall not endure.* It is our glory to hold fast integrity, yea, and duties, in point of practice and obedience; but it is our sin, and very dangerous to hold them fast in reliance and confidence. His worldly and spiritual house that he thinks is established, shall pass away as a shadow, and disappoint his hopes. *It shall not endure.*

In verses 16 to 19, Bildad farther illustrates the condition of an hypocrite by a third similitude. It is as if he had said, If I have debased the hypocrite by comparing him to a rush or flag, and his estate to a spider's web, then let us compare him to a flourishing tree fastening his roots and spreading his branches. Yet at last he shall be cut down and wither.

*Ver. 16. He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden.* The ordinary heat of the sun signifies prosperity, the extreme heat of the sun persecution. So the meaning may be, that before persecution and trouble arise he is green and flourishing, and appears very beautiful and gay.

He lives as in a paradise, so the word is translated, Gen. xxviii. While hypocrites flourish outwardly, they continue to rebel against the light which would keep them from sin. But they love the light which shows any good they do; whereas the upright are more desirous of being good, and doing good, than of making it appear that they are so. Not only does the hypocrite shoot forth his branches, but,

*Ver. 17. His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones.* He lives, converses, or dwells even where there seems to be the least probability of his stay; for he abides in the place or house of stones. Another sense is, he looks into the house of stones; he annoys his master's house at the foundation, and hinders the light of the windows. The state of the hypocrite, thus settled and made firm, is but tottering. It will not be able to stand.

*Ver. 18. If he destroy him from his place,* which Broughton translates, 'If the sun root him up from his place.' The sun, which for a time makes a tree to flourish, may at last so search it that it dies. So when God comes to remove an hypocrite, there is an end of him quickly.

*It shall deny him, saying, I have not seen him.* The meaning may be given thus, that a tree highly grown, &c. may be so cut up that it shall not be known where it stood. So, though a hypocrite may flourish for a while, yet at last he shall be swept so clean away, that his name and memory shall be forgotten. Whence observe, that the memory of wicked men shall perish for ever, and that destruction often comes upon them in the very height of their prosperity.

Bildad having laid the hypocrite so low that no man will own him, concludes,

*Ver. 19. Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow.* Those joys that arise from outward things, or from a man's good opinion of himself, is but for a moment. When you cast up all the comfort and happiness of the flourishing tree of the hypocrite, it only comes to this, that he is to be rooted up, and by such as he neither feared nor suspected, and those that knew him before will not so much as own him. Whereas the sincere and upright, who have been trodden down as the mire of the streets by the wicked in this world, shall grow up. It is truly awful to live expecting joy from a hope that shall perish, and that others should still grow up indulging the same hope, notwithstanding that so many have been disappointed by it. Happy they who have a well-grounded hope of which they shall never be ashamed.

Bildad now concludes in a vindication of the justice of God.

*Ver. 20. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man;* that is, the Lord doth highly esteem and prize a righteous man. God calls after many who flee from him, but he casts off none that come to him. As none come till he draws them, it is certain he will not drive any away who come to him in his Son; who have the spirit, and are joined to him in a perpetual covenant; and they cleave to and follow hard after God and his truths, &c. Let them beware of casting away their confidence, or being indifferent to the concerns of God's glory.

*Neither will he help the evil-doers.* Some read, he will not put forth his hand to evil doers; that is, he will have no fellowship nor familiarity with them. He will not receive a gift or offering from them. God is not a patron or aider of evil doers. As man's duty ought not to stop in negatives, neither doth the mercy of God. He bestows positive blessings.

*Ver. 21. Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing.* But is it not said, "Wo to them that laugh?" It is true that laughter that arises from worldly riches, honours, and carnal pleasures, as such hath a wo annexed to it. But to express ourselves joyfully when God works any deliverance, or bestows any favours upon us, is not only comely but holy. In the second Psalm God is said to laugh at the proud opposers of his truth and people. And though they may not insult any in misery, yet his people laugh at the disappointments of those who have derided God's truths, and scorned his people, when they see the vengeance of God poured out on them. This is no ordinary joy; it is a triumphant joy, which is the peculiar portion of a godly man. "My servants shall rejoice, and ye shall be ashamed."

*Ver. 22. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame.* Natural men are such haters of holiness, that they not only hate God and the saints, but even hypocrites;

for they cannot endure a man so far as he appears religious. Shame is the fruit of sin. To be clothed with it is a great punishment, and most proper for such as are proud of their clothing. Shame is opposite to laughing.

*And the dwelling-place of the wicked shall come to nought.* Dwelling-place is tabernacle in Hebrew, and means his whole estate shall be brought to nought. Some say tabernacle notes their religious duties. Wicked men will serve God outwardly; they have their tabernacles as well as the saints; they pray and hear, &c.; but whether it is a civil or religious tabernacle, down it must come; both their riches and religion shall come to nought. Thus Bildad advises Job to think aright of the justice and judgment of God; to humble himself and seek unto God; and to forbear complaining of his troubles, or desiring the end of them by death.

In answer to his reproof or advice, Job replies in chap. ix. and x.

## CHAPTER IX.

*Ver. 1, 2. Then Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?* Bildad had said, Doth God pervert judgment? No, saith Job. He hath not a word to say against the truth of God. We should cheerfully acquiesce in any truth, even when spoken by those whose errors are such that we must zealously oppose them, and this is very becoming in a champion for truth. God is just not only when he punishes the guilty, but even when he afflicts the innocent. It is no way inconsistent to admit the justice of God, and maintain our own innocence, when we smart under his rod. The argument of Job's friends is, God is righteous; for he deals with men according to their deserts. But Job asserts that however he deals with men he is righteous. All must acknowledge that there is no sin at all in God, and that we have no goodness at all in us. Though the saints are said to be partakers of the divine nature, yet they cannot bear a comparison with the perfections of God.

*Ver. 3. If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.* In this Job asserts that no man can be just before God by inherent righteousness. No man can be justified by his works. He that mixeth but one sin with a thousand good actions cannot be justified by his works. How then shall he be justified by works who hath not one perfectly good action amongst a thousand sins? Should man contend with his own heart, that will condemn him; man cannot stand before the tribunal of conscience. How much less can he answer God. Yet man is naturally prone to contend with God, not only in quarrelling with the dispensations of his providence, but at his sovereignty in his method of saving sinners, and in the rule of their obedience.

*Ver. 4. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?* Having asserted the wisdom and power of God, he challengeth all the world, as if he had said, Do ye think I have any thoughts to contend with God? No; I know not one who hath accepted this challenge, or hardened himself against God and prospered. He both knows how to do right, and has power to do it; and, therefore, needs not pervert judgment for fear of man; and there is no turning him out of the paths of justice. A hard heart is the worst of all judgments, and it brings all judgments upon us. Prov. xxix. 1. "He that hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed." It is certain ruin to contend with God.

Observe, that God is infinitely wise and powerful. The power of God being as large as his will; he doth whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven and earth. If the power of men were equal to their wills, what work would they quickly make in this world!

*Ver. 5. Which removeth the mountains, and they know not; and overthroweth them in his anger.* This is one proof of Job's assertion, and shows that the greatest things are done by God's almighty power, whether it is taken literally or figuratively; and he does them with the greatest speed and secrecy. How often are the rich and mighty cast down before they see any hand touching them. Let us beware of security and stupidity. If the moving and shaking of our mountains do not awaken us, it forbodes destruction; for "he overturneth them in his anger." God is not angry as man, but is said to be angry when he doth like man in his anger. He lets out the effect of his anger, but without any of the feelings of anger.

Hence observe, That the troubles and confusions among creatures are tokens and effects of the anger of God. It is no wonder if kingdoms shake when the Lord comes to testify against and root out superstition, idolatry, and profaneness. Yea, he shakes

kingdoms that he may establish Jerusalem. Isa. xxxiii. 20. "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation."

*Ver. 6. Which shakes the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble.* The Lord doth not only shake mountains, but he can take up the whole earth and shake and overthrow it. If kingdoms totter who can stand fast? But when the pillars of church and state are trembling and shaking, the saints who have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken, may stand without dismay.

*Ver. 7. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars.* At the command of God the sun riseth. But to stay the sun from rising is still a greater display of his power. As he can seal up the spiritual treasures, so he seals up the natural influences of the heavens, that the earth and the fruits of it shall receive no quickening, no refreshing from them. Job produces a proof of the omnipotency of God. He is great in power. Why? Because he can stop the sun. He that can stay the sun what can he not do?

*Ver. 8. Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.* This spreading is either an exposition of the nature of the heavens, Gen. i. 8. or refers to the foregoing words, and shows that God can command the sun, and seal up the stars, for as he made so he can dispose of them. For he created all things by the Word, and the Word was God, &c. He needs not the help of any creature to do any work. To sail or swim in the waters is ordinary. But to tread upon the waters is wonderful. He walks upon them as on a pavement. Though winds and waves are the most disobedient creatures in the world, yet a word from God calms them; when Christ rebuked the sea, by saying peace be still, as if one should hush a child, it is said the men marvelled, Mark iv. 38. The power of Christ is as eminent in stilling the rage of mystical as of literal waters, and we find them mentioned together, Psalm lxxv.

*Ver. 9. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.* Having heard of the power of God in stretching out the heavens, we have here his skill displayed in adorning and beautifying these heavens. Or this verse may be connected with the last clause of the former, and is an answer to those that might say the motion of the seas is regulated by the rising and setting of the moon, and other planets and constellations. True, saith Job, yet the Lord treadeth upon the waves of the sea; it is he who orders them, and not the stars. He teaches us, that though the heavens influence the seas, yet God works upon the heavens. He makes Arcturus, &c. The power and wisdom of God appears in the magnitude, and multitude, and regular moving of the stars. It may be very profitable to consider them. Only beware of confining the providence of God to second causes; avoid that, and the heart may be elevated to God by meditating on his works, Psalm xix. The sun, moon, and stars are universal preachers, the world is their charge. Job gathers all these into a general conclusion.

*Ver. 10. Which doeth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number.* Mark in what a condition Job was when he spake thus honourably of the name and power of God. This shows the admirable frame of his spirit, in all his distempers his heart stood right, and he would speak good of God whatsoever evil befel him from the hand of God. He sees God as wise in troubling as he is in delivering. A carnal man would be above God if at any time he puts forth his power against him. But an holy heart saith, Let God improve his power and wisdom which way he pleaseth, even to afflict and chasten me, yet still I'll say his be the power for ever. I extol his power. When we can honour God frowning as well as when he smiles upon us, then we have learned to honour God indeed.

Job having exalted the power and wisdom of God in many instances, and concluded all with an admiring sentence in this verse, he, in verses 11—13, seems to give a proof of these attributes of God's works, that they are innumerable and unsearchable, &c.

*Ver. 11. For he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.* As if he had said, I am not able to reckon how often he works, for I cannot always perceive him. I am not able to search out all his great and wonderful doings, for I cannot see him in many of them. His motion is not local but providential. He destroys, he builds, he plants, he roots up; but I am not able to apprehend him, or unriddle the meaning of his wonderful works. He is a spirit, bodily eyes cannot behold him; therefore man is not able to contend with, much less to overcome him. God sees all, himself being unseen, and fills all places. His presence being unper-

ceived, nothing is hid from him; yet he is hid to every thing but to the faith of his own people. God works round about and in us, yet we know little of him. Our blindness should abase us in our own eyes. This is a proof of man's ignorance and blindness; and the 12th and 13th verses is a proof of his weakness.

*Ver. 12. Behold he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What dost thou?* This shows how impossible it is for man to deal with God. He who cannot so much as ask God what he doth, cannot prevent any of his proceedings. Man is not only not able to stop the Lord from what he would do, but he has no right to put in a plea against what he hath done. No; not to ask what he has been doing, or why he did it. We may ask in a humble way for information, not in a bold way of contradiction. We may, in zeal to his glory, not in discontent with our own condition, expostulate with him about what he has done. Josh. vii. 7—9. He is the sovereign Lord, there is no appeal from him. All our comforts are in his hand, and when he either by himself or by instruments takes them away, we must quietly submit.

*Ver. 13. If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.* Suppose any should come to help those whom God hath a mind to take away, shall they prosper? No; not only they, but their assistants shall fall before him.

Pride is one of the greatest weaknesses of man; but it is always grounded on supposed strength. If a man have a little strength of body or mind, of memory or understanding, &c. he is under a strong temptation to pride. Whoever these proud helpers are, the meaning is, that except the Lord himself restrain his anger, no power in heaven or earth, how proud or strong soever, and however confident of success, is able to change him. Helpers shall not help themselves, much less those to whose help they come, against the mind and purpose of God. Prayer is said to appease the wrath of God, and stay his anger; yet it is an act of God's will which turns away his anger. He is infinitely free even when he acknowledges that we lay the most powerful restraint upon him. It is the command of God that prayer should be made to him, and he promises to turn to us when we pray. When he stirs up his people to pray for the doing of any thing, it is an evidence that he is about to do it, and that he will withdraw his anger. Job having lifted up the glory and majesty of God in his power and justice, and showed the utter insufficiency of creatures to inplead his justice or to rescue themselves out of the hand of his power, he now comes nearer home.

*Ver. 14. How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him!* If these mighty and powerful creatures, and the mightiest of the children of men, are not able to contend with God, how much less shall I answer, &c.? I am so far from being able to answer him, that I know not how to choose out words to reason with him. A godly man's thoughts are lowest of himself. Are we then not to reason with God at all? We must not reason on the footing of our own worth, and we ought not to attempt it in our own strength: but we may reason from such arguments as these. The riches of his grace, the freeness of his promises, the greatness of our need, or the troubles of the church, and the concerns of his own glory, &c. Thus we may reason with God for the blessing we ask according to his will, and in these the life and strength of prayer consists. Jacob's prayer contains seven arguments; and in the issue, got not only a new blessing but also a new name.

We may declare our cause, and confess our sins without fear, but we must not presume to declare our righteousness, that we may justify ourselves. This Job declines. If the Lord object against me, I am not the man who dares, or is able to answer him; and if I take upon me to object against the Lord, he can easily answer me.

*Ver. 15. Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge.* Job would not only not answer God objecting or reasoning, but that he would not answer him accusing or judging him. I must acknowledge myself to be what God judgeth me to be, and that I am worthy to suffer whatever he appoints me. All the failings and infirmities in man are the issue and effects of sin. Job's supposition hath a negation in it. *I am not righteous.* He did not deny the work of the Spirit, or the grace of God in him, but he would not own them in his pleadings with God. He could stand upon his terms with men, but before God he had nothing to mention but Christ. In reference to justification we must forget all our sanctification, and in sanctification we must forget all that is past and press to that which is before. Christ draws the picture of an hypocrite to the life, in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Never did any good man tell God such a story of his own life as the Pharisee told.



Hezekiah and Nehemiah seems to put God in mind of their good deeds. But it is one thing to put the Lord in mind of what we have done historically, and another thing to plead what we have done legally. It is one thing to show the Lord the work of his grace in us, and another to mind the Lord of our works to obtain his grace. Job resolves to crave pity and pardon at the hands of God, and thus obey the counsel of Bildad.

*Prayer overcomes when nothing else can.* Christ conquered by dying, and we conquer by submitting; and yet it is not supplication as an act of ours, but as it is an ordinance of God's, that it prevails with him. He looks on prayer as having the stamp of his own institution, otherwise our greatest humblings could prevail no more than our proudest contentings.

This holy man having abased himself before the Lord, and disclaimed the least intention of contending with him, now confirms it.

*Ver. 16. If I had called, and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice.* When I find God so gracious as to grant what I pray for, yet I will not believe that he hath done it for any worthiness in me, or in my prayers; or on account of any value which my person hath with God. Job speaks very highly of the goodness of God, and very humbly of himself. When man prays, God answers; but he does not answer because man prays. He speaks very highly of the providence of God, though the dispensations of providence be dark towards him.

*Ver. 17. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause.* A tempest, or whirlwind, which implies a sudden and unexpected affliction, and also its fierceness and violence. It is irresistible, who can stand before it? The Lord lays very sore afflictions upon those that are very dear to him. Therefore, we cannot distinguish men by either the matter or the measure of their afflictions; that which is a judgment to one is but a chastening to another; with the same weapon he wounds a friend and destroys an enemy. Though he hath wounded me already, yet he may wound me still, without giving me a reason. Or though I have given him no cause, that is, not the cause that you have alleged against me, namely, that I am an hypocrite.

God is the only judge who may give sentence without hearing parties. He hath the reason of all things in himself. He not only breaks me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds, but

*Ver. 18. He will not suffer me to take my breath.* These words are of the same import with chap. vii. 19, and implies not only that he had many and great afflictions, but that he had no respite.

*But filleth me with bitterness.* Which notes abundance of afflictions. Though Christ drank the cup of his Father's wrath to the very bottom, yet when he tasted the vinegar he would not drink. If it be grievous to taste but a little of a bitter cup, then judge how grievous Job's sufferings were when bitterness was both his meat and drink. Since afflictions sometimes come incessantly, therefore when thou art assaulted, prepare for fresh attacks. The Lord often mixes a very bitter cup for his own people; but everlasting love is always an ingredient in the very bitterest of them.

Notice here a climax or gradation of four steps, Job says, that he was unable to answer the Lord, verse 14. That if he could he would not, verse 15: That if God should answer his prayers in mercy, he would not ascribe it to them. That God might go on to afflict him, for some read, He will multiply my wounds.

Job humbles himself yet farther before God.

*Ver. 19. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead?* God is of infinite and insuperable strength. No creature is able to grapple with him. As I cannot oppose God by force, neither can I at the bar or at the judgment-seat. Neither men nor angels can stand before God.

*Ver. 20. If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me.* But of what would it condemn me? Surely of folly. Paul says, 2 Cor. xii. 21. "I am become a fool," &c. That is, ye ought to have given a testimony of me, and I had been condemned in justifying myself, as it would have been unnecessary. But it is a duty to witness for ourselves when those neglect it who ought to do it.

Job speaks to his friends of his integrity; but before God he humbles himself under a sense of his own vileness.

*If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.* But was Job perverse? No. Yet a boast of his perfection would have been a proof of his perverseness. Nothing

discovers an evil heart more than a profession of its own goodness. Though Job had a free and full certificate of his innocence, (neither bought nor got with flattery,) yet he forbears to bring it forth to his friends. Let God report him perfect to men, he will not report himself perfect before God. They who have most real worth are least in their own eyes.

*Ver. 21. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul; I would despise my life.* It is the greatest perfection to know our own imperfection. If a man see no moles in his life, (though some see not the beams that are there,) it is because he walks in darkness, *he doth not know his own soul.*

Not to know how frail and sinful we are, to what corruptions and temptations we are most subject, is a sinful and dangerous ignorance; and not to know our graces, and the work of the Spirit within us, is no less so. The new creature is light, and carries light for its own discovery. A good man would have God know the worst of him; but he is not anxious to know the best of himself. He would not have his sin hid from God; but he would hide all his good deeds from himself.

*Ver. 22. This is one thing, therefore I said it.* As if he had said, you have said many things about the power of God, &c. in all which I agree with you; but I must disagree with you in this one thing, that *he destroyeth both the righteous and the wicked*,—destroy signifies to blot out, noting, that the outward dispensation of God may be severe to the perfect as well as to the wicked. The perfect man is the man in the highest form of holiness, &c. And the wicked, or unquiet, and tumultuous man, or mighty and rich man. Riches are so often got by wickedness, and is the occasion of making so many wicked, that rich and wicked may change names, and signify the same person. Bildad said, God will not cast away a righteous man. This Job denies; and affirms, that a godly man may be afflicted through life, and die under it; which, in Bildad's sense, is to be cast away. I have said it, and I will abide by the position while I live, not because it is my opinion, but because it is a truth.

Job brings forward another argument to confirm this opinion.

*Ver. 23. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.* That is, so far as man can judge, there is no difference in the dispensations of God toward the innocent in their trials, and unto the wicked under the greatest judgments; which words are at once a confirmation and aggravation of what he had said before. The scourge means any affliction; every scourge doth not slay, and many which slay do not take effect suddenly; slaying suddenly is a judgment coming unexpectedly. Those that sleep in security seldom dream of scourges. God can send affliction and death in a moment. 1 Thes. v. 3. "Then sudden destruction cometh upon them." Security springs from infidelity, and both from slighting the word of God. No marvel then if the Lord hasten his wrath to justify his truth, and slay suddenly those that despise his admonitions. Let us then watch and be ready for every event, that death may not overtake us unawares.

*Ver. 24. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked: he covereth the faces of the judges thereof; if not, where, and who is he?* Having shewn how the innocent are afflicted, Job now shows how the wicked are exalted, and from both he infers, that it cannot be known by a prosperous or afflicted state whether a man be godly or wicked. The innocent may be under the scourge while the wicked are upon the throne; and who appoints this but God himself? No man hath any thing but by the gift of God. There is a gift by Providence whereby he gives the earth into the hand of the wicked; and there is a special gift of promise peculiar to believers; they enjoy earthly things by a heavenly title. When Nebuchadnezzar invaded the land and took it by violence, he had no thought of doing the will of God, but of serving his ambition and covetousness. Yet the Lord saith of this cruel oppressor, I have given him all the lands, &c. So, then, to receive by donation from God denotes any kind or way of possession.

*He covereth the faces of the judges thereof.* A wicked prince covereth the faces of the judges by gifts, threats, or oppressing and putting them to death; and sometimes by overlooking men of ability, courage, honesty, and uprightness, and preferring only such as are base and corrupt, and who will serve a turn and comply with the times. Some say, it is God that covereth the face of the judges. It is said of judges, Ps. lxxii. 5. "That they know not, neither will they understand, they walk on in darkness," (these three expressions explain the text.) And what follows? Then all the foundations of the earth are out of course. When judges are corrupt and law is perverted, it is impossible to obtain justice.

Hence observe, That ignorant and tyrannical magistrates are sent by God for a scourge to mankind. "I gave them a king in mine anger." Ignorant, cruel, and partial judges have their faces covered, and God is just in giving men over to such a scourge; and the next words challenge all to make another answer.

*If not, where, and who is he?* If it be not the Lord who doth this, then shew me who it is. No creature can do good without the directing and enabling hand of God. It is matter of comfort to consider that the ways and issues of good and evil are in his hand who is good, and doth good, and can do no evil.

Job having shewn, in general, that the wicked are exalted and the innocent afflicted, proceeds to prove the latter from his own example.

*Ver. 25. Now my days are swifter than a post; they flee away, they see no good.* The ancients represented time with wings, to shew that it was not only running but flying. For the most part we live as if time were chained to a standing post rather than like a running post. One said, when a creature comfort was taken from him, methinks if I had it again I would enjoy it. We seldom enjoy what we have, it is passing from us while in possession. Hence Job concludes, *They see no good.* The good things of this life are so transient, that, so far from feeling or tasting them, I have not time enough to see them. To see is to enjoy good. The things of heaven shall not perish in the using, happiness there is real and abiding, and therefore perfect.

*Ver. 26. They are passed away as the swift ships, and as the eagle hasteth to the prey.* My days, and all the comforts I had in them, are passed away as ships upon the streams of swift rivers that go down with speed. Job's days passed not as an eagle in her ordinary flight, but as one whom hunger adds swiftness to her wings. Job does not speak thus, as if he undervalued the favours God had bestowed on him, but with a view to answer the objections of his friends, and maintain his argument, that no distinction can be made of men by outward dispensations, for the situation of a godly man is as transitory as that of a wicked man.

Having illustrated by three similitudes, that a righteous man may quickly lose all his outward comforts, in verse 27—29, he proves that he may be entangled with afflictions beyond hope of escape, which he amplifies, verse 30, 31. In the highest strains of rhetoric, he shews that his sorrows were remediless.

*Ver. 27. If I say I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness and comfort myself.* If I should set myself to lay aside the thoughts of my troubles, and try to leave off my heaviness and complaint no more, yet it will not do, I find no ease. It is sometimes as hard to forget, as at any time to remember. Sorrow is not easily shaken off, and joy and comfort is beyond the power of the creature; all means will prove ineffectual until the Lord give a blessing with them.

*Ver. 28. I am afraid of all my sorrows.* Christ himself was afraid of all his sorrows, Matt. xxvi. 38. Now, if he was afraid of his sorrows, though he knew he should overcome, how much more may the fear of sorrows overcome us.

I fear that, by striving to unlose and overcome my sorrows, I straiten the cords of my affliction faster upon me. The next clause seems to hint at the reason why his sorrows hung so close upon him.

*I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.* Some refer the *thou* to God, and so Job expresses a fear that God will not be reconciled to him, and blot out his transgressions; or rather, that he will not relieve him from punishment; for the fear of trouble will not remove till guilt is taken away. Or it may be as if Job had said to Bildad, how shall I gain credit of integrity in thy opinion, so long as outward trouble renders me a hypocrite in thy sight? It is easier to do good than to be good, and those who are really good, are seldom free from suffering.

The following words may be connected with either of the interpretations of the former verse; I know thou, O God, or thou, O Bildad, will not hold me innocent; now then,

*Ver. 29. If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain?* You assert that I am wicked, and that the providence of God gives you reason to think so. *Why do I labour* for apologies to excuse myself? or to defend my cause by arguments. Your counsel is, that I should seek unto God; but surely your opinion and counsel cannot agree, for if I am wicked I labour in vain. The original is absolute. *I am wicked*, not only in the opinion of men, but before God. I acknowledge that I am wicked indeed; Lord if thou judge me according to my sin, then in vain do I seek to comfort myself, for in thy sight I cannot be justified. Bildad said, chap. viii. 6. "If thou wert pure;" alas,

saith Job, I can never be pure before God, I am as pure as ever I shall be, and that is, I am impure and shall be so at my best, which sense agrees with the following verses.

*Ver. 30. If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean.* That is, though I wash myself till I become white and pure as snow. The saints who came out of great tribulation, are said to have washed their robes &c. Sanctification, which is cleaning from the filth, and justification, from the guilt of sin, are set forth by washing, 1 Cor. vi. 11.; "but ye are washed." The *hands* signifies our outward works, as the former expression refers to internal holiness. Though my heart were as clean as washing can make my hands,

*Ver. 31. Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch.* As if he had said, thou mightest have greater cause to plunge me in the ditch, when I am so fine and clean in mine own eyes than before. Thoughts of our own purity only discovers our impurity. We are never more deformed and defiled in the sight of God, than when we are pure in our own eyes. The Pharisee is represented as washing himself in snow water, and the poor publican as plunging himself into the ditch; yet he went down to his house justified rather than the other.

*And mine own clothes shall abhor me.* This notes extreme pollution, or it may refer to the continuance of his afflictions. It is by no means certain that a man shall be immediately brought out of his affliction, because he has been cleansed and purified in the furnace. That God who has blessed his afflictions, may see meet to continue him under his chastenings, for his further purification and humiliation; and for the display of his own glory.

*Ver. 32. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.* God exceeds man in his acting, as much as he doth in his nature. He may proceed to judgment without an accusation, and he may give judgment and execute it, without taking any proof of a crime. Job was smitten without any cause alleged. God afflicts that grace may be proved. Though saints may know no particular reason why they suffer, yet they believe it is not without reason. The consideration that God is supreme, is enough to humble and silence us. Till we believe that God is holy as well as our superior, we do not fear to sin.

Our treating with indifference and neglect, the intimation of pardon of our sins through the atonement of Christ, is more dishonouring to God, than all our other sins. All men may say they sin, but sin appears sin to very few. The pride and ignorance of man cavils at the decrees of God. Rom. ix. "Why doth he yet find fault," &c.; but stay says the apostle, "O man who art thou that repliest against God?" He hath only exercised his just prerogative. Besides, if ye will argue from reason; then see how it confutes the blasphemy; hath not the potter power, &c. What if God hath done thus, and what if he will do thus? what hast thou to do with it? No man is a match for God, nor able to contend with him in judgment.

Job having thus confessed his inability to contend with God in judgment, proceeds to show that there is none to whom his case might be referred.

*Ver. 33. Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.* There is none to arbitrate the matter between God and me. The laying on of the hand, signifies the composing or compounding a difference. Job speaks highly of God, and humbly of himself. He was not able to dispute with God, and there was none capable of being an umpire between them. *The will of God is the supreme law;* whatever he is pleased to do with us, we should cheerfully acquiesce in, believing it to be best for us. The secrets of his providence are beyond our search, and his judgments above our reach.

In the two last verses, Job desires that God would not contend with him; as if he had said, Lord I will not plead or dispute with thee; and I know thou mayest do what thou pleasest with me; yet, O that thou wouldest abate the severity of thy procedure, that I might have liberty to spread my case before thee; I have no friend to take up the matter for me, but if I might obtain a cessation, I would open my case in a few words myself.

*Ver. 34. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me.* Afflictions may be called a rod, because of the hand that useth it, and the end for which it is sent, as well as on account of the smart of it. A rod is in the hand of a father, not for destruction but for correction. The rod is an evil in itself and will do us no good, but evil, unless the Lord make it a blessing to us. Now, as it is our duty to pray for deliverance from every rod of affliction, so it is one end why God casts us in-

to trouble, to stir us up to pray for support under, mitigation of, and deliverance from them. So the rod may be said to be taken away from us, either by an abatement of it, or giving strength to bear it, as well as when it is completely removed. There is nothing so grievous, either in active or passive obedience, as that which is either against our will or above our power. Now, it is all one to have a burden taken off; or to have strength to bear, and patience to endure it. Whether it was the majesty of God that overawed Job, or the pain that he felt, or whatever it was; he was oppressed with fear and terror from the Lord, which he earnestly seeks to be relieved from.

*Ver. 35. Then would I speak and not fear him; but it is not so with me.* This is as if Job had said, if the Lord would grant my petition, I would speak unto him without fear or doubt of being heard, for I am not the man you take me to be; for if I were, though the Lord should withdraw his terrors, I should be afraid to pray to him, lest I should draw down judgments on myself; which, if I were the wicked hypocrite you assert, would certainly be the consequence. Or, Job may mean, I have earnestly entreated the Lord to abate my afflictions, and remove his terrors from me; but he hath not been pleased to grant my request. *It is not so with me,* the rod smarts, and terrors amaze me still. The prayers of God's dearest children are not always answered immediately, perhaps to learn them to pray more earnestly. There is an opinion which gives this verse a connexion with the first of the next chapter; had the Lord condescended to take away his rod, and remove his terror as I requested, then I had somewhat to say; but seeing I have not liberty to speak to the Lord, I will pour my complaint into mine own bosom and commune with my heart. He pursues this resolution in chapter x.

## CHAPTER X.

*Ver. 1. My soul is weary of my life, I will leave my complaint upon myself, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.* My pain is so perpetual, and my distress so grievous, that it wears my very soul. As David speaks of being weary of dwelling among wicked men, Psal. cxx. ; so Job, in reference to his polluted body, "Wo is me, that I sojourn in such a diseased body, and dwell in such a dying carcase." The noble tenant is weary of staying in such a filthy habitation; and I see the great landlord will neither repair nor as yet let it fall. This was no doubt Job's infirmity. The assaults of Satan, and the troubles, temptations, and wickedness of a present world, together with their inward corruption, makes godly men weary of their lives; and others, because they have got such assurance and evidence of a better life, as well as on account of the afflictions and troubles of this life, are desiring to depart. We leave our complaint upon ourselves when we make no excuses or evasions, but plainly charge the fault upon ourselves. God is righteous, but I am a transgressor. This is the sum of Job's resolution, *I will leave my complaint with myself.* They who strive to comply with the will of God, complain most of themselves for resisting it. I will *speak in the bitterness of my soul.* A bitter soul brings forth bitter words; it shall appear by what I say, what I feel, or it may be taken as an apology for what he spake. Speaking in the bitterness of the soul, signifies either the excess or greatness of a complaint, or the cause and spring of it. Job's complaint came not from the ordinary temper of his spirit, but from his troubles distempering his spirit.

Having expressed his resolution to complain, he turns his speech to God.

*Ver. 2. I will say unto God, do not condemn me.* As if he had said, seeing thou art the God and father of all that fear thy name, and call upon thee in truth; therefore, in the exercise of faith and filial reverence, I beseech thee not to deal with me as if I were condemned for my sin, but make it again appear that thou art my God, either by removing these afflictions, (which represent me to the world as thine enemy, rather than thy son,) or by removing the dread and terror of them, by which they may appear as exercises of my grace, not as punishments of my sin; that while I am pained with thy rod, my soul may rejoice in thy love, and that while I am under this cross, I may triumph over it: or if thou see meet to continue me in this state of suffering, then I have another request, namely,

*Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.* Job having in the former clause intreated that the Lord would not condemn him as a judge, desires now that he would shew him why he contends with him as a party. Cause me to know, and let it ap-

pear, why I am thus afflicted: that if it be for sin, thou mayest give me such a sight of it as will humble me, and cause me to turn from it unto thee; and if it is only for trial, I shall bear it more patiently, and my friends will be more charitable to me under it. Let these considerations prevail with thee, to open this secret to me, and expound the mystery of my afflictions. Hence observe, that an afflicted soul is very solicitous to find out the reason of his affliction, and a godly man may be long in the dark about the cause of God's dealings with him. In the next verse Job gives a reason why he makes this request: my condition excuses me for thus crying to God. Far be it from me to think so dishonourably of God, as that he could delight in oppression, and in breaking the work of his own hands, or in favouring the works of wicked men; and therefore I am thus importunate to know the reason of his procedure with me.

*Ver. 3. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress? that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?* These interrogatories flatly deny what they seem to inquire doubtfully. Now, seeing oppression can be no advantage unto thee, thou hast no gain by it, nor delight in it, and no glory or honour from it; show me why thou contendest with me. The vulgar has it, is it good for thee that thou shouldest slander me? that is to give others occasion to speak evil of me. Slander and censure wound deep; hard words bruise the credit and break the heart, but here it may be taken for outward violence, cunning, cheating. Hos. xii. 7. "He is a merchant," &c. who by light weights oppress, by withholding what is due, as well as by forcibly taking away from any. As if Job said, I know that thou dost not love to oppress; whence is it then that thou actest so unlike thyself to a poor creature, the work of thy hands? The hand of God implies his power and wisdom. Job means himself or any other man when he says, *That thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands*, which in general is of the same sense with the former clause. That we are the work of God's hands, is an argument to move his compassion towards us, and should prevent us from proudly disputing with him; at the same time, we may humbly plead with him not to despise the work of his hands. It seems to intimate that the plea hath a kind of command upon God, as Isa. xlv. 11, "concerning the works of my hands command ye me."

*Ver. 4. Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?* To have an eye of flesh, is to judge according to the flesh; and to see as man, is to see no more than man sees.

By this question, Job seems to say, Lord I have been long afflicted with sore distress, why hast thou brought me to such a trial? It is not with thee as with men, who can see no farther than the outside of things; and, therefore, mortal judges must fetch out what lies in the heart of man by examination, or by torture. But there is no need that thou shouldest take this course with me, for though I should not speak a word, yet thou hearest the voice and understandest the language of my spirit; wherefore is it then that thou inquirest by these afflictions into what is naked before thine omniscient eye? By this Job seems to vindicate God from another dishonourable insinuation, and justifies him either in reference to the truth or manner, the clearness or speediness, the certainty or impartiality, the infallibility or charity of his judgment. Upon all which his former request is again to be inferred. Show me wherefore thou contendest with me? Job seems to comfort himself, that the Lord judged him by the settled temper of his inward man, and not by the casual distemper of his outward man.

He proceeds to a fifth dishonourable thought, which he also by way of interrogation removes from God, and so virtually says again, Show me, &c.

*Ver. 5. Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man's days?* I know they are not, and therefore I wonder why thou dealest so severely with me, as if thou shouldest have no other season for it.

God who inhabiteth eternity, need not hasten his work; and therefore he doth not precipitate, but does his work deliberately, because he may take what time he pleases. Wicked men, do not ye hope? godly men, do not ye fear? that God will never do what he hath said, because he hath not already done it. He hath not lost his time, although he hath passed over the time or season that you expected.

The next words will show why Job made so many negative queries.

*Ver. 6. That thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin.* Surely thou needest not search and examine me in this manner, seeing thou art omniscient.

Observe, that God knows us before he search us, and he searches us that we may

know ourselves. Observe 2d, that there are not many who know God at all, and none know him enough. God searches us that we may seek after him; and this is the design of every affliction, to acquaint us with God and ourselves. It is said, that then Manasseh knew the Lord when he was in the briers.

The next verse contains one of the chief questions of that grand controversy, whether Job was a wicked man or not; Satan represented him to God as such, and upon that challenge the Lord gave him up to grievous trials. Job now appeals to the Lord's own knowledge, and is content to stand or fall according to his determination, being still satisfied that he stood right in the sight of God.

*Ver. 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked, and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand.* Wicked and just are judiciary terms equivalent to justified and condemned, as Psalm cix. 7. Hebrew, "Let him go out wicked," that is, Let him go out from the bar of his judges a condemned man. It is matter of consolation to the saints that God knows them. David seems as glad that God knows him as that God would save him, Psalm cxxxix. To be wicked is inconsistent with the possession of saving grace. Sin reigns in all wicked men, in a hypocritical professor as well as in the openly profane, he drives a trade of, and purposes to sin, &c. Peter did not deny Christ because he was resolved to do it, but because he resolved not to do it without a due dependence upon Christ for power to withstand the temptation to do it. There is none that can deliver out of thine hand. No, neither power, policy, nor riches, can avail in the day of wrath, and even prayer cannot prevail in some seasons of wrath. Let us, therefore, take heed how we fall into the hands of God's justice; for till God discharge us there is no escaping.

At verse third Job questions—"Is it good for thee that thou shouldest oppress," &c. From verse 8 to 13 he insists upon and illustrates that argument by fitting it to his own condition. "Seeing thou wilt not despise the work of thy hands, why shouldest thou despise me? Am not I the work of thy hands?" This point is proven, first, in his formation in general, ver. 8. 2dly, The matter of which he was made, ver. 9. His conception, ver. 10. The conjunction of his parts, ver. 11. The quickening of his parts and preservation of life, ver. 12. And then Job's assertion concerning all this at ver. 13, which is as if he had said, Lord thou knowest all is truth that I have spoken.

*Ver. 8. Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about, yet thou dost destroy me.* Man receives not only his nature, but his figure from God. The structure and frame of nature is the work of God. He ascribes his own formation to God as well as the making of Adam. Second causes work purely at the will of God; though means are used by man, yet it is God that gives effect. Now, as in the work of redemption we are of God by grace, so we are his by creation, and the same reason holds in both, viz. "Glorify God with your bodies which are not your own, but God's. Let them be holiness unto the Lord." It is but reasonable that creatures formed and fashioned by God should be at his disposal, and it is their wisdom to obey and submit to him in all things cheerfully.

*To destroy* signifies to swallow up. Job had a great army of afflictions encompassing him about, ready to devour him, and he cries to the Lord, (who alone has the command of these as well as of every other army), "I am the work of thy hands, why dost thou swallow me up?" Hence observe, That it is a good argument to use with God for protection and deliverance, that we are the works of his hands. His lothness to give up Ephraim is emphatically described, Hosea xi. 8. "My heart is turned within me," &c.

Job enforces his argument from the consideration that he is made of clay.

*Ver. 9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me of the clay.* That is, frail, brittle, and weak, which shows our utter inability to contend with God, and also how easily we are overcome by temptation to sin. A body of earth hath a suitableness to all earthly allurements. In Psalm lxxviii. the Lord seems to be moved with pity to man, ver. 39. "He many a time turned his anger away," &c. Why? for he remembered that they were but flesh, that is, weak and easily led into sin; but we must not plead this as an excuse, or expect impunity on this account. As it is the duty of saints to remember God, by obeying his command, so it is their privilege to put him in remembrance, craving a speedy supply of their wants, or actual deliverance from all their tribulations, and thus Job beseeches God to remember that he hath made him as the clay, and

*Wilt thou bring me into dust again?* Job found himself brought into the dust of a low condition of poverty and distress, which if continued but a short time longer would bring him to the dust of death. In Zech. iii. 2. it is said, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire." As if the Lord had said to Satan, "Art thou moving me to throw this people into the fire of affliction, out of which they were so lately snatched?" Job seems to plead for a respite that he might enjoy some quiet comfortable days before the end of life.

*Ver. 10, 11. Hast thou not poured me out as milk and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.* Man is born naked, yet clothed; and unarmed, yet fenced; the more noble and tender parts, the heart, brain, &c. are inclosed with skin and flesh to prevent the cold, and they are fenced with bones and sinews, lest they should take hurt; hence death is called an unclothing; it strips us not only to, but of the skin. We have a natural clothing before we have an artificial one. We are dressed with garments from the wardrobe of God before we have a rag put on us. Bones are for strength, and sinews for motion. Bones give form, straightness, and stability to the body. The Lord hath framed man so well that it is impossible for man to conjecture how he could be made better. The noble structure and symmetry of our bodies invites our souls not only to gratitude but to admiration. Let us then make it appear in our thoughts, and by our words and deeds, that we have hearts, hands, and tongues, not only from, but for him, and also strength and life, and all for him, seeing we receive all that we are, and enjoy all from him, as appears

*Ver. 12. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.* The bounty of God appears in granting life, still more in favour, and most of all in his grant of gracious visitations. The Hebrew is *lives*, which may be taken for vegetation and growth, as in trees, &c. of sense and motion, as in beasts, and of reason, as in angels, whereby they understand and discourse. These three lives which are shared among all other living creatures, are brought together and compacted into the life of man. Hence observe, that life is a special gift and favour from God. When Christ parted with his precious life for sinners, he thereby showed the greatest favour for them. By favour, in conjunction with life, we may understand these good things which make life agreeable; and so Job must refer to his former enjoyments; for in verse first he speaks of life as a burden. Thou not only gave me life and favour, but didst protect me for many years in the enjoyment of them. But how did the visitation of God preserve the spirit of Job? The spirit may be taken first, for life, and then he preserves our spirit by keeping us from death. The spirit may be taken for the *soul*, and then God preserves our spirit while he keeps us from sin, or from falling into temptation. 3dly, The spirit is taken for *courage*; while God keeps us from needless fears and perplexities, he preserves our spirits. It is a large patent that is granted, Psalm cxxi. No time shall be hurtful, neither *day* nor *night*, and neither sun, moon, heat, nor cold, shall hurt; these include all annoyances. Thy soul, and thy outgoings and incomings, shall be preserved, so that nothing shall be hurt; for these include the whole man, and all his lawful affairs. As none can keep but Him, so he has promised to keep for evermore all who can say, the Lord is our keeper. Christ says, "take no thought for your life," to excite a more deep concern for the soul; but alas! how often does our outward man cost us more thought and care for one day than our soul does for a year, yea for a lifetime. As God in his providence visits us, so we should visit Him by prayer, not only in trouble, as they did, Isaiah xxvi. but also in peace and prosperity. Let us visit God by earnest prayer, for a blessing, who is always at hand to visit us in mercy.

*Ver. 13. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart;* some read, *And hast thou hid these things in thine heart?* That is in the will, purpose, or decree of God, where-in all things are laid up; as if Job had said, This bill of blessings now read were hidden in thine heart, thou hast had gracious intentions towards me, even while thou hast been smiting me.

*I know that this is with thee,* that is, thou rememberest all this, and keepest a record of it by thee. By these "hidden things" we are to understand the mercies that Job had enumerated, and so the words are either an argument to move the Lord not to destroy him, or to assure himself that he would not, as if he had said, "I know that thou hast not forgotten what thou hast done for me in making and preserving me



hitherto, and that thou hast a good will to me still;" and so he expresses an assurance of the love of God under his chastisements.

Hence observe, that in the exercise of a strong faith saints can discern the favour of God through the clouds of the darkest dispensations.

Job having thus revised and read over the particulars of his former mercies, renews his complaint and desire of deliverance from present sorrows in the words that follow, the connexion of which is difficult. Some connect it with ver. 13. "I know that this is with thee, namely, that if I sin thou markest me," &c. Others with ver. 12. "Thou hast granted me life and favour," &c. "Yet if I sin thou markest me," &c. Another goes to ver. 3. where Job puts three queries, the last of which is, "Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest shine upon the counsel of the wicked? I know it is not, my own experience proves that thou dost not, for if I sin, thou markest me," &c. It is not easy to determine which is the proper connexion.

*Ver. 14. If I sin, then thou markest me.* Sin stands here in opposition to wickedness. Sin is any transgression against, or deviation from the rule however little. To observe and mark signifies a critical observation, to mark exactly, Psal. cxxx. God takes notice of the failings of his own people, chapter 14. "Thou numberest my steps; dost thou not watch over my sin?" That is, how my conversation is ordered; for God does not need to judge by information, but by observation. We cannot secret ourselves nor our least failings from his all-seeing eye. "*And thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity;*" that is, thou wilt not remove these afflictions which are the fruits of mine iniquity, putting the cause for the effect. All men are in a debt of duty to God, as creatures, and when they fail, they contract a debt of penalty as sinners, from which they cannot be acquitted but by a pardon.

The word *acquit*, signifies also to cleanse and purge. As sin defiles the soul, so pardon cleanseth it. Psal. li. 7. If I sin knowingly and wickedly, as they charge me, then thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.

*Ver. 15. If I be wicked, wo unto me.* What it is to be wicked is explained at verse seventh. *Wo* is derived from a root that signifies to *howl*. Wicked men howl rather than pray unto God in their distress, Hosea vii. 14. Though wicked men flatter themselves, yea though ministers may flatter them, yet God does not, and at last conscience will not flatter them. *Wo* is, and will be their portion. From holy Job saying, "If I be wicked," learn that a good man may put the worst cases to himself.

*If I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head.* This does not imply a doubt whether he was righteous or not. A godly man walks trembling, lest he should offend, and saith, "If I am wicked, wo unto me;" and even when he does not offend, he walks humbly, saying, "though I am righteous, yet I will not hold up my head."

There is a lifting up the head with joy and consolation, Luke xxi. 28: and also a lifting up the head with pride and ostentation, Psal. lxxxiii. 2. But Job seems to say, "I will abase myself before God."

*I am full of confusion.* Job's spirit had received as much sorrow as it could hold, and more than he could well digest.

*Confusion* signifies shame, and also intimates a disorder of spirit. When a man knows not what to do, or whose counsel to follow, and cannot make up his thoughts and bring them to an issue, then he is in confusion. Trouble upon the sensitive part disturbs the understanding. Every affliction makes some outward confusion, and it is very rare if they do not make much confusion within us. Great sorrows distract the mind, and brings a man to his wit's end.

*See thou mine affliction.* The word rendered affliction imports weakness and casting down, which oppress like a great weight upon us. Pity me in my affliction; have compassion, and give deliverance.

When saints are in a right frame of spirit they are joyful in all their tribulations; for Christ is able to make consolation abound as tribulation doth abound. Yet where there is abundance of tribulation, consolation is usually very scarce.

*The therefore* seems to say, Lord take notice of my sad condition. It is vain for me to show my distress to creatures; but I know that I am not past thy cure, therefore I bring them unto thee. O see my affliction. Hence, note, that when we are beyond the help and cure of man, we are the fittest objects for God. When dangers and distress increase, then let us pray earnestly to God that he would take our deliverance into his own hand.

The two following verses are a pathetic description of Job's growing and prevailing sorrows.

*Ver. 16. For it increaseth.* Instead of which some say, *Can it be lifted up?* Is it possible to lift me up when I am so full of sorrow and confusion? Afflictions will make the stoutest heart stoop, and the highest head to bow. But take the words declaratively. Job describes his condition as growing worse and worse. But in another sense it is taken for pride or lifting up, and there is an elegancy in it. See my affliction, *it waxeth proud.* For as when the waves of the sea swell and increase, are called proud waves, so an increasing affliction may be called a proud affliction. The next clause illustrates this by a similitude.

*Thou huntest me as a fierce lion.* God is often represented under the notion of a lion, in the afflictions with which he visits his people. Hos. v. 14.

*And again thou showest thyself marvellous upon me.* That is, thou dost not punish me in an ordinary way. Such an affliction as mine hath no parallel. Thou hast afflicted me till I am become a wonder unto many. So thou, O Lord, art become a wonder to me, for I cannot reconcile thy character as gracious and delighting in mercy, with the complicated and lengthened out afflictions upon me. That thou huntest like a lion those whom thou dearly loves is truly wonderful. He proceeds to give a farther amplification of what he said before, and shows the greatness and increase of his trials.

*Ver. 17. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me: changes and war are against me.* Afflictions sometimes discover the reality of grace, of faith, patience, &c. but they also give evidence against us in many different ways, as, 1st, That sin not only remains, but hath been indulged by us. It is true that afflictions are not always sent on account of indulged sins, yet they are a testimony against sin; for if we had no sin we would not suffer. 2dly, Afflictions testify against that great and universal sin, a proud heart; for one special end of affliction is to humble us and lay us low. 3dly, By bringing forgotten sins to remembrance, they testify against us. 4th, What an awful testimony does afflictions give against us when we are nothing bettered by them. It shows that we are nought. Afflictions testify God's displeasure with and care of his children.

Indignation is still more grievous. The word signifies hot consuming displeasure, and increasing both in number and weight.

Though Job had a variety and a multitude of afflictions in their strength, it was not a destroying war with him; yet it was so terrible that he cries out,

*Ver. 18. Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me.* Improper questions are usually followed with unreasonable wishes. Job seems to forget all former benefits when he complains of his birth.

It is no less strange than true, that when we cannot obtain the mercies we would have, we grow angry with those we have enjoyed, and a good man thinks he lives to no purpose if he do not live to the praise of God. O that I had gone out of the world before I was observed to have been in it.

*Ver. 19. I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.* Such a quick passage out of this world would have prevented me from tasting the cup of sufferings of which I have drunk so deep: there would have been little trouble with me in this world. Thus Job is again renewing his desire of death; from which learn, that while the same stock of corruption remains in us, it will produce the same corrupt fruit as often as occasion and temptation offers.

*Ver. 20. Are not my days few? Cease then and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little.* From the consideration of the shortness of life, and that much of his time was already gone, Job founds a petition for a mitigation or removal of his troubles. He seems to look upon himself as besieged or straitened with his afflictions, and he prays that God would grant a cessation, and give him some comfort the short time he had to remain.

It is said, Psal. lxxxix. 47, "Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" Lord I have but a few days, and shall they be nothing but clouds and darkness? While thine hand is upon me, the comfort and help of creatures is all in vain. Hence learn the necessity of performing every duty in its season; the folly of being anxious to obtain the perishing things of this world; and that we should bear patiently our crosses as they pass along. But, above all, it points out the sin and danger of delaying to seek an interest in Christ, and so live ready for death and judg-

ment. Happy they who are taught of God so to number their days as to apply their hearts unto wisdom. They who are low make low demands. Job only seeks comfort a little ; but why is he in such haste ? Besides that his days are few, he gives another reason in the next verse.

*Ver. 21. Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death.* A strange journey indeed, from which there is no hope of returning. Job believed a resurrection by the power of God, but he knew there was no returning to this world, and to the business and enjoyments of it ; and that is the reason why men are so unwilling to depart. It is the hope of being ever with the Lord in a house not made with hands, that makes the saints so cheerfully leave every present enjoyment, and put off the clay tabernacle without a sigh, to go to the land of darkness, save for the friends they leave behind.

*Ver. 22. A land of darkness, as darkness itself ; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.* This is the place where death dwells, and here is a description of it which exceeds the fancy of poets, and the rhetoric of heathen orators. The spirit of God riseth to the height of eloquence in exhibiting that unpleasant region.

The state of the dead is without any order, as it hath no changes. There is no difference in the grave between night and day, winter or summer, &c. and there is no rule in dying. Here a child, and there a man ; here a rich man, and there a beggar ; and as there is no order in going thither, so there is no distinction there : all mingle with the dust. How terrible is death and the grave to those who live and die in sin, and how should the hearts of believers be filled with gratitude to Christ, who, by his death, hath taken away the sting of death, and perfumed the grave for his people. Thus Job concludes his reply to Bildad, and complains to God that his afflictions are continued.

In his replies to the following speakers his grace is often very conspicuous, yet his corruption sometimes appears.

## CHAPTER XI.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said.* His name imports a *watchman*, and his designation signifies *pleasant*. Like Eliphaz and Bildad he first reproves Job and then counsels him.

*Ver. 2. Should not the multitude of words be answered ? and should a man full of talk be justified ?* Eloquence is a gift of God, but verbosity is the vanity of man ; sometimes it is a sin in the speaker, and a burden to the hearers ; but, in some cases, many words may be spoken and all few enough. We have no reason to think that Paul spake one word too many, though he continued his speech until midnight. To teach us to be more ready to hear than to speak, God has given us two ears and but one tongue. When we speak much we are in danger of offending much ; and he who has nothing but words to support him must needs fall.

*Ver. 3. Should thy lies make men hold their peace ?* It is noble to shew ourselves friends to truth, though we lose friends by it ; and we must oppose error, though we get enemies by it. At sometimes it is prudent to be silent ; but we must never forbear to testify against a lie, whether verbal, doctrinal, or practical.

*And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed ?* Multitude of words is ill enough, and lies are far worse, but to mock is worst of all. Some say, Shall no man confute thee, and so put thee to shame. Mockers shall be put to shame. Though they escape the censure they merit from men, they shall not escape the judgments of God.

When truth is honoured it is easy to own it ; but it is our duty and greatest honour to avow our attachment to Christ and his truths when they are despised and derided. It is no new thing for him that speaks truth to be counted a liar, or such as speak seriously to be reproached as mockers. Zophar gives the reason of this charge.

*Ver. 4. For thou hast said my doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.* Zophar manages his discourse more like an accuser than a comforter. He uses Job's words in a sense that he never intended. We are apt to put unsound glosses upon the words both of God and man.

Thus Zophar interpreted these words as a reflection upon the justice of God by Job.

*Ver. 5. But O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee.* As if Zo-

phar had said, it is now my turn to speak unto thee, but I should rejoice if God would grant the petition thou hast presented to him, chap. ix. 15, and x. 2, even vouchsafe to speak unto thee himself; and I am certain, that as soon as he manifests himself to thee, and shews thee what thou art, thy courage will fail; for thou canst not stand a day of trial. He is a wise man that keeps a lock and key at his lips: the lock of silence, and the key of discretion, to shut and open the lock upon every proper occasion of speech and silence. The word of God in the hand of the spirit is invincible. *O that God would speak.*

*Ver. 6. And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.* Zophar does not try so much to convince Job of his own sinfulness, as of the mysterious nature of divine wisdom. Thou judgest upon the outside of the dispensations, God alone can expound them. For we neither know what God does, nor what we ought to do. He may be said to know all things who knows whatever it concerns him to know. But except so far as the anointing teaches us, we know nothing either of the word or providence of God as we ought to know, and, therefore, as the secrets of wisdom are hid from and above our reason, I desire that God himself would teach thee. As all the sins of man that appear are nothing in comparison of the depths of sin secreted in the heart, so God hath store of wisdom which man can neither discern nor comprehend double that which is visible. The greatest afflictions are less than our sins deserve. Notwithstanding the terrible judgments inflicted on Israel, yet Ezra confesses, "Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve." The evil of the least sin is greater than all the evils of punishment.

Zophar proceeds to illustrate what he had said, verse 6; and to shew the mysteriousness of the wisdom of God, he puts a question,

*Ver. 7. Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?* It is impossible. Some of God's works are so eminent and evident, that if we were not wilfully blind we must needs see them. Isa. xxvi. 11. But there are many of his workings so hidden, both in their nature and manner, that we cannot discern them. Zophar concludes concerning the wisdom of God, that God cannot be found out; all his attributes are unsearchable. The wisdom of God is God, as well as his power and holiness, &c. But though we cannot know all of God, yet we must carefully learn all that may be known of him. To know God here is eternal life; and yet when the beautiful face of truth shall be unveiled to the understanding in heaven, none shall ever be able to know all of God. They shall there know and enjoy as much of God as shall make them perfectly happy. But to know God unto perfection is impossible.

Zophar's question contains this position, that man cannot find out God unto perfection, which he exemplifies.

*Ver. 8. It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?* Wisdom is not only as high as heaven, but high above the heavens. Some translate, what wilt thou do in the height of the heavens? Seeing thou canst not manage the sun, moon, stars &c. and can give but little account of the height of the heavens, how wilt thou be able to give account of him who is higher than, and rules in the armies of heaven? Heaven and hell are the great opposites or remotest extremes. Matt. xii. 25. And as the height of heaven, so the depths of hell is ascribed to wisdom, to shew the unsearchableness of it. Rom. xi. 33. 1 Cor. ii. 10.

*Ver. 9. The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.* Here are four very different dimensions met together, and they all speak the same thing, that the wisdom of God is infinite, and exceeds all natural dimensions. The apostle ascribes to the love of Christ these four dimensions with which Zophar here adorns the wisdom of God. It is common to give but three dimensions, but here a fourth is added, to shew the immensity both of the love and wisdom of God. Now, since thou canst not take the perfect length of the earth, nor the breadth of the sea, &c. how much less art thou able to take the dimensions of God or of his wisdom? He is above and beyond all, and therefore unsearchable, and cannot be found out unto perfection.

From the infinite wisdom of God, he proceeds to argue the sovereignty of God and his irresistible power.

*Ver. 10. If he cut off, and shut up, and gather together, then who can hinder him?* As if he had said, wherever the Lord acts he is in his own kingdom; for all

the world is his, therefore none can hinder him. If the Lord cut off by sword, shut up in prison, gather together and bundle men up as fuel to feed the flame of his fiery indignation, though he doth all or any of these things, who can hinder him? He speaks as if there were no hand of the creature moving in any of these things, but that God himself had done all. Psal. xli. 8, "Behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. Our eyes are so much upon second causes, and so little upon the first cause, that we are angry and impatient. If we would view God in all, and man only as an instrument, we might possess our souls in patience whatever is done. Job complained that God had cut him off and shut him up, and that he had gathered together armies of Chaldeans and Sabeans to destroy him. But though all this be the case, saith Zophar, why dost thou speak as if God had done the wrong, when he has a right to do what he will, and he can will nothing but what is right?"

*Ver. 11. He knoweth vain men.* This is brought forward as a reason why a man cannot reach the wisdom of God. He is *vain man*. The Lord knows the baseness and deceit, as well as the folly and rashness that is in vain man. Some render, *the Lord knoweth that men are liars*. When we see or hear of wars, famines, contentions, and strifes, &c. between man and man, we are apt to think that these things are inexplicable, and so they are to us. *But God knoweth vain man*. He discerns in man that which justifies him in all that he does among the children of men.

*He seeth wickedness also.* He not only knows the vanity that is in the heart, but the transgressions of the life. Beware of imagining that you can sin unseen, or of attempting to hide yourself from God. You must make known your wickedness unto God by confessing it; for you cannot hide it from him by denying or excusing it.

*Will he not then consider it?* Yes he will. Though many a careless man sees and knows both his own and others' wickedness, yet lays neither of them to heart. But God not only takes notice of, but hates every sin, and will certainly punish it. Psal. xxxiv. 16, "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Man is apt to think most of himself when he is stark naught; and that he is wise enough, though he be a very fool, as appears,

*Ver. 12. For vain man would be wise, though man is born like a wild ass's colt.* To desire to be wise is a great point of wisdom. But Zophar seems to find fault with *vain man* because he doth not so much care to be wise as to be thought wise. Or man is vain when he would be wise in things above him. *He is as high as heaven*, &c. Though such knowledge of God be too high for any man, yet vain man thinks he knoweth nothing if he know not something which he ought not to know.

Man would be thought wise as God; at least he would search out the wisdom of God; and yet Zophar compares him to a wild ass, because the ass among beasts, and the wild ass among asses, is most destitute of wisdom. In regard of ignorance, stubbornness, &c. man is like a wild ass, and how beast-like are they who will not return from their folly when they are smitten and broken with judgments. Hence the repeated expostulation, Amos iv. "I have smitten you, &c. yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." God himself seems to wonder at their stupidity and obstinacy, when they had been so long under the burden, and had received so many blows. O that the fruit of all our afflictions may be, that we who have been like wild asses may now live like new creatures. This would make our losses gain, our judgments mercies, and turn all our sorrows into joy.

Zophar having finished his reproof, proceeds to counsel Job.

*Ver. 13. If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him.* By the heart we are to understand the whole inward man. The conscience, which hath in it the light of the understanding, the motions of the will, and the recognitions of the memory, comes under the notion of the heart. Psal. li. 12. 1 John iii. 20. Job xxvii. 6. The sum of all safe and wholesome counsel is contracted into this one sentence, *Prepare thy heart*. If it were possible to cast out sin, and to put off the old man, it would not be enough, unless we also put on the new man. As God bestows the first grace upon us, so the exercise of grace fits or prepares us for further favours. While our hearts are not right with God, no marvel if things go wrong with us. Grace is as much magnified in working in us, as in saving us without works. When a child is in danger of falling, while he cries for help he stretches out his hands; so our stretching out our hands to God implies our telling him that we depend wholly upon him for help, pardon, &c. and that we are undone unless he deliver us.

Preparation of heart is necessary in every duty, and especially in prayer.

*Ver. 14. If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away.* Having exhorted Job to prepare his heart and stretch out his hand, Zophar now desires him to prepare his hand before he stretch it out. The hand must be cleansed as well as the heart. The heart may retain its filthiness, while the hands are washed; but when the heart is washed the hands will not remain filthy. It is true a man whose heart is cleansed may defile his fingers, but he will not allow them to continue so; for purity of spirit cannot consist with impurity of life. Sin must be thrust away and removed to the utmost distance. As we should go far from sin by an holy care, lest we fall into it, so we must go far from it by a speedy repentance when we have fallen into it. Hence observe, That it is only in the way of putting sin far from us that we can draw near to God in prayer with an expectation of acceptance. Taking iniquity for fraud and oppression. Then that which is ill gotten must be restored. It is indeed very sinful to get any thing by unjust means, but it is still worse to retain it. Many are willing to give alms that are very unwilling to restore that which they have got in a sinful way. But no man may give till he hath made restoration, nor be charitable until he is just. How can we expect that God will remit our just debts if we do not restore our unjust gains?

*Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle.* That is, let it not continue; hasten it away; take care to purge the worship of God from every species of idolatry and superstition; or, let not wickedness dwell in those who dwell in thy tabernacle. A man who has got his heart and hands purified will be desirous that all under his inspection enjoy the same blessing.

Zophar having given Job counsel, now gives him encouragement.

*Ver. 15. Then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear.* There are four things chiefly seen in the face, pride, Psal. x. 4; fear, Dan. v. 6; envy and discontent, Gen. xxxi. 2—5; and guilt and shame often appears in the face. Strong confidence is implied in *lifting up the face*, and to be *without spot* is when the children of God are kept from such spots as are unsuitable and inconsistent with their sonship. Phil. ii. 15. "That ye may be blameless, the sons of God without rebuke." Holiness of life and purity of conscience give boldness in approaching to God, to all who are accepted in the beloved. Grace establishes the heart. Put away sin and thou shalt be steadfast. This promise may refer to outward things, but especially to the steadfastness of faith, &c. that he should no longer continue in suspense between hope and fear. An upright man may be unsteady even in the right way, but a carnal man is unsettled between a right and a wrong way. A wicked man is often secure, but he is never settled concerning his end. It is a false peace that is the daughter of ignorance; but true peace is the daughter of saving knowledge. A holy fear of God will prevent anxious and distracting fears. As by fear we are kept from iniquity, so by departing from iniquity we are preserved from fear. To be delivered from the fear of evil is preferable to freedom from evil. For he that is not afraid of evil before it comes may be happy when it does come. To be delivered from fear is the privilege and portion of the saints; and the next verse shews it and gives a reason.

*Ver. 16. Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.* As we do not feel, so we cannot fear what we have forgotten. Thus, *to forget thy misery* implies that he should be long free from such evils as had oppressed him, and not a vestige of them remain. When a man forgives an injury, he may be said to forget it, because he passes over it, and desires no revenge; yet he cannot but recollect the wrong that was done him. So it is as if Zophar had said, When thou thinkest of thy afflictions it shall not afflict thee. Or he connects the forgetting of his misery with the putting away of his iniquity. So long as a man continues in sin, his past sufferings, as well as his present, will continue to torment him till he is delivered from guilt, and sin is subdued. Then it shall be as if it had not been. It is the peculiar privilege of the saints to have the power of sin broken in them, so that it shall never recover so as to condemn them.

The latter part of this chapter consists of motives and encouragements.

*Ver. 17. Thine age shall be clearer than the noon day; thou shalt shine forth; thou shalt be as the morning.* That is, thine old age shall be full of comfort, and thou shalt rejoice in the serenity of thy condition. God can easily make the worst part of our lives the best. Thou shalt be as the noon in regard of the clearness of thy light, and as the morning as to the increase and continuance of it. So these two includes

the highest expressions of a prosperous condition. God can quickly turn all our sorrows into joys. The sum of this mercy is laid down in five particulars, verses 18, 19.

*Ver. 18. 1. Thou shalt be secure because there is hope.* This security arises from the exercise of a vigorous faith in God, as revealed in his word. It is a sure foundation on which to cast the anchor of thy hope, which rests firm on the promise of good things to come. Saints walk by faith and not by sight, and this leads them into the treasury of God for all their supplies. But worldly men walk by sight not by faith, and this leaves them seeking happiness among the treasures of men. The consideration of what God hath done, and the relation in which he stands to his people, is ground of encouragement for them to hope in him. For he is a father who always speaks what he means, and is able to do what he speaks.

*2. Yea thou shalt dig about thee.* Digging is either strictly to till and manure the earth, or for the labour of any calling. So it means that thou shalt prosper in all thy lawful undertakings, and carry them on without fear or danger, and nothing shall prevent thy success.

*3. And thou shalt take thy rest in safety.* As thou shalt dig and thrive at thy work, so thy repose in the day, and they sleep in the night, shall be sweet unto thee. When the Lord undertakes our protection, we may sleep securely and comfortably. When he watches over us we need not fear, though thousands seek our hurt.

*Ver. 19. 4. Thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid.* The word here used signifies the lying down of cattle in the fields or folds, and, understood thus, it is a distinct mercy. That our estates are quiet as well as our persons, that our beasts may lie down safely as well as our children, ought to be numbered among our mercies, for which we are to be thankful. Though neither all nor our chief happiness consists in these outward things, yet they are described in the inventory of the happy man. Psal. cxliv.

The fifth privilege is greater than any of the former.

*Yea, many shall make suit unto thee.* Heb. They shall entreat thy face. The word *entreat* signifies also to weary, and, when joined with the word *face*, it signifies to weary one with prayer and entreaty. As many are weary of prayer, so some are wearied with prayers, and grant the petitions of the poor, not so much to relieve them as to ease themselves. Luke xviii. 5. "I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." So the meaning is this, they shall make suits to thee, even as many as are made to him that is wearied with suitors. We give honour unto God when we sincerely seek unto him and obey him.

Zophar having mentioned these privileges to encourage Job, now points out the contrary condition of wicked men.

*Ver. 20. The eyes of the wicked shall fail.* The failing of our eyes is the disappointment of our hopes. The eyes of the wicked shall indeed fail with waiting upon their idols, vanities, lusts, and lies; upon their relations and friends, their policies and plots. It should make the saints lift up their heads and eyes with confidence that God will cause the eyes of wicked men to fail.

*And they shall not escape.* As they shall not receive the good which they expect, so they shall not be able to deliver themselves from the evil which they fear. Seeing that God rejects the confidence which wicked men pretend to have in him, and blasts every outward thing in which they place their confidence; how is it possible for them to escape?

*Their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.* When hope dies all dies. Hope is the last commodity which a man parts with. As all the hopes of wicked men perish when they die, so, while they live, their hopes are dying. A godly man hath not only a living but a lively hope.

## CHAPTER XII.

This and the two following chapters contains Job's reply to Zophar, and the two former speakers, and he 1. Sharply rebukes the pride of spirit and confidence in their own opinions. 2. He refutes their assertion, that good or evil things distinguish good and evil men. From verse 5. to the end of the chapter, he shews that outward evils are often the lot of good men, &c.

*Ver. 1. And Job answered and said.* He seems to assert his own positions more fully than he answers or disputes with his friends.

*Ver. 2. No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.* Wisdom is peculiar to none, and an opinion of our own wisdom savours of great folly. Some take this as a plain assertion; others as an irony, which is a speech filled with derision, while the letter of it makes no doubt, the spirit of it is an absolute denial. Without breach of charity we may check pride with derision.

*Ver. 3. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior even to you.* The Hebrew is, "I have a heart," &c.—I have courage to maintain what I have asserted. It is not a good proof of preferable understanding to boast of it. But in some cases self-commendation is not uncommonly. Job had derided their ignorance, and now he compares himself with them both in the matter and degree of his understanding; and then he triumphantly asks, *Yea, who knows not such things as these?* There are some common principles that it is a shame not to know; and about common truths to affect mystery is vanity. Job next takes notice of the scorn of his friends.

*Ver. 4. I am as one mocked of his neighbour.* Instead of comforting, you have mocked me in my adversity. The unkindness of a friend hath much of the enemy in it.

*Who calleth upon God and he answereth him.* The vulgar read, "He who is derided of his neighbour as I am, will call upon God, and God will hear him." It is the privilege of the saints to make God their refuge when men despise them. He is the helper of the friendless. God is the best friend at all times, and the only friend at sometimes. Perhaps God gives up his people to reproach, to stir up a spirit of prayer in them. Or it may be a reproof to them for having loved the world and the praise of men too much. When we are reviled and mocked, let us call upon God, who will not mock but answer us. He will not give stones for bread, &c. for he loves to be giving, and delights to give good gifts to all who ask him. Job next gives an answer to the question, How is a just upright man entertained in this world? Do not all respect and reverence him? No, he is laughed to scorn.

*The just upright man is laughed to scorn.* Holiness is in disgrace among ungodly men. Those men of whom the world was not worthy "had trial of cruel mockings;" and Jeremiah says, "I was a derision to all my people, and their song all the day." It is enough that holiness is in repute with God, for it never had, nor never will have credit in this world.

He now enters upon the argument, and in verses 5 and 6, lays down two positions in direct opposition to what Zophar asserts, verses 17, 20.

*Ver. 5. He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thoughts of him that is at ease.* As a burning lamp is an emblem of a happy condition, so a dying lamp represents a miserable one. They that slide should be supported. But he who falls under the weight of affliction has often the burden of contempt laid above it. The afflicted are usually neglected; for the very best of men at ease are apt to be inattentive to others in affliction, and, in a certain degree, to despise them, which we do not only by reproaching them with our tongues, but by not sympathizing with, and assisting them with a brotherly fellow-feeling. Though David was despised when he was eating ashes and drinking tears, Psal. xlii. yet he acted very differently. Psal. xxxv. "When they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth." Happy they who are enabled to follow this example.

Upon the whole, it is as if Job had said to Zophar, Thou hast affirmed that the *righteous man is as the shining light*; but I say, he is a *despised lamp*. Again, you have said that the eyes of the wicked shall fail, &c. whereas I say,

*Ver. 6. The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.* God sometimes gives them the greatest worldly prosperity, who offer him the highest provocations. These treasures of good things which he bestows upon them gives them an opportunity to bring out those evils which were treasured up in their hearts; hence, observe, That to have wealth, without grace to use it to the glory of God, is a curse to the possessor, and often hurtful to all around him.

Job having checked the pride of his friends, and opposed Zophar's assertions, proceeds to give proof.

*Ver. 7. But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee, and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.* All creatures have a teaching voice. The knowledge of na-



tural things should be made subservient to spiritual improvement; this world is a glass, wherein we may discern and converse with the invisible world. It is usual to direct us to the irrational creatures, when we depart from or act below reason. "Go to the ant thou sluggard," &c. Though they do not answer the questions put to them explicitly to the ear, yet they do it convincingly to the conscience. To meditate in a serious manner, on the peculiar properties of the beasts, is to be taught of them, as every true conclusion is the voice and answer of the creature.

*Ver. 8. Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.* Zophar had said, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Yea, saith Job, I can find him, without much searching; every thing I see shows me God, and every object is a teacher to the ear. The earth, and the creatures, are mostly given to oppressors and robbers, and in this sense, the tabernacles of robbers prosper.

But what is chiefly intended by Job, is expressed in the two verses following.

*Ver. 9. Who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?*

*Ver. 10. In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.* Though there is much to be learned from beasts and fowls, &c. yet Job calls on them, in a special manner, to observe that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and that all these things are in his hand. Providence is as extensive as creation. Now, if providence, (wherein man usually acts with God), act so much above man, that the whole is ascribed to God, how much more does creation declare itself to be the sole work of God? Some parts of creation excel others, but there is enough in any one of them to speak out who made it. Let us therefore glorify God, in whose hand our breath is, and all our ways, by carefully observing the operation of his hand, in all that happens, submitting cheerfully to his will in all things, and by depending upon him for all we need, either in this or the world to come.

This is Job's first argument from the creatures, all of which acknowledge God their maker, disposer, and preserver. They have their being and their well being with the changes and continuance of both from him.

*Ver. 11. Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?* The words seem to convey a reproof of the rash and inconsiderate judgment of Job's friends about what had been spoken. You have not pondered my speech, nor the arguments and reasons which I have produced in support of my opinion; or suppose it to refer to what Job's friends had offered. You have declared many things to me, and you think that I have taken no notice of them; but my ear hath tried your words as exactly as the palate of a mouth does in tasting meat. Our Saviour cautions us to take heed how we hear. The ear must be taught to hear by the Spirit, or else we never can hear what the Spirit saith. The senses are a door to the understanding, and, acting jointly, they lay up treasures of knowledge; therefore

*Ver. 12. With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.* Experience is a great teacher, and by attentive observation much knowledge may be attained. Therefore, old men should show forth wisdom by their conduct and instructions, and then they are to be honoured and their counsel respected. But it is to be lamented that many have learned nothing of holy knowledge, even when their time is far spent, and so have nothing worthy of communicating to the succeeding race. To whom the apostle gives a severe reproof, Heb. v. 12. "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you," &c. Though we may attain knowledge by conversing with creatures, yet there is no creature that hath wisdom at its disposal. It is the prerogative and privilege of God only.

*Ver. 13. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding.* Thus Job shows that all these perfections meet in God, and thereby demonstrates the absolute completeness of all his administrations. Would you have understanding? It is in him; he can search out deep things. Would you have counsel? He can direct to the most proper means. Would you have wisdom? He can manage and order means to the best advantage. Do you need strength? His power is over all, and there is nothing too hard for him. God is complete in every perfection. Of this he gives an instance.

*Ver. 14. Behold he breaketh down, and it cannot be built up again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.* What God will do, he can do, and it shall be done. There is no prevailing against God. No withstanding any of his operations; or repealing any of his decrees. Balaam confesses God hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

*Ver. 15. Behold he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up : also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth.* This is an instance in natural things that man cannot resist God. The waters are at God's command ; and he withholds them, as with a bridle, at his pleasure, till the earth is parched and dried up.

And he overturneth the earth by sending immoderate rains, for when the fruits of the earth are destroyed, the earth may be said to be overturned for that season. From the same creature being made either a mercy or a scourge to us, we see the difference between the things of nature and grace. Spiritual things, in the least degree are a blessing, and the greater the degree, the blessing is the more increased.

*Ver. 16. With him is strength and wisdom : the deceived and the deceiver are his.* This shews the providence and power of God acting mightily in civil things. Strength and wisdom here signifies not only the quintessence of wisdom, but *being and existence*. God is the *measure*, the *reason* of all things. He knows the deceiver and the deceived, and will bring both to an account. He will bring about his counsels, and promote his own glory by them both. It proves an infinite sovereignty in God when he doth his work by that which seems to work against him. To try his people, and prove their zeal for the truth, he sends out some to oppose it. It is just in God to blind their eyes against his truth who harden their hearts against his fear ; and because they received not the love of the truth he leaves them under the power of strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. We may well conclude that *wisdom and strength are his*, whom the craft of men to deceive cannot circumvent ; and whom the silliness and folly of men in being deceived cannot disappoint.

Job now specifies several degrees of men whom the Lord, by the wonderful administration of his power and wisdom, sets up or casts down.

*Ver. 17. He leadech counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools.* It is a special gift of God to be able to give good counsel, or to be willing to take it. Many can give good counsel who will not receive it. He in mercy gives good counsellors to establish and preserve kingdoms. But when they abuse their wisdom, or when people abuse the blessings that God gives, they thereby prepare the way for their removal. The ruin of kingdoms is not from chance, but by a divine power. As wisdom is the gift of God, so is the continuance of it. We need daily wisdom for our daily work, as much as we do daily bread for our daily wants. God, for the punishment of a nation, may give up judges and rulers to folly and tyranny.

*Ver. 18. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle.* God by his mighty power breaks, or by his wisdom dissolves, those bonds of oppression with which kings attempt to enslave their people. When the Lord punishes the pride and sin of kings, he looseth the bonds of their authority, of their riches and revenues, of their people's love and affection, and also the bonds of leagues and alliances with foreign powers. All those bonds that the kings of the earth make, either to support themselves or oppress their people, are snapped asunder by the power of God at the appointed season. A girdle and girding with it signifies a servile or captivated condition ; the royal belt is laid aside, and a girding of sackcloth taken up by the mightiest earthly god, when the God of heaven manifests his displeasure. Let the great men of the earth hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Let them shew their regard to Christ's authority by taking his counsel, as stated in the second Psalm.

*Ver. 19. He leudeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty.* Princes are called the shields of the earth ; but they cannot defend themselves against the assaults of heaven. Faithful nobles are the bars of a kingdom. It is their duty to bolt out impiety and unrighteousness, and thereby keep out evils. When princes bar up the liberty of the people of God, their power and arrogance will be no bar against their own misery. Those who trust God need not fear their most powerful and crafty enemies, for he overwhelmeth the mighty.

*Ver. 20. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged.* The word *trusty* is derived from a root that signifies fidelity, truth, stability in word or deed. Men so qualified, and they only, are worthy to be trusted. God changes or removes the speech of the trusty, not by making them inconstant and unfaithful, but by leaving them to the inconstancy and unfaithfulness of their own hearts. Changes in the providence of God make the changeableness of men's minds visible in their actions, and audible in their speeches, which arise sometimes from fear or from hopes and gifts. Deut. xvi. 19. There is no depending upon the most faithful man, we must judge of what is spoken by a standing rule,

not by the person speaking; there is neither wisdom nor safety in taking any thing upon trust. When the Lord will destroy a people, he takes away the understanding of the ancients. No wonder then if God put this among his marvellous judgments. Isa. xxix. 14. "Behold I will proceed to do a marvellous work, &c. for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid."

*Ver. 21. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty.* This is a continuation of the former argument, as understanding is most proper for the aged, so is honour for princes, and strength for the mighty. God punishes them in that which is peculiar to them. He poureth contempt upon princes; that is, he makes them very contemptible. Liberality or munificence is the virtue and honour of princes. God expects from the meanest of his people a free princely spirit in his service, Exod. xxxv. 5. The same word is used, Psal. li. "Uphold me with thy free Spirit." The Lord gives the Spirit freely and liberally, and it makes his people free. They who have received the Spirit serve the Lord freely, and esteem his service freedom. Worldly princes have in their name that which the saints have in their nature; and because they have so little of a free spirit to do good, and to defend those who are good, therefore God *pours contempt upon them and weakeneth the strength or girdle of the mighty.* There is a girdle of strength, or an alliance of one king with another, by leagues of amity and mutual aid. But the Lord will weaken this strength also, and make them, instead of helps, hurtful to each other, as Isa. viii. 9. Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces," &c.

*Ver. 22. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death.* The infinite knowledge of God makes a darkness to hide his ways and counsels, and so does the knowledge of man; they keep their projects and purposes under veils of specious pretences and studied secresies; out of all their darkness God discovers deep things, &c.

The *shadow of death* is extreme danger and darkness. The Lord discovers deep things out of darkness; by wonderful providences he makes a key to unlock the secrets of men; therefore the people of God have no reason to fear the combinations and plots of evil men; for while their ways please the Lord, what can harm them? The Lord comforts his disciples against calumnies and persecutions. Matt. x. "Fear them not," &c. and he seems to caution them not to conceal the word of God for fear of men. And fear not them which kill the body, &c.

*Ver. 23. He increaseth the nations, in number, wealth, reputation, and honour; and destroyeth them secretly as by a moth, or openly by disease, famine, and sword. He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again.* As he spreadeth them out by prosperity, so by affliction he straitens them. Divine providence acts upon every stage of worldly affairs; God's wheel moves in all the wheels of the creatures. He rules the governors, as well as those who are governed. He leads into ways of peace and prosperity, and gives up to wars, troubles, and desolation. When a people increase in sin as much as in sovereignty, and are straitened in their obedience and thankfulness to God, it forebodes a sudden and unexpected downfall. God never wants means either to increase or destroy whole nations.

*Ver. 24. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.* When God leaves the leaders of a people to err through ignorance and obstinacy, or when those who have been valiant for the truth becomes indifferent and faint-hearted, then it may be said that he taketh away the heart of the chiefest of the people. That is of such as will not give up their hearts to obey and submit to him. But we never have our understanding, will, or courage, &c. so much in our own custody, as when we commit them to God, for his honour and service, in obedience to his call, "My son, give me thine heart." God causeth no man to wander by leading him into false ways, or by preventing him from going in right ways, and yet it is said, *He causeth them to wander.* His providence is always fulfilling his own counsels to a certain issue, and by a sure way, how much or how long soever. "He causeth men to wander." Isaiah lxiii. "O Lord why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?" It may be said that God made them to err when he did not effectually show them the truth, and that he hardened their hearts when he did not soften them. God left them a while to the conduct of their own lusts, because they refused the guidance of his Spirit. When God deserts a man as he did king

Saul, he entangles himself at every step; it may well be said that he is in a wilderness, and the longer he is in it he goes the farther out of the way. For,

*Ver. 25. They grope in the dark without light.* They are in trouble, and they are so ignorant that they know not which way to get out. It is mournful to be without light, but it is far worse to have light and not to use it. Let us take heed of sinning against light, lest we be brought into the darkness of error and delusion.

*He maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.* When men are drunken with wine, they sin grievously against God, and he punishes men severely when he makes them drunk without wine. When God takes away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, whether in reference to civil or spiritual things, they produce the same effects of wandering, groping, staggering, &c. And when God in justice doth this, then he declares, "that with him is wisdom and strength, and that he also hath counsel and understanding," which is the scope and design of Job in this whole discourse.

## CHAPTER XIII.

*Ver. 1. Lo mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it.* That is, I have fully apprehended all that I have declared in the former chapter, and having been an eye and ear witness, you ought to receive it as truth.

Note, That we ought to be well acquainted with, and firmly persuaded of the truth and importance of that which we teach others.

*Ver. 2. What ye know, the same do I know also; I am not inferior to you.* Though all ambitious contendings with others is odious, yet no man ought to betray the truth or his own integrity, lest he should be counted contentious. That man buys the character of an humble and peaceable man too dear who pays either the faith of God or his own credit for it, which every man does who denies or conceals his belief of any truth, or neglects to vindicate himself for fear of the reproach of men.

*Ver. 3. Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God.* As if Job had said, "I would rather speak with God himself than with you, and I expect a more favourable hearing from him than you have yet given me." We must not reason with God in a way of contending with him, yet we may, as learners, to receive instruction.

Note, That an upright person is not afraid to reason with God himself. For the justice and majesty of God, which make rotten hearts to tremble, causes the righteous to rejoice; they are glad that he is just and holy as well as gracious and merciful.

*Ver. 4. But ye are forgers of lies; ye are all physicians of no value.* They did not discern the true cause of Job's trouble; they thought it was for the discovery of his hypocrisy, and, by asserting that God gives outward good things to such as are good, they wounded, instead of comforting him, which made him say they were physicians of no value; for it is impossible to apply a suitable remedy when ignorant of the causes of the disease. To defend the justice of God they found Job guilty, which was their error; and therefore Job charges them with erroneous doctrine, as well as with the improper application of it to him. They not only repeated a falsehood, but they framed the lie, which is still worse.

*Ver. 5. O that you would altogether hold your peace, and it should be your wisdom.* There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak. When we have an opportunity to vindicate the honour and truth of God, or the credit of a brother that is wronged, or to reprove those that do evil, or to direct and instruct the ignorant, then it is our sin to be silent. Let us learn to speak the truth in love, with a view to the glory of God, and the good of mankind; and unless we do so, we had far better be silent, as we should thereby discover more wisdom than by talking at such a rate of indiscretion as Job asserts his friends had done. "Let your speech be always with grace."

*Ver. 6. Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips.* He now requests a patient and an attentive audience to what he had to say in his own defence. If it is our duty to defend others who are injured, how much more are we bound to endeavour to convince those of their error who have reproached us, and to vindicate ourselves from every false aspersion? Some greedily drink in an evil report of their brethren, but will not have patience to hear their defence with candour, which is both cruel and unjust.

*Ver. 7. Will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him? Will ye reproach me under a pretence of honouring God? He needs no such advocate, neither will he thank you for condemning me, even with a view to justify his dealings with me. I do affirm that God is righteous in afflicting me, and at the same time that I am not wicked, because I am afflicted.*

*Ver. 8. Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God. When under pretence of obeying God, we wrong man, we may be said to accept his person. So some say God is honoured by their opinions, and therefore they must needs be right. As Papists who pretend zeal for God in maintaining free will, lest he should seem to mock in his commands, and the Arminians assert, that Christ died equally for all men, lest God should seem to mock in his promises. Thus out of a professed respect for the person of God they oppose his truths. While we are zealous in maintaining one truth, we should be cautious lest we obscure another. We cannot suppose that Job means to blame his friends for contending for God; he surely means only that their manner of doing it was wrong.*

*Ver. 9. Is it good that he should search you out? or, as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him? An earthly judge may be mocked and deceived by false witnesses, so as to condemn the innocent. Man may be, and often is mocked by man, but God cannot be mocked; and you will find at last, that by all your insinuations of my deceit and hypocrisy you have not imposed upon God but deceived yourselves. A good end will not excuse us for any unlawful deed; and we may be justly charged with doing what may be fairly inferred from our actions, though we never had such an intention; and when God searches,*

*Ver. 10. He will surely reprove you, if you do secretly accept persons. In this Job seems to prophecy, for the event fulfilled what he said, chap. xlii. Some are afraid, many are unable, and others are unwilling to be at the pains and trouble of reproof; but God will thoroughly reprove you, for the Hebrew is, "in reproof he will reprove you," which intimates not only the certainty but the severity of it. Some read the latter part of the verse, "although ye do accept persons secretly," which shows that however close and concealed our sins may be, that God observes and will bring us to shame by reproofing us for our most secret sins. Now if God will not endure that any creature should be wronged, even under a pretence of doing him right, how shall those judges who favour the great ones of the world, to the prejudice and hurt of their inferiors, be able to answer for their sinful partiality.*

Job shows his friends their errors by two more arguments in verses 11, 12.

*Ver. 11. Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you? There is an excellency in the being of God which appears in all his attributes, and in all his works. He is excellent in working, because excellent in being, Exodus xv. 7. Deut. xxxiii. 26. His excellency should strongly affect and overawe our hearts into a holy composure of spirit, with a due care of pleasing him, and a fear of offending him.*

The word for *make you afraid* signifies extreme fear, such as doth swallow up and amaze, Isaiah xxi. 4. The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me; that is, such a fear seized upon me, as turned all my pleasure into dread and terror.

God is to be dreaded in the justice of his law, his awful threatenings, and in the certainty and greatness of his judgments.

*Ver. 12. Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay. As if Job had said, your bodies, which in regard of their figure and frame, are lifted up as if they did scorn the earth, are still but clods of clay; and however beautiful and strong they appear, they must shortly be reduced to first principles, and the remains and remembrance thereof swept away like ashes.*

*Ver. 13. Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. Will you, who are ashes and clay, stand it out before the excellency of God; of whom you ought to stand in awe, and be abased on account of your frailty? Those who have high thoughts of themselves are apt to despise what is said by others. Were men low enough in their own eyes, they would be ready to embrace every advice that appeared to promote holiness.*

But why does Job say, *let come on me what will?* That is, censure me as much as you please, or however you may take it, I will speak; or, it may be, as if he had said, you seem very tender of me, and afraid lest I expose myself to farther judgments from God for maintaining my integrity, but I will speak and bear all the blame myself, and abide his determination and submit to him.

An upright heart is very resolute ; there is nothing that can make a man afraid while he is not afraid of himself. Every good man ought to say, *I will do my duty, come of it what will ; and what can come of it but good ?* for though the Lord leave him to the cruel dealings of men he will overrule it for good.

*Ver. 14. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand.* Some say this is an enquiry after the cause why he endured such grievous afflictions. Others take the words as a denial of impatience. But it rather appears to be a self reproof. A godly man usually casts the first stone at his sin, and blames himself more than any other man can do for his own secret distempers or outward miscarriages. A carnal heart doth what it can to excuse or extenuate its sin ; but a holy person doth both aggravate and rebuke himself for his own sin. *Wherefore am I so vain, so earthly, so proud, so impatient, &c.* Is this the way to submit to the rod of a father ? No man needs expect to be his own carver, either in comforts or sorrows.

Job having intimated that he did not carry his life in his hand, as a thing that he made no reckoning of, proceeds to make a high profession of confidence in God.

*Ver. 15. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* But how can a man trust in God when he is slain ? Slaying sometimes notes only a civil death, or depriving a person of former favour, or present comforts. So *to trust* is to depend on God for support and deliverance. A true believer, living or dying, may say *I will trust in the Lord* for the salvation of my soul, the resurrection of my body, and the eternal rest and enjoyment of God in heaven. I believe he will save my soul when he shall destroy my body. This is not only a profession of Job's faith, but a vindication of his character from the accusation of his friends. That man who confides in, depends upon, and makes his boast in God alone, cannot be a hypocrite. God is always trusted as much as he is known ; and the more we know of him the more firmly will we trust him. He that takes hold of God in reality, lets go his hold of all other things ; we may use the help of creatures, but we must trust none but God ; and we must trust him for all things, and at all times. In this Job manifests the highest confidence in God, but in the last clause he discovers too much conceit and confidence in himself.

*But I will maintain mine own ways before him.* Not that he thought he had no sin, but he was willing to be tried by God. Try me, prove me, saith the upright soul, I doubt not but I shall be found right. He that doth truth is not afraid of the light. The good deeds of the saints are wrought in the strength and power of God, as well as at the command and by the authority of God ; and so his deeds are made manifest that they are wrought in God. Our deeds have no value in them but as they are done in the name and strength of Christ : Nor can we maintain any of our ways before God, but in so far as we walk in the Spirit.

You must not imagine that God will disclaim me because I maintain mine own ways before him ; or that he will condemn me because he slays me. No, though he does, I will trust in him ; and though I maintain mine own ways before him, yet,

*Ver. 16. He also shall be my salvation ; for an hypocrite shall not come before him ; some render, This shall turn to my salvation.* I am persuaded, that when God hath heard my plea, he will give sentence on my side notwithstanding your accusations.

There is a self-justification consistent with salvation by grace. 'Tis not pride but duty (when we are called to it) to say we are what we are ; and when our ways are right ; to maintain and defend them. Thus we may and ought to defend our ways before men. Yea, even while we put our mouths in the dust, and are deeply humbled before God for the imperfection of our ways, we may thus maintain the uprightness of our ways before God, and be assured that he also will be our salvation. It is comfortable, in every distress, and also in the view of death, to reflect upon our interest in the salvation of God. Faith can fix on nothing less than God himself : He shall be my salvation ; but a hypocrite shall not come before him. A hypocrite is a wicked man in a godly man's clothes ; but that will never give him a right to come before God, nor procure the acceptance of any duty, since he cannot address God as his Father in Christ Jesus, for there is no coming before God but in Him ; and it is only through Christ, and in his name, that believers have access with boldness to draw near to a holy God. But all that confidence which presumption inspires will give way, and disappoint and destroy its possessors.

*Ver. 17. Hear diligently my speech and my declaration with your ears.* The Hebrew is, *Hearing hear.* The doubling of the word imports either that his friends were inattentive, and unwilling to hear ; or that what he had to say was of very great

importance. A declaration signifies grave and weighty speech, as a plaintiff makes when he puts in a state of his grievance.

Thus Job renews his request for being heard,

*Ver. 18. Behold, now I have ordered my cause: I know that I shall be justified.* This commences his reason why he desires to be heard. I am not come unprepared to this bar. Though, through ignorance or prejudice, you mistake my condition; yet having carefully examined the whole cause, I find that, upon good grounds, notwithstanding all my afflictions, I am warranted to say, *I know I shall be justified.* The justification here intended seems to be the determination of the question between him and his friends on his side. Or it may be a contrast with these words, "An hypocrite shall not come before thee;" that is, he shall not be justified but condemned. He says, in a bold manner,

*Ver. 19. Who is he that will plead with me? for now if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.* We do not suppose that Job speaks proudly, confiding in his own wisdom, but trusting to the justness of his cause, and the power and support of God, in maintaining his defence against his opposers, he speaks as certain of victory. Our reputation should be dearer to us than our lives; and it seems Job would rather have given up the ghost than have yielded to their charges by keeping silent; and therefore he calls upon his friends to appear and support their charges against him, and thereby give him an opportunity to vindicate himself.

*Ver. 20. Only do not two things unto me; then will I not hide myself from thee.* Job seems here to say, I will not be afraid to speak unto thee, provided thou wilt grant my request contained in the following words, I will then cheerfully appear before thee.

*Ver. 21. Withdraw thine hand far from me.* That is, mitigate my sufferings; abate my pains; release me from my sorrows, and let not thy dread make me afraid. When God manifests his love to his people it makes the bitterest cup pleasant. But when afflictions are mixed with tokens of his anger, and a sense of his displeasure, it is affliction indeed; hence, Psal. vi. "O Lord rebuke me not in thine anger." &c. To pray for the pardon of sin, yet willing to continue in sin, is truly absurd. But to pray for the removal of afflictions, yet willing to continue under them if God so pleases, is truly a good frame of spirit. Or it might be a discovery of the majesty and greatness of God that he was afraid of, and petitions to be preserved from it.

Job having deprecated the terror of the Lord, resolves what to do.

*Ver. 22. Then call thou, and I will answer; or let me speak, and answer thou me.* The particle *then*, implies, that he could not do either without permission. Take away thy dread, and then I am ready for a hearing. But I cannot endure thy majesty by reason of weakness; and yet I know my own uprightness is such, that I have no fear of thy censure. Zophar had said, "O that God would speak," &c. Job answers, you said it would then appear that my sins were double to my afflictions. Now I desire that God would speak out what my sins are. For I am suspected by my friends of great crimes, which certainly ought to be brought forward and substantiated before I am censured or condemned.

*Ver. 23. How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.* It is worthy of notice, that Job having asked the question, "How many are mine iniquities?" immediately adds, "Make me to know," &c. By which, he seems to say, I may see how many my sins are; or that they are very many. Yet I cannot know them in their evil nature and demerit, or as abominable in thy sight, without thy special teaching. The words express a strong desire to know the cause of his afflictions. That if it was on account of unknown sins, he might be led to repent of, and turn from them unto God, and thereby be enabled to watch carefully against them in future. None can be truly willing that God should shew them their sins but such as he has enabled to embrace the Saviour, for the sight of one sin is sufficient to render us miserable. But a believing view of forgiveness through the blood of Christ swallows up all our sins. For Job had said, "He shall be my salvation," before he said, "Show me my transgressions." Even those who are best acquainted with the plagues of their own heart, have need to continue instant in prayer, that God would make them know their transgressions.

The scope of this discourse to the end of chapter xiv. is to maintain his integrity, and aggravate his present misery, and is very like chapters vii. and x.

*Ver. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?* These words are not so much a question as an expostulation, which is a very affecting way of

expressing the grief of the heart. We must suppose that Job believed that God had a reason why he hid his face from him; and also that Job was resolved to honour God, by submitting to him, though he should continue to hide his face from him. When the Lord withdraws the light of his countenance, and his promised assistance in duty, or his wonted support under suffering; then he is said to hide his face from the house of Jacob, or from the saints. We may expound the latter clause by the former, thus, surely thou holdest me for thine enemy, else why dost thou hide thy face from me?

Note, That as some persuade themselves falsely that God is their friend, so others have false suspicions that God is their enemy.

Job next uses an argument with God why he should not contend with him, viz. that he was so weak and inconsiderable.

*Ver. 25. Will thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?* We do not suppose that Job intends to charge God with severity, but to move him to pity him in his weak and helpless condition; and as it were to put him in mind, that if he was to continue to afflict him, he could as easily crush him as a leaf could be broken, or as the dry stubble was driven before a strong wind. The most prevailing argument with God, is to make known our case, as poor, diseased, and unworthy helpless sinners. When a Pharisee comes and tells a long story of his righteousness, the Lord abhors him; but if a poor publican confesses himself unworthy to look up to heaven, and prays for mercy, the Lord not only pities, but accepts him; he goes home justified, not the other.

*Ver. 26. For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.* Writing may allude to recording the sentence of a judge. Sin is a bitter thing in its effects, as well as base in its nature; and as it provokes God to anger, it is very bitter, for all who do not repent shall be punished. Now repentance itself is bitter, it is no pleasant potion; and this shows, that however sweet sin is in the mouth, it must be bitter in the belly. Whatever renders the life of man grievous, may be said to be bitter. To possess the sins of youth, is to feel sorrow and pain, and also to be afflicted with the filthiness of them. The sins of youth often prove great sufferings in old age. Holy Job reflected upon, and chewed them over not as sweet morsels, but as gall and wormwood, to mourn over and repent afresh for them; when he looked back on his life, he saw such defects and failings, as justly exposed him to the rod. Hence observe, that it becomes saints to view their sins as the cause of their afflictions, whatever is God's aim in them; as 1 Kings xvii. 18. the woman said, "Art thou come unto me to call my sins to remembrance, and to slay my son?" Her sorrows brought her sins to remembrance, and then she feared that God contended with her for her sins.

*Ver. 27. For thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths: thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet.* Thus God made him possess the iniquities of his youth in old age, and is as if he had said, Thou proceedest with such severity against me as against a grand malefactor, thou layest me fast by the heels; and wherever I go, my troubles are like armed keepers watching me, and I am all over wounded, afflicted quite through, there is a wound in the very soles of my feet, Isa. i. 5.

Note, That great afflictions are often the lot of God's choicest servants, which makes them complain bitterly; and even the most patient become impatient from the severity or continuance of the rod.

Some say the following verse is a preface to the next chapter, and assert, that it is an explication of it throughout.

*Ver. 28. And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth eaten.* He speaks in the third person, though he means himself. In chap. vi. 12. he asked, "Is my strength the strength of stones?" &c. Here he tells us what he and his strength are; and surely he could not go lower for comparisons, than the effects of moths and rottenness. By this self-abasement, Job seems to argue with God for compassion and sparing mercies; as if he had said, could I bear these sorrows any longer, I would not so earnestly beg an end of them: but alas! if they do not end speedily, they will end me; for my strength is gone, and I am but rottenness; seeing thou not only tearst me as a lion by open and violent afflictions, but also doth eat me as a moth by secret and silent consumptions. In all the steps of gradation by which Job ascends to the highest pitch of his afflictions, from verse 24—27 inclusive, he eyes God in all, and



acknowledges him as the author of all these evils ; for he says, "Thou hidest thy face, thou writest," &c.

Hence observe, that we should honour God by observing his hand in all that befalls us, and acknowledge his sovereignty in all his disposals, and look to him for support under, and deliverance from all our afflictions ; as well as view him as the fountain whence cometh all the good things we enjoy.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*Ver. 1. Man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble.* To shew that the same afflictions which had fallen upon him may fall upon any other who is born of a woman ; Job speaks in the third person, or thereby to abase himself as scarcely worthy to be named. As the woman is doomed to bring forth in sorrow, so she brings forth a sorrowful helpless child, which points out the frailty of man. Besides he is of few days : Hebrew, "short of days or cut short." How vain to reckon upon many years to come, when our whole time can make but a few days altogether, and uncertain but each day may close the scene ; since our days are few and hurry away imperceptibly. Let us therefore live, habitually laying hold on eternal life ; for we live no more of our time but is spent properly, and these few days, it is added, are full of trouble. Trouble is hard fare, but there is plenty of it. Sin is the seed of trouble, and trouble is all the harvest we reap by sin. Some render *trembling*, as Hab. iii. 16. Holy men tremble at the holiness of God, and all have reason to tremble on account of their own sinfulness. Others render *full of anger*. Trouble and anger are well expressed by the same word, seeing most of our troubles proceed from the anger of God, and are all greatly increased by our own anger. There are troubles in getting, keeping, and losing the things of this life. We have troubles in doing our duties, and for doing them ; and worst of all for not doing them, or for doing that which is not our duty. Besides, we are, or ought to be full of the troubles of sympathy and compassion at the troubles of others, so that we are always full of trouble.

*Ver. 2. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down ; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.* Man in his flourishing, is near to withering, for his standing is so short, that it is not so much as mentioned. The literal reading of Cant. ii. 11. is, "the flowers appear, the time of cutting is come," which suits the point in hand ; for it intimates that flowers are cut as soon as they appear. Such a flower is man, he cometh forth and is cut down ; as if death did rise early and watch for the flourishing flower to crop it. Man even in his best estate is vain, and many who have stood beyond that, have proved far worse than vain, bad as it is. We read often of the shadow of death ; and our life is but a shadow, because it continueth not. Death is a perfect shadow, and a shadow is the similitude of our imperfect life. The mind of man is more mutable than the wind ; it is hard to say what any man's mind is ; and there are very few that know their own minds, and even the body is changing every day ; and as for honour, power, riches, &c. they are not abiding, and the spiritual estate does not always continue the same ; so it may be well said "he continueth not."

Job having by these similitudes shown the frailty of man, says,

*Ver. 3. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?* Thus Job debases himself, *such an one!* a man, who besides the common condition of men, is brought so much lower by these afflictions. To open the eyes upon a man, signifies a diligent inspection of, and care over him ; or an accurate observation of his ways, so as to bring him to a strict account. He that will not bring a man to judgment for what he sees him do amiss, is said to connive or wink at him ; and it is as if Job had said, does it become thy greatness and majesty to take such strict notice of all the motions of so poor a creature as I am ? A due consideration of what we are, leads us to low thoughts of ourselves ; so Job pleads, *dost thou bring me into judgment with thee?* that is, I am no match for thee, thou canst not raise thy name by casting me down ; thou mayest honour thy mercy by pardoning, and thy grace by supporting me, but not thy power by overthrowing me. The worst and weakest of men, are the best foils to display the riches and beauty of grace and mercy.

*Ver. 4. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.* The Chaldee paraphrase reads, who can make a clean man that is polluted with sin? cannot one? that is God. Some allege, that Job would extenuate his actual sins from his original

depravity by this question. When David, Psal. li. confesses that he was shapen in iniquity, &c. was he thereby sewing a fig-leaf over his transgression? as if he would say, is it any wonder that I who was brought forth in iniquity should practise wickedness? no, he does not excuse, but humble himself, being convinced of his need of mercy, he prays for it, because he was conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity. Such, I think, was the frame of Job's spirit; and in pouring out this complaint upon his birth sin, he aggravates his own sinfulness. But woe unto those that excuse or extenuate their actual sins from the depravity of nature. Job having pleaded for pity, from the consideration of the weakness of man, the brevity of life, and his impure original, proceeds to another argument.

*Ver. 5. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.* Seeing there are certain bounds beyond which the life of man cannot be protracted, and since after death there is no returning, therefore he desires that he may have some relief from his troubles while he passes along. And in Psal. lxxxix. 48, it is said, "Remember Lord how short my time is." &c. Thus the Psalmist urges the Lord to grant some ease and respite in this life, because death cannot be far off, from which there is neither rescue nor returning. Our days and months here are under thine eye, and established by thy counsel; we live not at our own pleasure. Natural causes are somewhat, but the true bounds are set by God himself; his will is the limit of man's life: friends cannot lengthen, enemies cannot shorten the life of man one moment. The Jews could not accomplish the death of Christ till his hour was come. May God who keeps reckoning for us, and knows how near the period of our time is, prepare us for our departure. From this assertion Job forms an earnest petition in

*Ver. 6. Turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish as an hireling his day.* Job thus intreats the favour of God, or the forbearance of his anger. Turn away from me; let me have some peaceable days before I leave this world. He must accomplish his days as an hireling. He is a labourer, not a loiterer. Sin brought pain into our labour, but the duty of labour was before sin. The saints are not mercenaries; yet in the issue, they shall receive for the least work more than the best work can merit. As all that they do is in the sight of God, so it is kept in remembrance by him, Hebrews vi. 10. Both the labour of our callings, and of our sufferings shall have a full reward.

From verse 7 and 10, by a dissimilitude, and verse 11 and 12, by a similitude, Job amplifies and illustrates the truth, that "The days of man are determined," &c.

*Ver. 7. There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.* This may be viewed as an argument to move the Lord to spare Job; though he had beaten off his leaves, his substance being swept away by robbers, and he had lopt off his boughs and branches by cutting off his children by death, he seems to solicit that God would not continue to press upon him by his afflictions till he had cut him quite down. For he was not like a tree, which, when cut down, shoots forth at the root again.

Some think, that by this comparison Job expresses his hope of the resurrection, and then the words are a similitude. As a tree cut down sprouts again, so though man dies, he shall revive and rise again.

*Ver. 8. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground.* This is a supposition of still greater improbability than the former. 'Tis much that a tree cut down should grow much more if the stock wax old, &c. The death of corn in the ground is not total, for if the seminal life were quite extinguished, it could not yield either blade or ear; yet because the corruption or alteration of it is a kind of death, therefore it is used as an illustration of Christ's resurrection, and also of ours from a total death; so the root of a tree dying, in this sense, buds and brings forth, as,

*Ver. 9. Yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant.* This is an elegant metaphor, as if a tree smelled the water as soon as it came near; give it water and you shall soon perceive a growth. How doth this shame man, who has not only the scent of water, but has abundance of holy doctrine; and yet how little does he grow, yea, and some continue in a winter of ignorance and unbelief, and bring forth no fruit meet for repentance, or for the hope of eternal life, even when they enjoy such privileges.

Hence observe, that the grass and trees will condemn those who are often watered with the word of grace, but do not profit by it.

*Ver. 10. But man dieth and wasteth away yea man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?* The Hebrew is strong and powerful, man dieth; wasting and dying are but antecedents to giving up the ghost. Man decays and wastes, yea dies every day; as Paul speaking of his outward troubles saith, "I die daily;" but he does not give up the ghost every day, that is the last act. The question, and *where is he?* seems to carry a negation in it, that is, *Man is nowhere*; he is a wasting dying creature, while he lives, and when he gives up the ghost, himself and all his glory are gone, and that for ever out of this world. He and his riches, honour, and wisdom, are now separated. What is become of all his designs, devices, counsels, and thoughts? Trust not in princes nor any of the children of men, their breath is in their nostrils, they die, and then all their contrivances perish, the similitude follows.

*Ver. 11. As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up.* When natural moisture decays in man, he fails, and can no more revive himself than a river can recover its streams when it is cut off from these secret supplies and springs which it formerly received. Thus the similitude is applied in the following verse. But Sir R. Blackmore makes this also to be a dissimilitude.

A flowing river or a standing lake  
May their dry banks and naked shores forsake;  
Their waters may exhale and upward move,  
Their channel leave to roll in clouds above;  
But the returning winter will restore  
What in the summer they had lost before.  
But if, O man! thy vital streams desert  
Their purple channels and defraud the heart,  
With fresh recruits they ne'er will be supplied,  
Nor feel their leaping life's returning tide.

*Ver. 12. So man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep.* Death is here compared to sleep, and the resurrection to awaking. When man is laid in the grave, he shall not arise till the times of restitution of all things, when the heavens shall pass away, &c. And since they are to be so completely changed, it is no wonder that all things in this world are constantly changing. The peace and prosperity of kingdoms, and even the beauty and purity of churches, soon decay and pass away. When the heavens shall be no more, there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. They who have done evil shall receive their wages, and they who have improved their talents shall enter into the joy of the Lord. Job was so full of this hope, that he seems in haste to go to bed, and petitions for a grave. He is an earnest and humble suitor for that which nature least desires, yea, for that which it abhors. He petitions for the grave, as if there were some beauty in darkness, or loveliness in that king of terrors.

*Ver. 13. O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me!* The original intimates, hide me as a treasure. The bodies of believers are treasures as well as their souls. A secret place may be said to be the grave of a living man. It is said, that Obadiah hid the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave; this cave was like graves to these men though alive. Some think that Job did not so much desire death, but only to be hid alive out of the reach of these troubles which annoyed him; and this view is favoured by these words, *And keep me secret.* How long? *Until thy wrath be past.* That is, the effects of wrath. The original is, *thy nostril*; because the breath of the Lord is nothing else but his wrath, which, like a stream of brimstone, kindles the fiery Tophet. Job desires the Lord to let this breath pass, and then he is willing to be kept no longer secret. We have much more need to be hid while the wrath of God passeth by, than Moses had to be put into the cleft of the rock, and covered with his hand while his glory passed by. As God hides his people from the wrath of men, Psal. xxvii. So also from his own wrath. Our only refuge from the wrath of God is God himself, whose name is a strong tower where the righteous find safety. A good man is more sensible of Divine displeasure, and fears the appearance of wrath more than the feeling of bodily pain. Jeremiah says, "Correct me, O Lord, but not in thine anger. Let me but see and know that thou lovest me, and then smite me if thou wilt." But it is the rod of God, and not the wrath of God, that makes an unbeliever smart. It is not the breathing of grace but of sorrow that made him pray, *That thou wilt appoint me a set time.* A distressed soul often makes distracted prayers, and makes him desire more that his own will may be done than the will of God. It is the sole prerogative of God to set and appoint

times. "My times are in thy hand," my time of joy and sorrow, of honour and reproach, when I shall fall into, or be delivered from affliction, how long I shall live, &c. Hence note, That we should not only be content, but rejoice that our times are in the hand of God; and we should esteem it a privilege, as well as a duty, to refer all the circumstances of our petitions to the will of God. As our remembrance of God is the sum of our duty to him; so God's remembrance of us is the sum of all his mercies to us. So there is nothing more desirable than to be remembered of God, and it is the accomplishment of all our lawful desires to be so remembered of him. The thief said, "Lord remember me," &c. Such as have a place in the memory of Christ, shall not want a place in his kingdom.

Job having finished his petitions, proposes strange questions, intermixed with some noble resolutions.

*Ver. 14. If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.* Some suppose that Job is here correcting and reprehending himself. Thus I indeed desired the Lord to appoint me a set time, when he would restore me; but why do I vex myself, and trouble the Lord with vain wishes? Why should I expect what was never granted to any man? When I die, I shall not live again in this world; yet I am willing to die when God pleases, and I believe I shall live again in the world to come, and therefore wait in faith till this change come.

To wait, is an act of patience, and of hope expecting to receive; it is also an act of humility, and tone of perseverance. Even all the days of my appointed time will I wait, &c. As he who is willing to wait, as long as God sees meet, for deliverance; so he is ready cheerfully to obey God without delay or hesitation, like Abraham, who went with full intent to offer up his son Isaac.

Note, That it is our duty to wait God's time fully, and obey God immediately; for this purpose we need the patience of labourers to do the will of God, and also the patience of waiters to tarry for our answer and reward. Some understand the change for which Job waited, to be a change of his outward condition. Others think it is till death come. Death brings a change to all. The saints have a great and blessed change from sin and all its evil consequences, to the enjoyment of felicity, without the least fear of its termination. As one of our worthies said, When I die, I shall change my place but not my company; I shall have a new house, but my old society. This change is interpreted of the resurrection. One renders it, I will wait till my holy birthday come. The resurrection will be a birth-day to the world.

Hence observe, that the assured hope of a resurrection to eternal life, will support the soul under, and enable patiently to endure the ills of life.

*Ver. 15. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.* Some think this is the very form of words in which Job intended to answer God—which may be well expressed thus, 'Thou wilt put forth thy hand to the work of thy hand, and help me up when thou biddest me rise. God had cast Job into the mire, yet he believes that he will take him by the hand and lift him up, not only out of the ditch of affliction, but out of the grave of death. When a true friend reaches out his hand to help, it is an expression of the feeling of his heart. Since God has a desire to the work of his hand, they should have a strong affection to and desire towards him. It is the art of genuine faith to look through and beyond the darkest seasons of distress, and of death itself, and discover the light of life. Faith is a true prophet, "thou wilt have a desire" at a future period. He speaks of the time to come.

*Ver. 16. For now thou numberest my steps; dost thou not watch over my sin?* God knows all the motions of our hearts as well as the actions of our lives. The Septuagint translates, "Thou numberest my meditations," or the workings of my heart, as the whole course of a man is called his way, so the several actings of that course are called his steps. The question "Dost thou not watch over my sin?" seems an allusion to a severe creditor who gives no day, but presently exacts the penalty of his bond. Thus Job represents God as taking notice of all his sins with a view to punish, by bringing him into judgment for them all. We should, therefore, watch and pray lest we fall into temptation and transgress the law of God, since he observes our conduct so strictly; and for this purpose, we ought to take heed to what he has said in his word, and what he is daily doing in the course of his providence, and in the prospect of the judgment we should carefully watch our thoughts, words, and actions. Have we not cause to watch lest we transgress when God watches to chasten for our transgressions?

*Ver. 17. My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity.* Sealing is used to keep things secret that they may not be seen, and to keep them distinct that they may not be confused, and also for safety that they may be forthcoming. By this Job seems to say, My transgressions are kept safe that it may be ready as matter of accusation against me. Some suppose it is a metaphor taken from solicitors who have their papers sealed up and put into a bag. As impenitence seals our sins upon us, so it treasures up the wrath of God for our sins, Romans ii. 5. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hid, Hos. xii. 3; it is reserved to a day of reckoning; it is hid not with a covering of mercy, nor for protection, but for punishment. A godly man is apt to think that all his afflictions are the fruit of his own sins. But though the sins of good men appear to be sealed and sewed up in a bag, yet they shall shortly see them, bag and all, cast into the sea, and sinking to the bottom, like lead, in the mighty waters of free grace and undeserved mercies.

Job having shown, that when a man dies he shall return no more to his former state, which he proceeds to represent and prove by mountains, rocks, trees, &c. which are changed and consumed as if they had never been.

*Ver. 18. And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place.* In the first chapter of the prophecy of Nahum, we have a clear commentary upon this text. What can be said more, and nothing less deserves to be said, either of the instability of the strongest creatures, or of the omnipotency of the God of strength? Every mixt body hath the seed of corruption in it, and therefore must naturally corrupt, though God should not destroy it providentially. Faith is said to remove mountains; but it is only upon this account, because it engages the power of God, who alone can do it. The power of God is invisible, and so is much of the weakness of man. The constitution of the creature makes the former visible, and the corruption of it makes the latter visible. Every thing that man sees reminds him of what he is, and what he must shortly be.

*Ver. 19. The waters wear the stones, thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth, and thou destroyest the hope of man.* Waters are soft, yet they make impressions upon that which is hard. This similitude intimates that Job's affliction by long continuance would wear him out at last. God once brought an universal deluge, which washed away not only all that grew out of the earth, but all that lived on the face of the earth. Our sin and the wrath of God turns our greatest worldly comforts into curses. "He destroys the hope of man." He destroys the hope of man, and disappoints the vain hopes, even of good men. Yet the hope of the saints endure for ever, for they shall never be ashamed of Christ their hope. But when they vainly hope for happiness in any worldly enjoyment, the Lord, in mercy, blasts their hopes, and shows how weak and withering the creature is, that they may hope in and depend for happiness on God alone. If the matter upon which our hopes are fixed be perishing, our hopes must perish, and if our hopes are overcome, we are undone for ever, as Job concludes in the next verse.

*Ver. 20. Thou prevailest for ever against him, and He passeth; thou changest his countenance and sendest him away.* When God breaks down, man cannot build up, and if he wound, no man can heal; both breach and wound must remain for ever, unless the same hand that made them make them up again. What is weakness to omnipotence? What is folly to wisdom? What is mortal and changeable, to eternal and unchangeable? that man should hinder God to prevail.

*And he passeth.* That is he dieth, so the word is used, chap. x. 21. Man must pass away, whenever God gives him an order to depart. Death defaces the beauty, and blasts the comeliness of man. How absurd and foolish must it be for a mortal man to glory in that, which a fit sickness can so easily eclipse, and which death will so soon totally destroy. Man only waits a dispatch from God, and he dies. Ah! alas! how soon he dies! However many changes he may experience, as he passes through this world, he must soon change from life into the state of the dead. Happy, and only happy are those who are daily and duly preparing for that last change.

*Ver. 21. His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not, and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.* This is a description of a father, ignorant or insensible of the preferment of his sons; and as he knows not the good which they come to, so neither does he know the evil which comes on them, they are diminished in number, but few are left; or they are made low and poor. There is little left to them, "yet he perceiveth it not." That is, he is not grieved at it. For a dead man hath no

knowledge of what is doing amongst the living; and as they have no knowledge of, so neither have they any affection for this world. They neither rejoice with, nor mourn over their nearest relations, on account of what befalls them in this life. Let this admonish parents to commit their children to the Lord for support and protection, and beware of taking inordinate and immoderate care, by right or wrong means, to promote their children to wealth or honour. Some live miserably, that their children may live in affluence; yea, it is to be feared, that not a few have ruined their own souls, by the means they have taken to obtain wealth, to aggrandize their families. But, Oh! what a pitiful delusion is it! Who can tell how many children have reason to curse their parents, for thus putting it into their power to dishonour God, and ruin themselves? Men act like atheists, when they say, "The living know they shall die;" not from a certainty of knowledge, causing them to prepare for death, but from a careless indifference, causing them to slight death; as if they said, death befalls all, and therefore should not trouble any. This is the way that many amuse and deceive themselves with their knowledge of the certainty of death; as if it were sufficient to say, they know they shall die, without making the least preparation for that important event. Oh! that our knowledge of the certainty of our own death, would lead us out to a habitual faith in, and love to our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Ver. 22. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.* It may be rendered, While his flesh, &c. while his soul is within him, he shall mourn. He shall be in pain and misery, as long as he lives, especially while he lives as a sick man doth, on the borders and confines of death. This is not mere speculation, but Job's own experience. He felt and endured what he spake to others.

Job's three friends having severally attacked him, to which he has made a distinct answer. And thus he finishes his reply to the first charge of all the three.

"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him."

## CHAPTER XV.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,*

This begins the second section of this disputation.

Eliphaz first represents Job as speaking that which was unworthy a wise man, and thereby charges him with folly.

*Ver. 2. Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?*

*Ver. 3. Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?* Eliphaz seems to be angry with Job because he did not tamely yield to the reproofs and counsels of him and his friends, and he charges him with vanity, ignorance, passion, and useless talk, as if he had said, What is to be expected from a vain man but unprofitable talk, which passeth like wind, which, like a tempest in the air, not only does no good, but, like an east wind, is prejudicial to all within its reach. If the unprofitable servant, who hides his talent and neglects to improve it, will be condemned, surely he who uses his talent in a vain unprofitable manner shall not escape. The tongue of the wise is as a tree of life. Grace in the heart blossoms at the lips in savoury words to the use of edifying.

Eliphaz next charges Job with impiety of such a kind as is altogether inconsistent with the character of a godly man.

*Ver. 4. Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.* It is probable that he founded this assertion on some expression that Job had used in his defence, it is no easy matter so to speak as not to give occasion to those who seek occasion to censure. When a godly man sins he breaks the command and so dishonours God, but he never wishes the law of God repealed as a wicked man does.

To cast off, signifies to make void; and those who live without God may live without prayer; but Job could do none of these.

Jeremiah classes prayerless families with the heathen, as if they were the same, ch. x. 25. "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name." As he that restrains prayer deprives himself of a powerful principle to prevent speaking wickedly, so Eliphaz seems to bring in the one as a consequence of the other.

*Ver. 5. For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou choosest the tongue of the crafty.* The word is *teaches it*; when men cast off the fear of God, they soon become teachers of others to follow them both by word and deed. To choose the tongue of the crafty, is deliberately and with design to act cunningly and deceitfully.

Eliphaz seems to charge Job with want of candour, in that he had said, ch. vi. 24. "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue, and cause me to understand wherein I have erred;" and yet he held fast his own opinions, and evaded and despised all that they had said to him. Instead of surmises, Eliphaz now boldly asserts that Job's own words condemned him.

*Ver. 6. Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I; yea, thine own lips testify against thee.* Our Lord, Luke xix. 22, says, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee." It is the most certain and effectual way to condemn upon confession. But the inference from what is said is not always fair and candid.

The high priest, Matt. xxvi. 65, rent his clothes, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy, what farther need have we of witnesses." It was once customary for witnesses to put their hand on the head of the offender, saying, It is thine own wickedness that condemns thee and not us. Much more does their own wickedness condemn them who may be justly punished without witnesses.

*Ver. 7. Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made before the hills?*

*Ver. 8. Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?*

*Ver. 9. What knowest thou, that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us.*

*Ver. 10. With us are both the grey-headed and very aged men, much elder than thy father.*

*Ver. 11. Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee.*

In these verses, Eliphaz continues to reprove Job for the high conceit he entertained of himself, and also for the low estimation in which he held the comforts of God tendered to him by his friends.

He reproves him, ver. 7, by asking, *Art thou the first man that was born?* As if Job had thought his experience greater than any man's, and then for arrogating to himself such knowledge as can be attained only by special inspiration, ver. 8. *Hast thou heard the secret of God?* Yet "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Psal. xxv. 14. He reveals to his people the secrets of his bounty, and of their duty, what he will do for them, and what they must do for him. When they have heard the secrets of God, they must communicate them to others. It is the duty of good men to diffuse wisdom. But it is probable that Eliphaz meant, when he said, *Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?* that Job had spoken as if he had the exclusive possession of wisdom, as if all were obliged to receive what he says, because he saith it, like the Pope, *who thus restrains wisdom to himself.* But the Apostle speaks very differently, 2 Cor. i. 24. "Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." As if he had said, Do not think that I take upon me as a Lord over your consciences, to impose any command of mine upon you. No, I am but a servant of God, to instruct you in his counsels, and to comfort you with his promises.

Eliphaz, in reproving Job, discovers his own pride, ver. 9, *What knowest thou that we know not?* this is the language of a high mind, it is unseemly to say so even when it may be true. A man may reprove pride with much pride. How often is passion and anger checked with passion. So inconsistent is man that he often runs into the very fault he is reproving. As a proof of his assertion in this verse, he produces, ver. 10, *With us are the grey-headed, &c.* It is no new thing for men to fancy they have truth on their side because they received it from antiquity.

The meaning of ver. 11 appears thus: Are the consolations of God which we have offered small unto thee because thou hast some secret hidden thing in thy breast, hence, observe,

That a man who is full of his own wisdom, is not fit to receive instruction, counsel, or consolation from others. Some remain ignorant by presuming that they know enough.

Jeremiah tells the Jews, ch. v. 25, "Your sins hinder good things from you." As sin hinders good from coming to us, so it hinders the word from working good in us. The Apostle Peter, 1 cpis. ii. 1, gives the rule, "Wherefore laying aside all guile, hy-

pocrisies, and envies." As if he had said, Till you cast out these you will never thrive under the word.

The consolations of God, which Job is here charged with undervaluing, were the promises made to him by his friends in the name of God. All consolation belongs to God, all comfort is in his power and at his disposal. The consolation of all our possessions and relations is from Him. If we would have comfort we must trade to heaven for it. It is a commodity that cannot be found in any earthly enjoyment. How highly then ought we to esteem, and how carefully maintain communion with God, seeing comfort is more to us than all we have. If we have comfort, let our estate be what it will, we are well enough. Comfort is the life of our lives. Have we not reason then to draw nearer unto God, who hath all comfort in his hand, and without whom the best things cannot comfort us. He can make a cross a comfort as well as our comforts crosses. Whatever instrument is employed, still it is God who comforts those that are cast down; it is not your friend who comforts you, but God by sending such a friend.

*Ver. 12. Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and what doth thine eyes wink at?* Thy heart hath seized upon thee; thou art led captive by the impetuosity of thy own spirit. There is a kind of violence in the allurements and enticings of the heart. As a man is said to be carried away by the ill counsels of others, so also by his own. Our hearts may quickly carry us beyond the line of modesty and honesty, yea, beyond the bounds of reason and of grace, even the heart of the best is sometimes carried away in prayer, or in hearing the word the body remains, but the mind, which is the man, is gone either about worldly business or pleasures.

Eliphaz, in this question, seems to say, Why do thy affections master thy judgment, why are thy passions too hard for thy reason? He farther questions him, What doth thine eye wink at? It is sometimes a sign of disdain and scorn; and Solomon puts a winking eye and a froward mischief-devising heart together, and it is said, Prov. x. "He that winketh with his eye causeth sorrow;" it denotes a deceitful man; he brings sorrow upon those he deceives, and either the sorrow of repentance or of punishment on himself.

He now brings forward a very high charge against Job.

*Ver. 13. That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest such words go out of thy mouth.* As if he had said, Instead of humbling thyself under the punishment of thy sin, thou, with an incensed mind, contendest with God himself in his judgments and counsels, which thou hast discovered by the words of thy mouth.

*Spirit* is here put for the will, thoughts, and counsels, of man, elated with pride and arrogance.

Eliphaz certainly does not mean that Job avowedly defied God by a direct opposition to Him. But that he showed so much impatience, and did not submit as he ought under the dealings of God with him. Hence, observe,

When our hearts rise up against the dispensation of God towards ourselves or others, we may be said to turn our spirits against God himself. We may indeed be guilty of this sin before we are aware, but to all such God will say,—Inasmuch as ye opposed my word, and murmured against my works, as ye were angry with my dispensations, and discontented with what I have done, ye have turned your spirit against me. God knows and will take vengeance not only of direct and avowed, but also of constructive treason against his sovereignty, except the offender repent and turn unto Him. At the last day He will judge thousands for opposing Him, who it may be in some things have pleaded for Him, yea, and even suffered for Him. Though usually when the spirit of any man turns against God that man's works and words turn against Him too.

It seems Eliphaz esteemed some of Job's words to be proud, blasphemous, reproachful, and false, and if so, they merit severe reproof. But it is neither fair nor charitable to make a general assertion without quoting the very words.

Our words are or ought to be suitable to our spirits. Some can dissemble much and speak golden words while they are only dross, but ordinarily the "vile person will speak villany, the covetous covetously, the proud man proudly; and, on the contrary, the sober and humble man will speak soberly.

Observe, That he that dares to speak evil is arrived at a great height of wickedness. Eliphaz makes this the effect of a heart turned against God. Such words as these shew that thou art not only a sinful man but impudent in sinning.

Eliphaz having reproved Job for his unprofitable words and uncomely carriage, now



proceeds to convince him of his supposed error in judgment, or unsound opinion, viz. that he boasted of a sound heart and a correct practice.

*Ver. 14. What is man that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?* Both parts of the verse import the same thing, *clean* and *righteous* are nearly of one signification, yet they may be distinguished. To be *clean* refers to the purity of man's nature, to be *righteous*, refers to the integrity of his life. So man cannot merit, for he is not *clean*, and he cannot answer God for he is not *righteous*. It is as if Eliphaz had said, O Job! *If God should search thy nature, what art thou that thou should be clean? If God should search thy life, what art thou that thou should be righteous.*

But had Job anywhere asserted that he was clean? His discourse everywhere demonstrates the contrary, except 1st. As righteous by another. 2d. As not scandalous to others by any notorious crime, or conscious to himself of any close hypocrisy, and in this sense he was clean, and so is every believer. They are clean, 1st. Meritoriously by Christ. 2d. Efficaciously by the Spirit sanctifying and uniting them to Christ. 3d. Instrumentally by the world. "Ye are clean through the word," John xv. 4. 4th. By faith. "He made no difference, purifying their hearts by faith." Job had indeed spoken much to vindicate himself, but he spake much more to abase himself before God, and therefore Eliphaz might have drawn a fairer conclusion than that he affirmed himself clean. Hence observe in general,

That when persons are engaged in controversy, they sometimes do not understand, and seldom report the truth of each other's positions. So the Papists call us Solifidians, as if we denied all good works, because we affirm that a man is justified by faith alone without works, though not by that faith which is alone. The question, *What is man?* may refer to his *nature*, his birth, to the matter out of which he was made, or to his present condition. But chiefly in reference to his corruption and sinful depravity.

*Ver. 15. Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; and the heavens are not clean in his sight. Behold,* is usually a note of attention, here of admiration. Whom will he trust if not his saints? In general, the word *saint*, signifies a person separated. Holy persons are separated unto God from the world. By saints here, some understand the patriarchs; others the holy angels, who are without the least taint of sin, either in their natures or lives; others include holy men with angels. He puts no trust in his saints, no not in those who are most holy. The word which we translate to *put trust*, signifies properly, to believe. He does not "believe in his saints," or not "confide" in them. The word rendered to trust, signifies sometimes strength or firmness; the same word signifies both to trust and to be firm, because it is on the supposition either of a natural or moral firmness that we do not trust any person or thing. Hence some translate, there is not one *immutable*, there is no *faithfulness* in his saints; that is, firmness or unchangeableness of nature, is not to be found in them. There is no created holiness sure, stable, and perfect in itself.

Some understand by heavens, the *angels*, others the *saints*, because they have their conversation in heaven. As carnal men are called *earth*, because their hearts and conversation are fixed to the earth, so spiritual and heavenly-minded men may be called *heaven*, because their hearts and conversation are in heaven.

We rather understand it in a proper sense; the heavens, which are the most excellent and pure part of the creation. That may be clean, considered simply in itself, which before God is as an unclean thing. The heavens are the purest of all inanimate creatures, yet they are not pure in the sight of God, therefore no man is or can be so.

*Ver. 16. How much more abominable and filthy is man who drinketh iniquity like water.* If he put no trust in glorified saints, then no marvel if man be called abominable *who drinketh iniquity like water*. This verse is a description of the sinfulness both of his nature and life.

Hence observe, That sin and sin only, makes men abominable in the sight of God. As he is abominable to God and good men before he repents, so he is abominable to himself when he repents, Ezek. xxxvi. "They shall loath themselves," not being able to endure the discovery of their own corruptions.

*To drink iniquity like water.* Intimates not only the frequency of sinning, but the abundance and pleasure taken in the commission of it. A general argument is; since the most pure and holy creatures are not able to stand before God in their own purity, how shall the impure and unholy stand before him.

Some think that Eliphaz spake in this manner to Job. 1st. To shew him that even a regenerate man can merit nothing from God because his holiness is still imperfect and his corruptions are abominable. 2d. That it is very consistent with the character and perfections of God to afflict good men in this life to humble them. 3d. To excite Job to bear the cross which the Lord had laid upon him for his good, patiently, and to resist every temptation firmly. So if this was Eliphaz's object, he did not dispute with Job, that man was by nature filthy and abominable, but that man, even in a state of grace, is so as to the remains of corruption that dwells in him, and in regard of his daily sins, he may be said to *drink iniquity like water*. That Job had behaved like a hypocrite or wicked man, was decidedly the opinion of his friends, but there is no necessity to conclude from what they said, that they absolutely judged him to be one.

*Ver. 17. I will shew thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare.* As if he had said, thou art out of the way, thou art in the dark; and while I state what I have learned by the help of all my senses, to lead thee out of that labyrinth of error in which thou art entangled, I beg an attentive audience.

While either by way of instruction we teach true doctrine, or by way of information report the truth of any action, it is our duty to declare upon knowledge; we must take heed of declaring upon surmises, upon a bare *hear say*, or *I thought so*. That which we have clearly learned, we may teach confidently, and he that is taught should teach. "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." Let others partake of thy experience. "Come and I will tell thee what God hath done for my soul." Holy knowledge must be communicated, such light must not be put under a bushel, nor such a talent wrapt up in a napkin.

*Ver. 18. Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it.* He does not mean worldly-wise men, but godly-wise men, who received it from their fathers. Truth must not be hid, it should be conveyed down to posterity. It is more precious than gold, and parents should be careful to instruct their children in the knowledge of divine truths; it is a common good, no man hath the sole property of it, every man may challenge a part of this possession. The Lord saith, "shall I hide from Abraham?" no I will not, for I know Abraham will not hide it. It is our duty to impart the truths we know to all about us, and it is a good mean to increase our own stock of knowledge.

*Ver. 19. To whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them.* When it is said, that the earth was given to such alone, it means that they only had the earth given them by special promise, and peculiar promise, or the giving of the earth may be considered either as the giving that which is good, or giving it for good as a gift of bounty, or as a gift of mercy; in the latter sense, the earth is given to good men alone. None have it for good but they who are good, and they only make a good use of it. These only receive the earth from a father's hand. "Godliness hath the promise of this life. No stranger or enemy passed." That is, none marched through their land to disturb or plunder them. Again, the word stranger is taken for one that is erroneous or idolatrous. This notion of the *stranger* is as if Eliphaz had said, The wise men whose authority I produce in this cause, were sound in judgment and pure in worship, they did not mingle with idolaters and heretics, they neither learned their works nor received their doctrines, and are therefore witnesses worthy of credit; for no idolater or person of unsound principles were admitted among them.

Hence observe, That as it is the happiness of a people to be free from the oppression of strangers, so it is to be preserved from the mixture of evil men whose worship is impure and doctrine erroneous. Eliphaz having by way of preface, given proof of what he was about to press upon Job, both from his own experience and the consent of antiquity, he now proposes the point itself.

*Ver. 20. The wicked man man travels with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.* The word signifies an unquiet motion. Unquiet is the name, and unquietness the state of a wicked man. He travels with pain all his days. His whole life is nothing else but continual pain, he has conceived mischief, and he would bring forth iniquity. A wicked man has the pain, but not the deliverance of a travailing woman. And though he sometimes seems to prosper, yet there is somewhat or other that sticks still in the birth, and pains him in the midst of all his prosperity.

*And the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.* He that oppresseth must have power, and some desire power to enable them to oppress. They that have much power need much holiness, that they may use it well; much power is a temptation to do much hurt. A godly man knows not the number of his years, but he knows by whom they are numbered, that satisfies him. But a wicked man would have the account in his own hand, he would be Lord of all, even of time too, but he cannot.

Eliphaz having laid down this position, that *pain* is the portion of a wicked man, proceeds to the proof.

*Ver. 21. A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.* It is said of a godly man, Psal. cxii. "No evil tidings shall make him fear, (though he hears a dreadful sound of danger) his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." While we have peace within, war without will not much trouble us, even when it afflicts us. But a wicked man is always subject to fear; he that is a servant of sin must be a slave to fear. No sooner had our first parents sinned, than the voice of God became a dreadful sound in their ears, and the same curse still produces the same effect in all their posterity.

A wicked man interprets all reports either to the discredit of others, or to the disquiet of himself; yea when his friends counsel him for his good, he suspects that it is only setting a snare to catch him. A blind, secure, sleepy, or seared conscience, is tame and quiet with the worst of men. But all this while, though this wicked man hath some ease, yet he has no peace, though conscience has no tongue to speak, or ear to hear, yet *in prosperity*, or in this false peace, *the destroyer shall come upon him*. Peace is so near allied, and so great a friend to prosperity, that one word may well serve both.

So at best it is but a seeming, not a real prosperity, for when wicked men think themselves most safe and secure, they are near destruction. That fool who sang himself to sleep saying, "Soul thou hast goods laid up for many years," could not retain his soul one night. Their temporal short spring is only an antecedent of their eternal winter. And their winter is not the going down of the sap to the root, but the pulling them up by the roots. Psal. xcii. "When the wicked spring up as grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever."

*Ver. 22. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, he is waited for of the sword.* This is an aggravation of the miserable state of a wicked man, who either has no outward prosperity, or his prosperity is nothing to him, he enjoys it not; and how great is his misery! When he is visited with affliction he gives himself up for lost. A good man, in the darkest night of trouble, and in the greatest storm, commits the helm to Christ, saying, "why art thou disquieted O my soul?" I shall yet praise him. But a wicked man hath no God to hope in, therefore he cannot say so. That man cannot cast his burden upon the Lord, who cares not how he burdens God with his sins, therefore he must bear and sink under both burdens himself. He cannot believe that he shall return out of the darkness of trouble who delights in the darkness of iniquity.

He waits for the sword, which he fears will destroy him; or, he waits for a sword to defend himself; or passively, he is waited for of the sword when he thinks not of it. A man is said to be waited for by an enemy when he intends to assault him unawares. He that waits for the sword is always in fear; and he that is waited for by the sword is always in danger. The destruction of a wicked man is inevitable.

*Ver. 23. He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at hand.* The Heb. is only, "He wandereth abroad for bread, where?" that is, no man knows where, and he knows not whither himself. *To be brought to a piece of bread*, is to be brought to the lowest ebb in worldly things. To want bread is ill; but to wander about for it is worse. He that wants bread is pinched; but he that wanders for it is disgraced. To be denied superfluities may be a mercy; but it is extreme misery to be destitute of necessities. The law made such provision for the poor, that the Jews had no wanderers for bread. He only is a beggar that makes a trade of it, not he that asks bread in a strait, for David did this oftener than once.

Whereas Eliphaz speaks especially of the oppressor, we may observe, that oppression is the nearest way to poverty. They who make beggars to satisfy their lust shall be forced to beg for hunger. It is very dangerous to make provision for the flesh even by lawful means, to fulfil the lusts of it; but it is awful to make provision for the

flesh by oppression and deceit. But it may be not so much the real as the imaginary want of a wicked man that Eliphaz here intends. He wanders while he stays at home, and seeks for bread while his barn and table are full of it. It is an affliction to be poor for want of riches; but it is a curse to be poor in the possession of riches. "He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver." To be satisfied is more than to be rich; and he is always poor who is dissatisfied. He that expects satisfaction from the creature will be disappointed. A godly man learns in every state to be content, and therefore a small portion of the creature satisfies him; whereas a carnal man is content in no condition, even when he is rich he never thinks he has enough.

Hence observe, That as abundance cannot satisfy, so imaginary wants may be more distressing than real poverty.

*The day of darkness* is either the day of death or affliction; there is a day of the Lord that hath nothing but darkness in it, Amos v. 20. "Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness and not light?" To be *ready at hand*, is that it is near, and will shortly seize upon him. And to *know*, is here opposed to conjecture; it is to be fully persuaded. The highest act of faith is expressed by knowledge, 1 John ii. 4. "Hereby we know that we know him." So here he knows in his own breast that evil shall be upon him. A day of darkness may come over the saints, but that day blows over; it is Christ only who can turn darkness into light, death to life, and the waters of sorrow into the wine of joy. His darkness shall never be removed who will not flee to Christ for light.

*Ver. 24. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle.* In this verse we have a double effect of these troubles, which are the portion of a wicked man. Trouble without and anguish within shall make him afraid, and then prevail upon him. There is a threefold fear. To be spiritually afraid is good, and to be naturally afraid is not evil, for Christ was not only afraid but amazed; and there is a distracting fear which is at once the sin and punishment of wicked men. God can create weapons in our own hearts to fight against us. Distracting fear is the portion of a wicked man. The troubles of the righteous are many, but their fears are few; excess of fear may take hold of him, but it shall not prevail, Micah vii. 8. "When I fall I shall arise," but the wicked fall and rise no more. They are more than conquered; they are utterly ruined. We are no match either for temptations or afflictions unless Christ be our second. Peter fell into temptation, but Christ undertook for him, therefore it could not prevail against him; "I have prayed that thy faith fail not."

When Eliphaz says trouble and anguish shall prevail as a king armed for battle, it means, they shall prevail irresistibly. The wicked man shall not be able to stand their charge, much less repulse it. Sin prevails upon wicked men as a king ruling over them at last; trouble, (which is the fruit of sin) shall prevail upon them as a king oppressing and destroying them. They who will not submit to the law as a king to rule them, shall be forced to submit to the curse of the law as a king to punish them.

The grievous sins with which wicked men are chargeable are stated as the cause of their punishment.

*Ver. 25. For he stretcheth out his hand against God and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty.* The bodily members, especially the hand and tongue, are made the weapons of unrighteousness both against God and man; and in a figure, a man's power, wealth, wit, and learning are his hand, and are often used in a way of rebellion against God. When they wish there were no God, or oppose his will and injure his people, they may be said to stretch out the hand against God. We cannot say that every one who sins stretches out his hand against God; there are degrees of sinning, there is a presumptuous sin, with full consent of the will and against clear light. Every sin is a transgression of the law of God, but every sin is not a despising of the word of the Lord. It is apprehended that the *presumptuous sin* in the Old Testament answers to the *sin against the Holy Ghost* in the New, because no sacrifice was appointed for the one under the law, and the other is said to be unpardonable. Heb. x. 26. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." They who despise the one sacrifice for sin reject the only remedy, and expose themselves to the just vengeance of God. We have no reason to dally with our lusts when we hear that they war against our soul. But we should not only abstain from them, but abhor them, when we consider that they war against God.

A wicked man, by transgressing the commands and refusing to obey the call of God, hardens his heart, and thereby *he strengthens himself against the Almighty*, which in Heb. signifies *all power*. Omnipotency is one of the incommunicable attributes of God. All the power of man is of his giving, but he has not given all power to any man; only Christ as Mediator has all power given to him. It is not the will of God to do all that is in his power; but it is in his power to do all that he wills. He is self-sufficient and needs help from none. He calls for service that man may have the honour of it, not because he needs it. If those shall perish who do not work for God, what shall be the end of those who in the midst of received light stretch out their hands and strengthen themselves to work wickedly against the Almighty.

Man strengthens himself against the Almighty, 1. By carnal pleas and reasonings; such as, the multitude do so, and even great men do so. He sets up reason against the law of God, which is the quintessence of reason. 2. He strengthens himself against the Almighty by presumption, saying, God has mercy for sinners, why not for me though I sin? It is good to plead mercy to strengthen faith, that sin committed shall be pardoned; but woe to those that presume to sin that grace may abound. 3. Others in hopes of worldly gain. "We shall find all precious substance," &c. Prov. i. 13.

By minding earthly things we neglect God, which issues in contempt of him, and then in open war against the Almighty; and can there be any thing more absurd and foolish? O vain man, what wilt thou do next? The following verse exhibits the awful spectacle.

*Ver. 26. He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers.* Eliphaz carries on the metaphor of a battle, and still prosecutes the strange progress and daring wickedness of man, who having strengthened himself by hardening his heart against God "runs upon him with his neck," (so some render) that is, he runs upon him audaciously and proudly with a daring spirit.

Hence observe, That all opposition to God arises from pride. James iv. 6: "God resisteth the proud," which shews that the proud assault God. "As in his pride he persecutes the poor," Psal. x. 2, so from the same cause he opposes God. Humble persons like the publican do not venture to lift up their eyes to heaven, but proud sinners lift up their necks against God.

From our own translation, "He runs upon him, even on the neck of God," that is, he sins fiercely and fearlessly, he charges boldly in his very face. Bucklers were offensive as well as defensive weapons. As it secured the body against the sword or arrow of the adversary. So the boss or pike of the buckler served to pierce those who pressed near it. God's buckler is his holy word, and the bosses of it are the threatenings and curses of the law. And men may be said to run upon the bosses of God's buckler, when they go on sinning even when God is making them smart for sin, Isa. lvii. Or like Ahab, "In the time of their affliction sin more against the Lord."

Jeremiah speaks of the bellows being burnt and the lead consumed of the fire; that is, when all instruments and means of refining were spent in vain, they came out as full of dross as they went into the furnace. It is then no wonder that God says he will spend no more of his judgments upon them, Isa. i. 5. To revolt from God and run upon him, is much the same. From wicked men persevering in their opposition to God, notwithstanding the means used to reclaim them. Learn that indulgence in sin does not satisfy, but increase a sinful appetite.

Eliphaz seems next to shew, that the riches and power of a wicked man is the cause of his continued rebellion against God.

*Ver. 27. Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collups of fat on his flanks.* Both parts of the verse mean the same thing, and shews the wicked man's worldly prosperity by the usual visible effects of it. It is usual to describe wicked men by fatness, Psal. lxxviii. "He slew the fattest of them;" that is, the worst of them. Psal. xvii. "They are enclosed in their own fat, with their mouth they speak proudly." The priests and rulers are represented as strong or fat bulls, when they conspired against our Lord. The Scripture speaks thus, not because there is any moral evil in the external appearance of the body, but because the man that is intent on that question, What shall I eat, &c.? and is careful how to feed his body, thereby discovers his sin though he do not grow fat, as a man may continue poor though he may be very covetous. And indeed such as make a god of their belly deserve to be called epicures rather than Christians. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked;" an evil heart turns the blessings of God into the means of rebellion against him. They who desire to

please appetite cannot endeavour to please God. When the apostle exhorts to put on the Lord Jesus, Rom. xiii. 14. he adds, "and make no provision for the flesh;" as if he had said, Unless you forbear providing for lusts, you will have little leisure and less desire to put on Christ. There is an inward gluttony and drunkenness when the thoughts run upon dainty dishes and full cups; such persons are as far from desiring to be filled with the Spirit, as those who are visibly drunk with the excessive use of strong drink.

The excessive use of the creature is the first cause of the wicked man's excessive sinning. The second follows.

*Ver. 28. And he dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps.* Eliphaz describes the power of a wicked man, and gives it as a reason of his fierceness against God. He either comes to cities already overthrown, or overthrows them and builds them for himself to dwell in, and his power renders him insolent. Others interpret this as the wicked man's decay; he shall dwell in a house ready to fall about his ears. The judgments of God are always just, and sometimes visibly so, Psal. ix. 16. "The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." Art cannot prevent the decays of nature, much less divine judgments.

*Ver. 29. He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth.* The man who says in his heart he will be rich, lays a snare for himself and forgets the author of temporal as well as spiritual riches. Deut. viii. 18. "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth;" we can no more add a penny to our estate than a cubit to our stature. A carnal man ascribes his wealth to his own industry, and claims them as his own, "my fruits and my goods." But a good man like David speaks of all that he possesses as the Lord's, of "thine own have we given thee." But suppose he get riches, yet he cannot retain them.

*Neither shall his substance continue.* The word rendered "substance" signifies also power and strength, because riches enable men to do great things; but however strong and substantial they are in the opinion of men, they shall not continue; they are but a shadow, and what is gathered by unrighteousness is scattered by the wrath of God. As the little which a righteous man hath, is better, so it is surer than the great riches of many wicked. Sin makes no provision for the soul, and but very ill provision for the body.

But suppose the wicked man's substance for bulk and matter continues long, yet the beauty and comfort of it is soon gone. That is perfect only in a strict sense to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away. But a wicked man is never satisfied with what he enjoys, neither can he retain what he has, Prov. xii. 3. "A man shall not be established in wickedness. Athanasius said of Julian the Apostate, when in the height of his power, "He is but a little cloud, he will soon vanish."

*Ver. 30. He shall not depart out of darkness, the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.* Not to depart out of darkness imports abiding misery, whether grief of spirit or outward troubles. "The just man falleth seven times and riseth again." He hath as many resurrections as falls. "But the wicked shall fall into mischief." Nothing makes our falling either into sin or trouble a mischief to us, but our continuing in it. He who has no desire to depart from sin, shall never be delivered from the darkness of misery. And if these negative evils are so distressing, what must the following be: *The flame shall dry up his branches.* The Lord can make any affliction a flame to dry up the most beautiful branches of a sinful people or person. Whatever is an instrument of his indignation is his flame. He can consume and dry up riches, honour, and health. God hath especial flames for every branch; nothing can continue to do us good when He gives commission to any of his flames to search or consume it. Joel i. 19. "O Lord to thee will I cry, for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field." The flame of which he complains was the extreme heat of the sun, which sends out refreshing beams, when tempered with showers; but when the rain is long withheld, they become scorching flames, by which God testifies against a sinful people.

God has no need to prepare armies to contend with wicked men. Psalm xviii. 15. "At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils the foundations of the world were discovered." What a strange power Christ manifested when he only confessed "I am he;" his enemies fell to the ground. If he do but breathe at the wicked he fills them with

consuming sorrow. "By the breath of his mouth they go away." And even the man of sin, who has stood so long by the flattering breath of men, shall be consumed at the appointed season by the breath of God.

Eliphaz having stated the wicked man's sad condition, and the causes of it, concludes with an application of the whole.

*Ver. 31. Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity, for vanity shall be his recompense.* In the close of this verse, and beginning of ver. 32. he enforces the exhortation in the first clause, and in the close of ver. 32. and ver. 33. he doth it allegorically. He then speaks of hypocrites, who corrupt the worship of God, or are corrupt, while they pretend to worship God; and then of oppressors, who pervert justice, or deal falsely among men. All which he concludes by a description of their evil actions, (the cause of all their sufferings), under the elegant metaphor of child-bearing.

The original word for *deceived* signifies either the turning of the foot or heart, or both out of the way. Psalm cxix. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." That is, I have been deceived. Man can deceive, and often does deceive himself; but the word also implies the cunning activity of an external agent to lead poor souls out of the way. But *let not him that is deceived*, whether by the fallacious arguments of his own heart, or by the subtilty of others, *believe in vanity*. He that is most deceived is most apt to trust that which will deceive him more, and gives not only his consent but confidence to that which is not fit to be trusted,—*vanity*.

The word rendered vanity is not the same as that Eccles. i. which signifies only a light thing; but here it signifies rashness, a lie, a deceit; vain things are false, lying, and deceivable, therefore one word serves for both. Vanity may be taken for any creature comfort, especially these which are the revenue of sinful practices. Sin leads to these frail and transitory things of profit, pleasure, or honour, in hope of satisfaction. But sin in its nature is vanity, and the fruits of it are vain too. Man is full of craft, which makes him deceitful; and he is empty of true wisdom, which renders him a prey to the deceit of others.

Idols are called *lying vanities*, because though they can do no good, yet they promise much. Riches are vanity and a lie, because they cannot do so much good as they promise. The creature promises to ease us of our cares and satisfy our desires, yet it multiplies and increases them. Riches are not food but fuel to our desires, yet they do not deceive us till we are deceived, nor do they deceive us as either possessed or used, but as adored and trusted. It is a special part of that worship which we owe to God to trust Him, and whatever we trust besides we make a god of it. God never deceived nor failed any that trusted in him, and yet men will not be persuaded to trust in Him. For though sin and the creature deceive all who confide in them, it is difficult to bring off the heart from trusting in them. But the vanity of misery will overtake all who are deceived by the vanity of sin. In this latter part of the verse vanity means *misery*, or the effect and fruit of sin. The creature is a vain thing, and the more it is trusted the more vain it is. The best way to enjoy comfort in the creature is to keep our distance from it; and they find most content in the world who live above it, and expect least from it. The best of creatures trusted become evil, yea an idol to us. There are two sorts of recompense. Evil as well as good deeds have their recompense. God will not be long in any man's debt. As Gospel confidence hath great recompense of reward; so every disobedience of the law received a just recompense of reward. "Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner," Prov. xi. 31. That is, a righteous man shall be corrected, though he sin through infirmity; how then shall the wicked be unpunished, who sin with presumption and delight.

*Ver. 32. It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green, or cut off before his time, or before his days can be filled he shall perish.* As the relative looks to the wicked man himself,

Observe, 1st, An untimely death is the portion of a wicked man. He that is not prepared for death (however old he is) dies before he is ripe. 2dly, If the words refer to the estate of a wicked man, it shall be cut off before the time. That is, his pomp and greatness, and all that he hath gathered together, shall be suddenly scattered. The pride of wicked men shall have a fall, their present possessions and future hopes shall come to nought. 3dly, Taking the antecedent to be the designs and contrivances of wicked men. Their counsels do often prove abortive. God in judgment hastens them to action before their plans are fully matured.

*His branch shall not be green.* That is, he shall not prosper in any thing he possesses or undertakes. Greenness notes flourishing, and branches children; and in this sense it is, they shall have no strength, vigour, life, or beauty, and so a parent brings a withering curse upon posterity.

*Ver. 33. And he shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive.* This and the former similitude set forth one thing,—the certain and sudden destruction of all the hopes of a wicked man. His posterity, especially they that follow his steps, shall wither. Though his branch be green a while, though he has leaves and buds, yet before it is perfect fruit it shall be destroyed. And as God has winds at hand to shake off the fruit, so He has pruning-hooks to cut off the branches also.

*Ver. 34. The congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.* Bribery is put for all sins against our neighbours, and hypocrisy for those against God.

The Hebrew word signifies not only to congregate several persons into one place, but to associate them into a confederacy with one another. Though hypocrites combine together, yet they shall be made desolate. Others interpret, Whatever hypocrites gather together, whether riches, honours, or relations, all shall be desolate, or *barren*. The word signifies both, and that which brings forth no fruit will quickly be desolate. Of all men in the world hypocrites are under the deepest curse. It is bad enough to be wicked, but it is worse to be so under pretence of being good. They who delight in the shew of moral goodness, when they hate or care not for the reality of it, shall certainly be visited with penal evil in reality.

*The fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery,* or as the Septuagint, of *bribe-takers*. And indeed, if there were no takers of bribes, there would be no bribe-givers. It is the receiver that makes the thief. Bribery is a very odious and comprehensive sin. It opposes what God loves. He delights to see men bountiful as well as righteous; yet charity without judgment, and bounty without righteousness, are an abomination to God. Though much may be got by injustice, there is nothing gained by it. What is the advantage of any sinful gain? Bribes may build houses, but bribe-takers cannot protect them. Bribery never bought any lasting materials to build with. “Woe to him that gaineth an evil gain to his house,” according to the Hebrew, Hab. ii. 9. Divine judgments are fitly represented by accidental fires, which come in a moment, when men are not aware, and because of their destructive nature; besides, they are more irresistible than fire. Sometimes the wrath of God cannot be quenched by prayer. “Pray not for this people.”

Eliphaz having described the perishing state of wicked men, concludes with an allegorical recapitulation of their sin and misery.

*Ver. 35. They conceive mischief and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit.* The word translated *mischief* signifies labour, accompanied with a great deal of pain and sorrow, also wickedness, perverseness. The conception here is of the mind; both the will and understanding concur in it; they contrive mischief with deliberation. A natural man may think of that which is materially good, but he conceives no good. Gen. vi. 5. “All the thoughts of the imaginations of his heart are only evil continually.” A good man may do evil, but a wicked man deviseth evil. Having conceived mischief, they bring forth, and the child’s name is *vanity*, and every vanity is a lie or iniquity, and they are said to bring forth vanity. 1st, Because they sometimes bring forth no fruit at all; they devise and plot, but only hatch the wind; or, 2dly, It is not in proportion to their expectation; or, 3dly, Because it is often quite cross to their expectation; they conceive mischief against others, and bring forth mischief against themselves, so they have a very hard bargain of it. “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” Psal. ii. It is vain to imagine the pulling down of Christ’s kingdom, for it must stand for ever, so they cannot obtain their desire, and it may well be said they bring forth vanity.

*And their belly prepareth deceit.* That is, they prepare to deceive and ensnare. The prophet denounces judgments against the priests, the people, and the king, “because they had been a snare upon Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.” That is, because they had prepared nets and snares to entangle and deceive the people. He speaks in the present time as if they were always doing it; they know neither vacation nor cessation from this wicked work. It is a continued act. *Their belly prepareth.* Hence observe, That a wicked man is constant in contriving wickedness.



The mind is not only the shop and artificer, but the very tool that frames it. The understanding and wit of a wicked man hammers out and shapes all his deceitful wares. The hand and tongue begin where the mind ends. The tongue publishes and the hand executes what the mind prepares and the heart suggests. The extreme love which a wicked man has to sin, with the earnest desire to attain his end, and the hope of succeeding, at last carries him forward to new experiments, however often they may have failed. As the heart would break for sorrow, so both heart and hand would break off from labour were it not for hope. But where hope of attaining lives, such will labour as long as they live. Though they have hitherto been disappointed of their expectation, *yet their belly prepareth deceit.*

Though Eliphaz did not say to Job, Thou art the man, yet it is evident he was the man he meant who conceived mischief, &c.

## CHAPTER XVI.

This and the following chapter contains Job's answer to the second charge of Eliphaz.

*Ver. 1. Then Job answered and said.* His answer consists of three general parts. 1st, To the 18th verse of this chapter, He confutes what Eliphaz asserted. 2dly, To the 11th verse of chap. xvii. He confirms his own opinion. 3dly, To the end of chap. xvii. He renews his former complaints and desires.

He begins his confutation with an accusation, in which he checks his friends, 1st, For speaking unprofitably. *I have heard many such things:* as if he had said, I expected you would produce some stronger arguments to maintain your assertions, or a clearer refutation of my opinion; but I am disappointed. 2dly, He charges them with speaking what did rather increase than mitigate his sorrow. *Miserable comforters are ye all.* 3dly, For speaking so much without cause, ver. 3. Lastly, He reproves their behaviour to him by a serious profession of his contrary carriage, on supposition that they were in his case, ver. 4, 5.

*Ver. 2. I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all.* The repeating and inculcating the same thing is not always blaineable, and it is sometimes desirable. But when pressed with sore afflictions, it is very painful to have the same things brought forward which have been often answered or assented to before. To press the same point oft (though true) suggests a suspicion that the hearer opposes that truth, and so it becomes an upbraiding rather than comforting.

From Eliphaz thundering out the judgments of God upon hypocrites and bribe-takers, without so much as one word of comfort to the penitent, it would appear he thought Job's case desperate. There are two sorts of miserable comforters: 1st, He who flatters the soul that lives in sin; 2dly, He who oppresses and grieves their souls who are already in bitterness for their sins. He that can guide the course of a soul that is afflicted and tossed with the tempest of sin and sorrow between the rock of presumption and the gulph of despair, is a learned pilot indeed. This learning is the special gift of God, and all that man can say will prove ineffectual till the Holy Spirit influence the hearts of those that hear, and direct the tongues of those that speak. "Our gospel came not to you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost," 1 Thess. i. Calvin upon this verse says, "Some comforters have but one song to sing, and they have no regard to whom they sing it." All persons and conditions are alike to them. Job's friends never discerned his case, and so they could not give suitable exhortations to him.

*Ver. 3. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?* Words are vain when they have no solid reason—when they have much pride and conceit in them—or when they are angry and furious. Job's question, as applied to his friends, was, it may be too severe a censure of them. Yet it must be allowed, that their words were also too sharp, even such as vexed his spirit and tired his patience, and therefore he begs an end of them. Profitable words may be too long continued, but unprofitable ones cannot be too soon ended. Let not thy mouth open to utter vanity. Never repeat that which should not be spoken once. Hence observe, Vain words are very burdensome to a serious ear, much more to a sad heart.

*What emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?* is as if Job had said, Do you think by thy renewed onsets to weary me, and make me yield at last? Do ye hope to prevail

by importunity when you cannot by reason? He seems to be at a loss to find out the cause of his friend's boldness. The goodness and justice of a cause, and confidence in God, may embolden a man to answer as David did Goliath. But it is likely that Job suspected their self-confidence and unwillingness to yield was the cause of their bold reply. Pertinacity of spirit disdains to lay down the buckler. They who contend for victory rather than truth will not be answered, nor submit to the plainest and clearest evidence. It is our duty to consider before we speak as well as before we act. We should think what we are to say before we give others the trouble of hearing it. If we are called to speak either in our own defence or for the edification of others, on a sudden we may expect it shall be given us what we shall speak, when we have no time to prepare ourselves; but if preparation is neglected, we have no ground to expect the accomplishment of the promise. For when Christ says, "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak," we must expound it like Matt. vi. 25. "Take no thought for your life," &c. which is not a prohibition of all thoughts about these things, but only of distracting and distrustful thoughts.

Job proceeds to tell them what he could do.

*Ver. 4. I also could speak as ye do, if your soul were in my soul's stead; I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you.* The soul is here put for the whole man; when the soul suffers all suffers. That man forgets the distress of his body whose soul is sorrowful. Some read, could I speak as you do? or, would I speak as you do if you were in my place? would I compose bare words against you, and nod upon you with my head? Others read it as a wish, *O that your souls were in my soul's stead.* Job could not desire this, merely that they might feel pain or sorrow, but only that he might have an opportunity to show them how differently he would treat them if the tables were turned, or that God might do them good by afflicting them and thereby teach them to sympathize with others in distress. The people of God shall rejoice when those who have oppressed them are brought down, not from a spirit of revenge or personal interest, but because God will be glorified thereby.

*I could heap up words against you.* That is I could make long speeches containing many words to the same sense, as well as you have done, and then

*Shake my head at you;* which notes scorn and derision, as Psal. xxii. 7., which was fulfilled. Matt. xxvii. 39. "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads." As if they had said to our blessed Saviour, thou evil doer, these miseries are well bestowed on thee, &c.

Job seems to assert that his conscience bears him witness, that suppose he had an opportunity, he would not speak to them as they had done to him.

Hence observe, That though a godly man has a natural or civil power to do evil, yet he has not a moral power. In which sense the apostle speaks of a regenerate person. 1 John iii. 9. "He that is born of God cannot sin." He has a natural power to sin, and he may have it in his power to oppress, deceive, and wrong his brother, yet he cannot engage in such things as these. He is born of God, his blood and pedigree is so high, that he cannot trade nor meddle with such low things. The Spirit of God sets bounds to the power of a holy man, and he keeps within bounds because he is renewed. But it is the providence of God only that restrains a carnal man, for he would do many evils if he had power and opportunity. What the apostle says of ministerial power, 2 Cor. xiii. 10. a gracious person says of all his power, "It is for edification, and not for destruction." He now says what he would have done if their "souls had been in his soul's stead," in the next verse.

*Ver. 5. I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.* Eliphaz, chap. iv. 4. had given testimony for Job that he had done what he now says that he would do, if their condition were changed. The word *grief* is not expressed in the Hebrew. *The moving of my lips should assuage,* be what it will that grieves you. I would labour not only to mitigate, but to remove your fears, sorrows, &c. A good man doth not only abstain from injuring another, but he labours to help and relieve him. It is our duty to use our utmost endeavours to refresh and comfort him who is in affliction. Job resolves, that if they were weak in faith and hope, he would strengthen them, and if their fears and doubts were strong, he would endeavour to weaken them. Yea, he speaks peremptorily as if he saw or were assured of the effect beforehand. Job knew that the success of all his counsels depended upon the blessing of God accompanying them, yet he speaks thus:—

*I would strengthen you with my mouth.* From which it appears, that a man may

say he hath done that for which he has used suitable and faithful endeavours, whether they are successful or not. God says, He had purged Jerusalem, though they were not purged, because He had given them so many means and helps for their purging, Ezek. xxiv. 13. "Because I have purged thee and thou wast not purged."

Job having thus reproved the personal failings of his friends towards him, proceeds to confute their opinions, yet before he enters on the state of the question, he sets forth his own state; granting what Eliphaz made the ground of his accusation, that he was extremely afflicted, but denying what he from thence inferred, that he was therefore wicked, or continued in the practice of any known sin. To the 17th ver. he describes his afflictions with much variety of argument, and speaks of them as stubborn, and such as would yield to no remedy.

*Ver. 6. Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased?*

*Though I speak.* That is, if I stand up in my just defence to answer and take off the force of your objections, yet my grief is not removed, and then you say my impatience under suffering is a proof of my sin.

*And though I forbear.* That is, if I stand mute as attentive to hear you speak, yet my sorrow remains, and then you take my silence as an argument of secret guile, and that all is true which you have said against me, because I say nothing for myself.

*What am I eased?* Hebrew, *What goeth from me?* That is, What of my pain, what of my sorrow goes from me when I forbear to speak? This shews that his troubles were past hopes of redress, they found no cure, neither by speech nor silence. If neither speech nor silence can ease a man's mind, what can? Thus he reflects upon his friends; whether I speak or hold my peace, it is all one; ye are all against me, and are neither persuaded by my speech nor by my silence to apply proper remedies for assuaging my grief, or to ease my pain. Or the words may refer to God, whether I speak, or whether I forbear, God doth not relieve me. I find no comfort from him, my pain is not eased by my complaints to Him, nor doth he assuage the floods of grief which are ready to swallow me up, though I remain silent. The next verse seems most suitable to this exposition. It appears in this context, That Job's spirit was much troubled, he speaks in the third person. *He hath made me weary*; and then in the second, *Thou hast made desolate*; and again, ver. 8. *Thou hast filled me, &c.* and ver. 9. *He teareth me*; and the 10th is plural, *They have gaped upon me.*

Broken language and incongruities of speech may well be excused from broken hearts and wounded spirits, either in prayer or conference, while their hearts are true and pure.

*Ver. 7. But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company.*

*Now*, is not here a particle of time only, but points out the certainty of the change. I was once strongly hedged about with mercy; *But now he hath made me weary.* I am full of sores without, and of sorrows within; the word *weary*, here, includes both body and mind. Even a godly man may grow weary of his afflictions. Suffering wearies more than doing. The word *desolate* signifies to waste and destroy; and also wonder, because great and sudden desolations cause wonder and amazement. To be *desolate*, is often put for all affliction. A man may be much afflicted and yet not desolate. The company of children and friends is a very great mercy; but all company is made desolate to us when it is not suitable. The comfort of our lives depends much on society, but more upon the suitability of it, Prov. xxi. 9. "It is better to dwell in the corner of a house top," &c. The primitive Christians were all of one mind, and so fitted for a pleasant and profitable association. But what is to be expected from a company or corporation of persons, professing Christianity of different views, tempers, aims, and ends?

It is the duty of a believer to count it all joy when he has a burden of affliction laid upon him. But he is often so far from rejoicing, that he can scarcely find himself patient.

*Ver. 8. Thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me: and my leanness rising up in me, beareth witness to my face.* Though I should hold my peace, and instead of aggravating, I should extenuate and hide my sorrow. Yet my wrinkles speak my grief, and my leanness shews that I am feasted with the sour herbs of trouble and sorrow. Great afflictions leave their marks behind them. Grief has made furrows in his face, and his tears had often filled them. These wrinkles may

refer to his whole outward condition. As poverty is the wrinkle of riches, and disgrace of honour, Job had reason to say in all these respects, *Thou hast filled me with wrinkles.*

The church cries out, Lam. iii. 4. "My flesh and my skin hath he made old." How did God make them old? Not by giving them many years, but by many troubles. "A broken spirit drieth the bones," Prov. xvii. 22. Great afflictions leave their mark behind them, and they were looked upon by Job's friends, and by many others, as proofs or witnesses of great sins. Let us take heed of passing judgment upon such evidence; they are always doubtful and for the most part false witnesses. Others take afflictions as a mark of sonship, because it is said, Heb. xii. 6. "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." But neither can be depended on as certain witnesses. "For no man knows love or hatred by all that is before him."

*Ver. 9. He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.* This description is an allusion to the fury of wild beasts, either when they fight with one another, or fall upon their prey. Job speaks here, rather as feeling his grief than discovering his enemy; or as a man smitten in the dark perceives he has an enemy, he feels the smart, but cannot see who hurts him; but yet in this confusion of language, his heart was still upon God, who ordered and disposed all these armies of sorrow which assailed him on every side. Tearing is joined with gnashing of the teeth, and indicates the highest contempt and derision of a man in misery, Psal. xxxv., gnashing with the teeth is the effect of extreme pain, Matt. viii. 12; and of excessive wrath and anger, Acts vii. 54.

What are tearing and gnashing of teeth, and the sharpening of the eye? Is not any one of these, much more all in one, a discovery of cruelty? Job says so, and Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 13, says, "I reckoned till morning, that as a lion, so will he break all my bones." And we find God applying these similitudes to himself. "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah," Hos. v. 14; and Isa. xliii. "I will not meet thee as a man," I will not shew so much as human pity, much less Divine.

Hence observe, That God sometimes seems to exercise a degree of cruelty to those whom he dearly loves, so that they apprehend it proceeds from hatred. Thus God threatens to deal with Babylon, and thus he appears to deal with Zion. I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. Hos. v. 14.

Job proceeds now to shew what hard usage he had from men, who were indeed his enemies, into whose hands God had delivered him.

*Ver. 10. They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me.* The person as well as the number is now changed; before it was *he*, now *they*. It must mean the instruments which God let loose upon him. He varies or heightens their base behaviour by three expressions.

1. *They have gaped upon me*, which implies scorn and contempt; he that gapes at another, tells him, though he says nothing, that he could willingly devour him, Psal. xxii. "They gaped upon me with their mouth as a ravening and roaring lion." Job often complains of their contempt and cruelty against him; and their gaping upon him includes both, which is farther intimated in the next clause.

2. *They have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully*; that is, by reproach they have smitten me on the cheek. Some interpret Matt. v. 39. "of the smiting of the tongue," as if Christ had said, if a man disgrace thee a little, bear it, and prepare to bear a greater. The sufferings of Christ, which were full of reproach, are thus foretold, Isa. l. 6. "I gave my back to the smiters," &c.

3. *They have gathered themselves together against me.* This signifies, 1. As men are gathered together in civil society and combination. Union is not always a proof of a good cause; men are too apt to agree in projecting or doing mischief. Others say it signifies, They are filled or satisfied with my sufferings. Some not only take pleasure in sin, but in the sorrows of others.

From the whole observe, That reproach is a grievous affliction, especially when one good man so far forgets himself as to speak reproachfully of another. It is the glory of Christianity to be reproached by infidels, or for a good man to be reproached by the wicked. But the glory may be said to be departed when one good man reviles another. It is a pity that those who agree in most things, are so ready to revile one another about the points wherein they differ, instead of blessing God for these truths in which they are agreed, and jointly looking up to him for farther light and direction. While

we complain of being reproached, we should beware of giving others just cause of complaint against us. Even Job himself cannot be excused in this respect, for he gave his friends reason to complain of harsh words, if not reproaches, cast upon them. As the greatest part of Christ's sufferings for us was to bear our reproach, so the greatest part of our sufferings for Christ is to bear his reproach. "Let us go forth bearing his reproach." While we are reproached for Christ's sake, Christ is reproached, which must grieve us, yet it may also comfort us that Christ takes our reproach as his own. They who can say that their reproach is the reproach of Christianity, esteem it greater riches than the treasures of this world.

Job having thus described the instruments and manner of his affliction, turns from them to God as the efficient cause of his afflictions, and so corrects himself.

*Ver. 11. God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked.* As if he had said, Why do I trouble myself with men? why do I complain of their unkindness or cruelty against me? God has done it by delivering me over, (as a judge does a malefactor whom he has condemned) into the hands of their tormentors. He now looks beyond men, and at once sees and adores the hand of God. When God, for the trial and correction of his children, delivers them into the hands of the wicked, it is a great aggravation of the affliction. "Let the righteous smite me," Psal. xiv. 15. "Let me not fall into the hand of man," 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. As those comforts are sweeter, so those sufferings are not so bitter which believers receive immediately from God. When godly men look through all second causes to the first, they give glory to God as the dispenser of troubles as well as the bestower of mercies, and this quiets their minds in every distress. Their times are in God's hand even when they are in the hand of man, both as to how much and how long they shall suffer.

Our present evils are aggravated by our former enjoyments, so before Job proceeds to describe his sad afflictions, he begins with what he had been.

*Ver. 12. I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark.* Job mentions his former flourishing condition as a contrast to his present afflicted situation. It is better never to have been great in the world than to suffer a miserable downfall. The apostle, 2 Cor. viii. 9. shews the greatness of the love of Christ, from his becoming poor who was rich. The pride of man changes from one vain fashion to another; but the providence of God often changes man from ease to pain and distress. The greatest worldly prosperity may be, and often is, quickly lost; therefore "use this world as not abusing it;" why? "For the fashion of this world passeth away." Job was broken or bruised like grapes in the press of heavy trials; his earthly glory was squeezed out and quite defaced, and it follows, *He hath also taken me by my neck.* This is in allusion, 1. To wrestlers who take one another by the neck, and the strongest not only takes his antagonist by the neck, but shakes him as if he would shake him in pieces. 2. Or like bailiffs that are sent to arrest men for their evil deeds. 3. And to conquerors, who seize a vanquished enemy by the neck and make him prisoner.

*And hath shaken me to pieces.* It is but one word, and is the same used to express the irresistible efficacy of the word of God, whether to break the stony heart into contrition for sin, or to batter the obstinate who continue in sin. Job was cast down by affliction, and yet he was set up to receive more, for he adds, *and set me up for his mark.* A mark is purposely set up to receive anything shot at it, and is to the eye in shooting what the end is to a man in all his actions, Matt. vi. "If thine eye be single, the whole body is light;" that is, if the end thou aim at be just and right, all thy actions will be so too. Old Simeon spake of Christ as a mark set up to be shot at, Luke ii. 34. "and for a sign to be spoken against. Bitter words are compared to arrows, many showers of these were shot against Jesus Christ.

In general observe, That God deals severely with many whom he loves dearly. Affliction does not hit the saints by chance, but by direction. There is a great difference between shooting at random and at a mark. God sends every arrow upon a special errand; therefore let us keep our ground, and not be moved in a way of cowardice and impatience any more than a post when it is shot at. This is at once the duty and glory of a Christian, as thereby he honours God.

Job continues the allegory, and proceeds with the sad narration.

*Ver. 13. His archers compass me round about; he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground.* Archers are called *Rabbi*,

*great ones*, not from their magnitude, but from their multitude, because they usually go in company, and every one has many arrows. God can make any creature his archer. He has a variety of means to afflict. Besides the fire, wind, Chaldeans, &c. Job's friends shot reproofs at him, and the very means they used to heal him pierced him like arrows. David felt the anguish either of the threatenings or inflicted judgments of God on account of his sin, Psal. xxxviii. 2. "Thine arrows stick fast in me." An archer may hit the man and not his reins, but Job's archers were expert.

*He cleaveth my reins asunder.* This implies the greatest pain and sorrow, and so some interpret, He smites me in that which is most pleasant and desirable; that which we inordinately love is made the mark for the arrows. The ready way to lose any comfort is to overlove it. He cleaves their reins that they may cleave to him with their whole love, which is his due.

The *reins* signify that which is most secret, Psal. xvi. 7. "My reins also instruct me in the night seasons," that is, my most inward thoughts instruct me, I have secret communion with myself every night. The torture of any acute disease, or a mortal wound, may be called a cleaving of the reins asunder.

Neither the angels that sinned, nor the old world, had any share of sparing mercy; and Job looking upon himself in this case, adds, "and doth not spare."

As God was not pleased to prevent Job's sorrows nor to deliver him from them, so he did not spare him in them. He had no ease; yet, however much any suffers in this world, there is still somewhat of sparing mercy in his sufferings. "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed," Lam. iii. 22.

*He poureth out my gall upon the ground.* The word properly signifies bitterness, because the gall is so; and when Peter addressed Simon, Acts viii. 23, he puts both together, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness." He that continues in sin lives in the gall of spiritual bitterness; and this expression is as much as to say, I am now upon the borders of death; for pouring out the gall upon the ground is a proverbial speech for present death.

*Ver. 14. He breaketh me with breach upon breach; he runneth upon me like a giant.* He means a multitude of breaches, as if he had said, I am so full of afflictions that there is no room left for a new breach.

Every child of God may look for new corrections till repentance has its perfect work, and every trial forebodes another till faith and patience have their perfect work. The Lord cuts and prunes his people, not to destroy, but to make them (as pleasant vines) bring forth abundantly either the fruit of godly sorrow for their sins; or the proofs and evidences of the reality and strength of the graces he has bestowed on them. This latter was Job's case.

When a breach is made in the wall, the besiegers run up to assault, and enter the place. And as no man, either in his estate or health, credit or comforts, is so strong a wall, but God can quickly make a breach upon him; so who is able to stand in the breach or make it good when God makes the assault? Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee? Ezek. xxii. 14.

*To run as a giant* includes speed, strength, and courage; and by this expression, "He runs upon me as a giant," Job shows with how much terror God was pleased to clothe himself, and how much strength he put forth in contending with him. And how did Job oppose or strive with his Maker? Prayers and tears were all the weapons he used in this holy war with God, as appears in the two following verses.

*Ver. 15. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust.* Job having narrated God's dealings with him, now states his behaviour under the hand of God.

Eliphaz having charged Job with haughtiness of spirit, and with opposing the Almighty, chap. xv. 12, 13, 25.

Job refutes, then censures, and professes another spirit and practice in this verse. As if he had said, I am not so foolish as to oppose God, or to stretch out my hand against him when he smites me; I have humbly submitted myself to receive and entertain these afflicting dispensations. Bare denials that we have done evil are nothing. A practical answer is the strongest; we may vindicate ourselves by our conduct far better than we can do with our tongues.

Sackcloth is a hairy rough garment used in times of great affliction, whether personal or public, and also as a token of deep humiliation and repentance. "They would

have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." Or it may be as if Job had said, I have greatly abased and humbled myself; I am as one who hath put on sackcloth.

*Horns* are proper to a beast, but by a figure ascribed to man, and imports strength and power, dignity and ornament. Luke i. 69. "God hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." God laid help for us upon one that is mighty to save.

*I have defiled my horn in the dust*, that is, my dignity and excellency; I have laid aside all my ornaments and put myself into the posture of an humble suppliant. Dust is properly light small crumbled earth, and was used in time of humiliation and sorrow, when they either sprinkled dust on their heads, or lay down in the dust, and it signifies any very low condition. "He raiseth the poor out of the dust." Psal. cxiii. 7. So it may be understood either that Job did sit down on dust, or that as God had brought him into a low condition, he was willing to submit to it, not only as man who is dust in his nature, and must return to dust, but as becomes that man whose power and honour, whose excellency and greatness is laid in the dust.

*Ver. 16. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death.* As Job put on his mourning garments, so he was indeed a mourner, he wept plentifully. Much eye-water does not clean but foul the face. As his affliction and sorrow was great, so was his submission. A man cannot be called patient who either does not feel or despises his affliction. To be insensible of judgment is as bad as to be insensible of mercies. They are most sensible of the hand of God who are most submissive to it. When we are visibly afflicted we should be visibly affected, though it must not be done to be seen of men. It is as great a vanity to be proud of a cross as of a crown. We should let the light of our passive obedience shine before men, that they seeing our patient sufferings may glorify God. Joel indeed says, "Rend your hearts and not your garments," that is, Rend your hearts rather than your garments, or as well as your garments.

The sorrow of the world, which is said, 2 Cor. vii. 10, to work death, may be a sorrow for the loss of, or disappointments about, the things of the world. But the sorrow of a carnal man for sin, *worketh death*, because it is not connected with true faith for the pardon of sin, nor from any real purpose of leaving their sin, so it not only leads to but is a foretaste of eternal death.

It is hard to dissemble a little grief, but a great deal cannot be hid. Godly sorrow manifests itself; "what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves," &c. Grace shines clearest in worldly darkness, and the light of worldly enjoyments is but darkness to us in the day of distress.

The favour of God, the pardon of sin, the influences of the Spirit are always pleasant to the saints, not only in the time they can say "they have no pleasure in them," but also when they feel pain and trouble. That ought to be esteemed most valuable, and most diligently sought after, which is best for us in the worst of situations.

Eliphaz having suggested that Job was impious, unjust, and hypocritical, because he was thus afflicted. Now, Job flatly denies this.

*Ver. 17. Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure.* Job seems to admit the general truth asserted by Eliphaz, ch. xv. 34, but holdly refutes its application to him. As if he had said, I have not received these wounds in my body and estate for any injustice in my hands, no, nor for any impiety in my heart, for my prayer is pure.

*Injustice* signifies any open tyrannical oppression or violence mingled with scorn and contempt. Ezek. xxii. "Her priests have violated my laws," they made an open breach in the laws of God. The hand being the chief instrument of action, *injustice* is ascribed to it, but the tongue is often accessory. Besides, he may be said to have injustice in his hands who retains any thing got by injustice. Prov. iv. 17. "They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence." They feed upon that which is got by injustice. Job disclaims having got wealth by making others poor.

Prayer may be taken for the whole worship of God. "My house shall be called the house of prayer." Matt. xxi. 13. Prayer being so principal a part of worship, may well include the whole. So love is put for all the duties of the law, and faith for all the duties, yea, for all the doctrines of the gospel. Prayer strictly consists in calling upon God. It is the opening of our hearts to God.

Zophar, ch. xii. blames Job for saying, "My doctrine is pure;" now he says, "My prayer is pure." The truth of doctrine is the purity of it, and the sincerity of prayer

is the purity of it. Job did not boast his prayer pure without infirmity, but he professes it pure without hypocrisy. He that has grace in his heart cannot live with injustice in his hand; he cannot live in sin; he cannot keep injustice in his hand nor frame an impure prayer in his heart. Holiness consists in a complete conformity to the whole will of God. The law of God is one entire thing, and it will be the aim of every believer to obey both tables of the law. He that offends in one point is guilty of all; he that breaks any one link of a chain, breaks the chain, though he never break a second. A good man may be said to lose his will in the will of God, and this is his doing the whole will of God, and, indeed, we do nothing unless we be found doing all.

Prayer is only pure and acceptable to God when it is, 1st, Directed to a right object, that is, to God only. 2d, It must be right in the matter of it. God who teaches what we are to believe and practice, also directs us what to pray for. So we must ask only for things agreeable to his will. 3d, And it must be in the name of Christ, which is something more than to name his name, or barely say for Christ's sake. It is to pray for the blessings of his purchase in the faith of his present mediation, that what we ask on earth Christ obtains in heaven, and this is no easy matter, but unless we pray thus we do not pray at all. 4th, Pure prayer has the glory of God for its end, *Hallowed be thy name*. 5th, It must be mingled with and put up in faith. Prayer is our coming to God, and he that comes to God must believe that God is, &c. Faith takes hold of Christ, by whom only our prayers are purified, and therefore, there can be no pure prayer without faith.

Note, The person praying must be pure both in his state and practice. Psal. lxxi. 18. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." These are so necessary ingredients in prayer, that if any one of them be wanting, the prayer is impure, and God will not accept them. Therefore, let us draw near to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, Heb. x.

Job now confirms his assertion by a vehement imprecation.

*Ver. 18. O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place.* Some say, If there be any iniquity in my hand let the earth reveal it; others, O earth do not conceal my capital crimes.

Job rests all upon the truth of what he had said, wishing that his evil deeds may be discovered, and that his prayers might not be heard, if he had either done as was suspected, or if he had not spoken truth. Imprecations for the most part are very wicked, and if at any time they are lawful, they must be used only in very important matters, with serious deliberation and self-examination, with a desire to honour God as well as to exonerate ourselves. God is an avenger of falsehood, and he certainly will pour out his wrath upon such as imprecate it to cover falsehood. Innocency fears no discovery. God is the last refuge of a distressed soul, and it is at once a duty and a privilege to flee to him by believing and fervent prayer. All our mercies are shut out at once when prayer is rejected, nor shall that person have room in God's heart whose cry hath no place in his ear. Job made the imprecation in the sincerity of his soul, and now he confidently appeals to God! *ver. 19.*

*Ver. 19. Also now behold my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.* As if he had said, I fear no evidence that can be brought against me on earth, and I rejoice in the witness I have in heaven; and though I have none to testify for me here, yet I have one above that will do it. Job speaks the same thing twice, to shew how firmly he believed that the Lord would witness for him. Heaven and high, as well as witness and record, are of the same signification. God is said to be a witness on high to shew how easily he can observe these things that are below, and it implies that he is able to protect all who trust in and appeal to him. He is above all fear, and needs no favour. Let none hope to escape the judgment of God because his sin is so secret that there is no witness against him, for God judges upon his own knowledge, not upon the evidence of others; and therefore, as there can be no failing in, so no avoiding of his judgment. A wicked man will sometimes appeal to God in presumption and impudence, but a good man does it in faith and confidence, and amidst the reproaches and clamours of men. It is his consolation that God knows him fully, judges all men righteously, and will render to every man according to his works. Therefore never rest till you have the witness of God. "We labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him;" as if the apostle had said, were we to study to please men



we might possibly gain their applause; but the favour of men will not serve our turn. David could not be satisfied though his actions might be approved by men, unless his very thoughts were accepted by the Lord. Psal. xix. 14. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight." There is no greater proof of a carnal mind than to "Love the praise of men more than," or even equal to "the praise of God." When we have witness among men we have cause to bless God; but we must prefer and esteem God's single witness to a multitude of human witnesses, and say exultingly with Job, *my witness is on high*. As the witness of good men is more desirable than that of all other men, and that of a good conscience than even the witness of good men, so the witness of God is still more desirable than the testimony of a good conscience, without which we cannot have it, and with which we shall not want it.

Job having asserted his integrity, and imprecated vengeance upon himself if he had not spoken truth; and having appealed to God, he now gives the reason of his appeal; he had no hope of help from creatures, and so he says,

*Ver. 20. My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears to God.* These my friends, whose profession and relation should make them administer wholesome counsel to my troubled mind, instead of which they put wrong expositions upon all my speeches, and pour the vinegar of sharp censures into my wounds; and therefore I am pressed to pour out tears to God. Who can forbear weeping while he is but reporting my sufferings? How then should I who suffer? *My friends scorn me, &c.* A friend a scorner!

Hence observe, That the best of friends may prove unfriendly, and scorn is wholly opposite to the law of love. He departs far enough from the law of friendship who does not pity and assist his afflicted friend. What must it be then to scorn and deride a friend in affliction, yea even a favourite of heaven. It often happens, that he who is beloved of God, falls under the scorn and contempt of men.

In the Hebrew it is *mine eye poureth out*. His eyes were as a fountain which flows continually; we add the word *tears*. The word signifies sometimes only to drop. So this distilling or dropping of tears was the pouring out of his sorrows. There was a voice of mourning mingled with his weeping. To drop is to prophecy. Ezek. xxi. 2. "Drop thy word toward the holy places." Because words fall into the ears of the hearers, as drops of rain upon the thirsty ground, both to soften and make fruitful. It is said, "Hold not thy peace at my tears," Psal. xxxix. which imports that his very tears had a voice and language in them, which he desired and expected God would answer. Not to weep when we either suffer or have sinned, proceeds not from courage, but from sullenness, and is a proof of a hard heart, not of a noble spirit. David did not weep for fear of men, but in faith to God. It is best to have recourse to God upon choice, but he will not refuse us even when necessity drives us to him. He is willing to be our refuge when all others cast us off; and we should go to him as our chiefest joy when all goes well with us in this world. Psal. lxxiii. 25. "It is good for me to draw near to God." It is *best*, even in the best of times. They may confidently weep to God in sad times who delight in God in good times. Liberty of address to God, when men scorn and reject us, is the peculiar privilege of saints. Carnal men can vex themselves and be angry when they are scorned, and perhaps they can scorn their scorners. But whatever they may profess, they know not how to spread their condition before God, or to pour out tears to him.

*Ver. 21. O that one might plead for a man with God as a man pleadeh for his neighbour.* The sum of this desire seems to be, that he might argue his case as freely with God as men of the same rank argue with one another. Job knowing his own uprightness, expresses his earnest desire to be tried at the tribunal of God, knowing that he would acquit him of the sin that men imputed to him. 2dly, The words are rendered as shewing the design that Job had in pouring out tears unto God; and then it reads, Thus "I pour out tears to God that he would be pleased to plead the cause of a man with God as the Son of man pleads the cause of his friend;" which is indeed to desire God to be his advocate.

Another reading is, "Mine eye poureth out tears to God, that he would judge for a man with God, (and that he would judge) the Son of man in respect of his neighbour.

The first reading makes the latter branch of the words a description of the manner how Job desired to plead with God. The second shews how Job desired God to plead the cause of man with God. The third makes it a distinct desire. In the former clause

he petitions for mercy with God ; in the latter for a judgment of reproof upon his friends.

*That he would judge or plead for a man with God*, which notes favour, defence, or patronage of his cause with God. So it is used by the prophet, Isa. xi. 4. "He shall reprove (argue, judge, or plead) with equity for the meek of the earth." That is, he shall reprove or plead in favour of the meek, he shall make their defence for them. And thus at last God did plead for Job, giving sentence on his side against his friends ; and therefore the latter clause is rendered thus, "That he would judge the Son of man in respect of his neighbour." That is, that he would reprehend him for the wrongs he had done his neighbour. The meaning of the whole verse according to this translation may be represented, and is parallel to that prayer, Psal. xxxv. 1—3. "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me, and say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

A fourth translation is, "And he shall plead for a man with God, and the Son of man for his friend ;" that is, Christ Jesus the Mediator between God and man will plead for me ; he speaks in the third person, though he means himself.

Jesus Christ is called the *Son of man*, to shew the truth of his *human nature*, and also the depth of his abasement. Job believed, chap. xix. that he would see the Redeemer with his eyes ; and therefore he did believe that his Redeemer should have a human nature. Jesus Christ is the *Son of man* by way of eminency, in reference to his not partaking of corrupted nature, except in the penal effects of it. He that is in all things like man except sin, is rightly called the *Son of man*.

It is as if Job had said, I know I have a friend of Christ, and he looks on me as his friend, and therefore I have the highest confidence that he will plead my cause, and take off this scandal ; and he next gives a reason why he wishes the business brought to an issue.

*Ver. 22. When a few years are come, then shall I go the way whence I shall not return.* As if he had said, I cannot live long, and I would not wish to go out of the world under the aspersion that is now upon me. It is an affliction to die under a blot of disgrace. Our good name should be precious to us while we live. Believers know how to go forth without the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ. But they are unwilling that his name should be reproached through them, and therefore they are careful before they die to remove from their own names whatever might reflect dishonour upon His.

Job would not die under the name of an hypocrite and oppressor, with which black crimes he had been charged by his friends. The years of man's life are few ; they are quickly gone and easily numbered : so when they are come we must certainly go. It will not do to say that we are not at *leisure*, or we are not *prepared*. It will be needless to offer a bribe, or prepare another to die for us ; every man, when his few years are come, must go in person.

How pleasantly and familiarly can a believer speak of death. It is a comfort to him in his sorrows, trials, and disappointments here, to reflect that the time of his departure is at hand, and like Paul, to say, I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is best of all,—better than even the most prosperous and happy Christian ever enjoyed in this world.

## CHAPTER XVII.

*Ver. 1. My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me.* The breath of man is corruptible, though his soul be not. The breath of man is so ready to cease, that it is our wisdom to cease from man ; for when breath goes man is gone, and all goes with him ; "in that day his thoughts perish ;" and therefore Job had no sooner said *My breath is corrupt*, but he adds, *My days are extinct*. That is, the time which is appointed for my life, which is measured by days, *are cut off*. Or my days fail as a lamp, which, when the oil is consumed, goes out. "Man's life as a fire consumes itself continually."

Job speaks peremptorily, because he saw and felt all things tending to dissolution ; therefore he concludes, *My days are extinct*. It follows in the original. *The graves for me*. He speaks in the plural, to shew that he could not escape death ; as if he had said, wherever I set my foot, I step upon a grave. Great men have variety of

houses while they live. But a small space will hold them when dead, whose ambitious minds seemed to think the world itself too small for them. Worldly men cannot be persuaded to view death as near, and when they express a wish to die, it arises from their impatience of the troubles they feel or fear. But a believer, knowing that his sorrows as well as his sins, the cause of them, shall end at death, and rise no more, looks forward to death with ease and comfort; yet he may mistake the times and seasons of God's dispensation, as Job did, who thought that he was presently to die.

Learn, that it is wisdom to stand always ready for death and the grave, as they stand always ready for us. Ours is a dying life, our days cannot be many, they may be very few. Therefore, let us, with loins girt and lamps burning, look with confidence and joy to Jesus, as the author and finisher of our faith, and so live ready to welcome death in whatever way it comes to us.

Job proceeds to reinforce the cause of his appeal.

*Ver. 2. Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?* In chap. xii. 4. the word he uses, signifies, to mock with derision; and chap. xvi. 19. it notes such as mock with wit and jesting, and here it is to mock by deceiving or deluding, as if his friends had behaved more like sophisters than comforters; it is the same word, Gen. xxxi. 7. "Your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times." To be among deceivers is a great misery. To be a deceiver is a great sin. He that knows the truth, and yet deceives others with false doctrine, shall be beaten with many stripes, and he, who by not knowing the truth, deceives others, shall not escape without blame, as Job's friends did not.

By the *eye*, in the last clause, we are to understand the eye of the mind, and is as if he had said, have I not a representation of your mocking and bitter provocations in my spirit, as if they were visible before mine eyes. Or it may refer to his bodily eye. By his sleep being interrupted in the night by the vexation they gave him through the day. "A man may sleep better on bare boards than upon hard words." Such words keep the eyes waking, especially when the eye continueth in them, (which was Job's case.) Intenseness of mind forbids the approach of rest. Their mockings were *provocations*, which is a bitter thing. It signifies, to irritate and stir up the spirit of a man, which is provocation properly. When any man deals very unkindly, frowardly, or unfaithfully to his brother, it is a provocation.

As the same word signifies both bitterness and provocation, and most provocations are given by uncharitable and inconsiderate speeches.

Observe, "That unkind words are bitter to the heart." Col. iii. 19. "Husbands love your wives and be not bitter to them." That is, do not give them bitter words instead of faithful counsels. Wholesome admonitions for the matter, are often given with such an undue mixture of heat and passion, as renders them not only distasteful, but hurtful to the receiver. The apostle cautions parents: "Fathers provoke not your children to anger." A father provokes his child when he speaks hastily and threateningly, terrifying rather than instructing his child. Railing speeches have provoked many both to speak and do what they never imagined they were capable of doing, and unless they had been stirred up, the corruption of their nature would not have appeared. Moses was the meekest man, yet when they provoked his spirit, he spake *unadvisedly* with his lips. Job certainly does not speak as if he wished revenge on his friends, though he was to blame for poring so much on their unkindness as to hinder his rest.

Job having complained of their provocations, renews his appeal to God.

*Ver. 3. Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me?* This is an apostrophe to God. The word rendered, *lay down*, signifies also to *appoint*. The original word for *put me in a surety*, signifies to undertake for another, and the noun derived from it is an *earnest*, because an earnest laid down is a real surety that such a thing shall be performed, and a surety is a personal earnest; and his meaning is, that he would have some person to order his cause, and undertake that all should be performed according to the determination that shall be given of it, and then the last clause is as if he had said, I shall readily agree that any man should hear and determine this business, whom thou shalt appoint. The sum of which is, Lord, my friends have wronged thee and me too, O that thou wouldst provide one furnished with wisdom and discernment, both to vindicate thy honour and prove my integrity! Literally it reads, *Appoint I pray thee my surety with thee, who is he then that will strike upon my hand?* that is, appoint Christ, who is with thee in heaven, to

plead my cause, and then no man will dare to contend with me. But though it is a comfortable truth, that all who have Christ for their surety need fear no opposer, yet as Job's controversy was only with man, it may not be very clear, how this view of a surety applies in this case. It may be answered, that had he been such as they represented him, he must have fallen under the divine displeasure, and therefore, while he pleads not guilty to their charge, he might beg farther discoveries of the favour of God to him through the suretyship of the Mediator. When we are falsely accused, and therefore need no surety to interpose for us, it may be profitable to view and renew our interest in the Surety, who will acquit us where there is need.

Job proceeds to reinforce the reasons why he desired God to provide a surety for him.

*Ver. 4. Thou hast hid their heart from understanding : therefore shalt thou not exalt them.* The word *understanding*, signifies any or all the intellectual powers, with a readiness or activity in any service we are called unto. This is as if Job had said, Thou hast hid the understanding of what thou hast done to me from their hearts, thy providences are riddles which they cannot unfold, neither do they know the meaning of what I said, chap. ix. 17, 22. "He hath multiplied my wounds without cause," &c. Now, as they have no insight into this present controversy, therefore "I beg that thou would undertake for me," &c. Job's friends must have been well acquainted with the doctrine of providence, but they appear to have been ignorant of that great and excellent design of God in his afflicting providences, by which he tries the strength, and manifests the graces he has given his people ; so they mistook Job's case.

From which infer, That the wisest of men do not see all truths, and the hiding of the heart from, and the opening of the heart to understanding, is the work of God. As God is said to circumsise the heart, to open the eyes, to take away the veil, when he gives the knowledge of his truths, so he is said to blind the eyes, to cover the heart with fat, when he denies or withholds the knowledge of the truth. "Thou hast hid their heart from understanding," as in the case of the disciples, Luke xxiv. 16. "Their eyes were held that they should not know him ;" and ver. 31. "Their eyes were opened and they knew him." It is a great misery to have the gospel hid from a people for want of revelation, but it is a far greater misery to have it hid in the revelation. Isa. vi. 9, 10. He seems to have been sent to preach the people blind, deaf, and ignorant. Mr. Broughton renders the last clause, "Therefore thou shalt not give them honour ;" that is, Thou shalt humble and abase them. Thou shalt not give them the honour to determine my cause—they shall not obtain a victory over me. A heart hid from understanding is hid from the truth, and God loves his truth so well, that he will not exalt those who depress his truths. When an error is held in ignorance, or even in zeal for God, as Job's friends did, yet the jealousy of God waxeth hot against such, chap. xlii. 7. Those repenting were, and such as they repenting, may be pardoned, but they shall not be exalted. Exaltation is from God. He is the judge, he puts down one and sets another up, and yet the fall of men is usually from their own folly.

*Ver. 5. He that speaks flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail.* Flattery seems to be far from force, yet nothing puts or holds men under a greater force than flattery. A flatterer promises fair, as if he minded nothing but the honour and advantage of him to whom he speaks, when indeed he minds nothing but himself, as the apostle deciphers him. He serves not our Lord Jesus Christ, but his own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceives the hearts of the simple. The Greeks say a flatterer seems to carry it fair with all men, but maintains friendship with no man. We may call them *men-pleasers*, but rather *self-seekers*. We flatter men when we promise more than we intend, and by applauding them more than they deserve. The flattery with which Job here charges his friends, is their justifying God in afflicting him, by condemning him, as if there had been no other way of vindicating the righteousness of God, but by concluding that Job was unrighteous. This way of arguing Job calls "speaking wickedly for God," &c. It is the custom and the fault of many when they visit friends apparently dying, that they give hope of life, by speaking as if they should yet see many days ; whereas to pray for preparation for their departure, and give counsel accordingly, would be far more friendly than to encourage hopes of recovery. As sin spreads itself in the pollution of it, so also in the punishment of it. For a man knows not how many he may bring evil upon by his sin ; even of all who imitate him, as well as his children, it may be said, *their eyes shall*

*fail*, that is, they shall be disappointed of their hopes. The punishment of Adam's first sin is hereditary, and every sin which threatens punishment on posterity, as idolatry, and here flattery, hath a special stamp of the first sin upon it.

Any kind of flattery is bad enough, but that about spiritual things is worst, such was that of the false prophets, who set themselves to please, not to instruct the people, and were therefore busy in sewing pillows under every elbow. A flatterer would make every man sit easy, though his doing so is indeed speaking misery and death. It is dangerous to speak all the good of a man that is true; but to speak good of him which is not true, may prove his ruin. It is our wisdom to be plain with ourselves, and with all men, however much disquiet we may get by it. Job now proceeds to aggravate the sadness of his condition, by the effects of his affliction.

*Ver. 6. He hath made me also a byword of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret.* When a man is said to be a *byword*, two things are usually implied, 1. That he is in a very low condition. Some men are so high that the tongues of the common people dare not climb over them; but where the hedge is low every man goes over. 2. That he is in a despised condition. To be a byword carries a reflection of disgrace. A man greatly afflicted is often little valued, and he whose state is laid low in the world, his person is as low in the opinion of the world. Great sorrows, especially the sorrows of great men, are turned into songs, and poetry plays its part with the saddest disasters. Psal. lxxix. 10—12. "When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them," (or a byword,) and who did this? The great ones. "They that sit in the gate speak against me, and I was the song of the drunkards."

Observe, That it is a great burden (or affliction) to be made a disgraceful byword. Thus God threatens his own people, and numbers it among the sorest punishments of their disobedience, Deut. xxviii. 37. and the Psalmist bewails that God had brought his people into such a condition, Psal. xlv. But often God turns that to the honour of his servants which men intend for their disgrace.

The affections and opinions of men are very variable; formerly I was as a "tabret," though now I am a byword. To adore one while, and to despise another; to applaud to-day, and to dislike to-morrow; now to smile, and anon to frown, is the constant inconstancy of the creature. Therefore live not upon the breath of men. Happy they who have credit with God and rejoice only in his estimation.

Broughton translates, *That maketh me a byword to the people, and I am openly a tabor.* They play upon me as a tabret, or drum; they rejoice in my sufferings, they make themselves merry with my sorrows and rejoice at my calamity. Thus Job aggravates his sorrows by the joy that others discovered at them. Jerusalem was as much burdened with her enemies' joy as with her own sorrows, Lam. ii. 15.

It is a kind of comfort to have others to mourn with us; but when God leaves us to the scorn and contempt of men, when they make themselves merry with our troubles and exult at our calamities, it renders our sorrows out of measure painful, hence David prays, "Let not mine enemy triumph over me," Psal. xxv.

Job now mentions the dismal effects his afflictions had upon himself.

*Ver. 7. My eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow.* The eye of the body. That organ of sight which is as the glass or light of the whole body, even that is dim by reason of sorrow. The word signifies sorrow with indignation or provocation. Sorrow is that passion which moves in us when we are afflicted. By reason of sorrow mine eye is dim. Sorrow wants both the vital and visive powers, Psal. vi. 7, and xxxix. 10, "Mine eye is consumed with grief." The members of his body were so decayed that he looked like a skeleton; nothing left but skin and bone—only the shadow or appearance of a man.

Having shewed the greatness of his affliction from its effects, in the two following verses he gives reasons why they were so great, very different from what his friends suggested—that he was a great sinner, &c. But, 1. That men, even *upright men*, might be astonished at the strangeness of this dispensation of God, and of his strength supporting a weak creature under it, and carrying him through it. God does some things that is not only matter of instruction but cause of wonder. 2. That the innocent and righteous might be encouraged by my example to proceed vigorously in the ways of holiness, notwithstanding the afflictions laid on them by the hand of God and the opposition they have from men, inasmuch as the favour of God shines through all these clouds, and I have no doubt of his love though I feel all this smart.

*Ver. 8. Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite.* The upright man is one free from passion and prejudice, as well as from hypocrisy. *Astonied* signifies astonishment with admiration; and well might the great and complicated affliction of Job set every honest man to contemplate and wonder at the singular dispensation of a man thus brought low, after the testimony that God himself had given of his integrity. It is indeed the Lord's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes. There are hard texts in the providence as well as in the word of God. If we judge all the dealings of God by our reason, we shall conclude some of them without or against reason, though they are only above our reason, or have a height of reason in them which we cannot reach, and therefore must admire and adore.

When Solomon asserts, Eccl. vii. 15. "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity," he gives two instances, "There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness." Now when God puts the righteous into a perishing condition, and sets up the wicked in worldly glory, this is matter of inquiry as well as admiration, therefore he subjoins a caution, verse 16. "Be not righteous overmuch," &c.; that is, be not anxious in searching out every particular about this administration of God; make not thyself overwise, as if thou could find out or comprehend the reason why God deals so unequally with the righteous and wicked. "Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" That is, thou mayest bewilder and entangle thyself by venturing too far upon these secrets of providence. And if the providence of God be so intricate, what must his counsels and decrees be, which made even an apostle cry out, Rom. xi. 23, "O the depths of the riches," &c. How unsearchable are his judgments. But however much the wise and upright are astonished at the prosperity of the wicked or the adversity of the godly, they do not respond nor blaspheme the name of God, but like Jeremiah say, "Lord thou art righteous, yet let me reason with thee. Why doth the way of the wicked prosper?"

But even good men who are well acquainted with the theory of sufferings find an aversion at their trials when they come, therefore the apostle exhorts, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial;" and our Lord forewarned his disciples lest they should be offended.

*The innocent.* This is a different character, but the person is the same. *Stir up*, may be either from sleep or sloth; *against the hypocrite.* His heart rises against him not as a man, nor as his enemy, but as a wicked man and an enemy to God.

It is our duty, and it is our spiritual safety, to stir up ourselves against the wicked. As we deny not civil peace with the hypocrites and the worst of men, so there is a spiritual warfare which we are bound to continue; God's quarrel must be perpetuated. "Let them return to thee, but return not thou to them," Jer. xv. 19. There is no compounding of this difference, they must return and give themselves up to God and his ways, else we cannot give them an inch of ground or make truce with them for an hour, much less may we make peace with them or give the right hand of fellowship. He must oppose him by counsel, reproofs, and prayers; and as he fights against the hypocrite by prayer, so by it he fortifies himself against all sinful compliances with him, Psal. cxli. 4. He would not change states with him, he cannot envy him nor imitate him. He that would refrain his foot from walking in, must first refrain his heart from approving of the paths of wickedness. And as the *innocent* sets himself against the way of the hypocrite, so he labours to set forward with all his might in the way of holy obedience.

*Ver. 9. The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.*

*The righteous.* It is the same man still, who, encouraged by Job's example, *shall hold on.* The word signifies to hold with strength never to let go. But to *go on his way*, which may be taken either for the way of opposition which he maintained against the hypocrite, or for the way of righteousness, he continues his course of affectionate regard of, and obedience both to God and man. Perseverance is at once the duty and privilege of the saints. Notwithstanding all seeming discouragements from God, and real opposition from men, they shall hold on their way. He neither turns back nor stands still. "He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Built upon and united to Christ the sure foundation, nothing shall be able to separate them from his love to them, nor quench their love to him. In the midst of temptations and troubles of every kind they can say, "I am continually with thee," and the reason is,

"Thou holdest me by my right hand. All believers may say it is not the hold which we have of God, but the hold that Christ has of us, that makes us hold on our way, and to grow in it.

The *hand* is the instrument of action, and *clean hands* are an emblem of *holy actions*, so that Job seems to intimate that he who, besides the uprightness of his heart and the general innocence and righteousness of his ways, is also careful to maintain a spotless conversation, is likely to be most courageous when troubles come upon him. It is as absurd to say, the heart is upright but the hands are unclean, as to say that a good tree bears evil fruit. "He shall go on from one degree of strength to another."

As affliction tries the reality of grace, so true grace is improved by it; whereas hypocrites and profane persons are undone by afflictions. The righteous grow stronger in proportion to their afflictions, so they need not fear an increase of afflictions who have the promise of strength in proportion. It is not from the improvement of *free will*, but from the fresh anointings of the Spirit, that believers are "strengthened with might in the inner man." The increase of strength flows from the same fountain whence we had it at first; all is from God, Isa. xlv. 24. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" therefore trust in the Lord and ye shall not only hold on, but grow stronger and stronger in your way. He that tries to live upon the grace received from Christ, and not upon the grace in Christ, shall quickly feel a decay of spiritual life.

Though some wise men go out of the way, yet it is for want of wisdom that any man goes out of the way. While Job calls upon all his friends to return, he intimates that they had discovered their folly in going out of the way, and that it would be their wisdom to return.

*Ver. 10. But as for you all, do ye return, and come now: for I cannot find one wise man among you.* The words are an invitation to repentance. Job's friends held false opinions concerning the doctrine of providence, and he invites to a speedy return.

Job's counsel may include a call to return, 1st, To themselves. It is said, Luke xv. "And when he came to himself." 2d, To God. 3d, To him whom they had so long opposed, which seems to be chiefly intended. We must not be ashamed to acknowledge our faults one to another, and return to them in duty from whom we have departed, either by not giving them their due, or by accusing them unduly or improperly. All the ways of sin and error are ways of folly, and it is no fault to speak of men as you find them.

When our Lord says, "Judge not that ye be not judged," it cannot mean to forbid all judgment of men, for we must reprove no man but whom we judge faulty. "Let the righteous smite me," as if he had said, I have done amiss let me hear of it, yea, let me smart for it by a faithful reproof. So Christ must forbid rash and wrong judgment—the final judgment is His. The works of the all-wise God are all right; but few are wise enough to discern the right meaning of them. To know how to interpret and improve the dealings of God with ourselves or others is the most excellent wisdom. A mistake on this point made Job censure his friends, saying, "I have not found one wise man among you."

*Ver. 11. My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.* Our days pass so swiftly, imperceptibly, and irresistibly, that we may say they are past as soon as they are begun. Job apprehended that the greater part of his days were actually past, he did not expect to outlive the storm, so that his days were past in his account. The term of a man's days may continue long after his comfortable days are past.

*My purposes are broken off.* The word signifies a violent forcible breaking. Purposes may be good, and yet broken, without being the sin of the purposer. If our purposes are broken off by the inevitable providence of God, it is not our sin. The purposes of Job may be either those of doing good, which he had before he fell into trouble, or those he resolved on if he was restored.

*Even the thoughts of my heart.* The Hebrew is, the *possessions* of my heart; so it is rendered, *the thoughts which my mind was wont to possess are snatched away*, thoughts of again enjoying happy days once possessed his heart, but now they are gone by. The heart, (in a figurative sense), is nothing else but the frame of our thoughts, and our thoughts, in a proper sense, are nothing else but the possessions of the heart.

Right purposes are good, but it is not good to live upon purposes. Action must presently follow resolution. It is dangerous to delay, for the mind of the purposer

may change, and the means of performing may be taken away. When great afflictions come, especially when death comes, all our purposes are broken off. Man is apt to busy himself about many things which he cannot know, and also about many things which he shall never do. It is in man to purpose, but we must ask leave of God before we can perform. Purposes to repent, or to mind heavenly things, not only may, but for the most part are lost when sickness and sorrow seizes us. How often have sick men been heard to say, we cannot seriously think of divine things, or act faith, or repent, as we have foolishly fancied we could have done in trouble. To suffer sickness and pain is work enough for any man at one time. Let us therefore hasten to obey God's command of believing on his Son, and thereby learn to live, on the strength of Christ, in the view of trouble and death without dismay. It is the glory of God that his purposes shall stand though all the world should combine as one man to cast them down. The security and comfort of believers is bottomed upon the unchangeable and faithful God, and not upon their purposes and resolutions.

*Ver. 12. They change the night into day; and the light is short because of darkness.* What is meant by changing the night into day? The united power of all creatures cannot make a natural change of day into night, and God has promised that he will not do it. But when the night is so full of trouble to us that we cannot rest, the night is changed into day; and when in the day we are so full of perplexity and distress that we can neither do our work nor enjoy our comforts, then the day is changed into night.

Dan. ii. 21. It is said, "He changes the times and the seasons," that is, He makes seasons comfortable or troublesome, peaceable or unquiet. 'The day is to me as no day, because of my calamity and misery, my day is short because darkness suddenly overtakes it.

It may be said, of all the light we have in this world "it is short because of darkness." The most of Christians can say of heavenly light and fellowship with God, as one of the ancients said, "It comes but seldom and is soon gone," and the light of God's providences are all mixed with darkness. When our comforts have scarce saluted us they are interrupted by intervening sorrows. Those creature enjoyments and relations which have most light in them have also much darkness hovering over them. But Job does not speak in reference to the general state of man, much less to him in his best estate in this life, but applies it to an afflicted state, and particularly to his own. By reason of his outward troubles and many assaults of inward terror, his night was changed into a laborious toiling day, and his outward light of comfort was short and quickly ended. And if the light of a man in prosperity is but short, and his day in danger of a night every moment, for all our light on earth dwells upon the borders of darkness how justly, may an afflicted soul say his light is short because of darkness?

*Ver. 13. If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.* Waiting is an act of the mind in expectation of some future good. Waiting is nothing else but patience lengthened out upon a promise. We believe the truth of the promise, we hope for the good laid up in it, and we wait till that good be given us. God waits to be gracious, and man should wait in a way of duty upon God. Job waited upon God for all things that he desired to have, only he did not wait upon God for a temporal deliverance, because the visible dispensations of God seemed to say he should not have it, and, in answer to his friends, who had urged such an expectation, he says, "If I wait for this thing what shall I get by it? a grave, where I shall rest as in a house."

He that says he does not wait upon God about that for which he has no warrant, thereby acknowledges that he ought to wait on God where he has a warrant. God never makes his people wait for good longer than he hath promised, and when it appears to tarry, our duty is to wait, for it will not tarry beyond God's time. Therefore, let patience have its perfect work, 1st, By a silent submission to God under every sorrowful dispensation. 2d, By giving it a hearty welcome as Job did when he blessed the Lord for taking away. 3d, By a serious cheerfulness under all that befall us. This waiting patience is called by Christ, "The possession of the soul." As faith gives us the possession of Christ, so patience gives us possession of ourselves, and will bring us to the possession of every other good thing we stand in need of to make us happy, an impatient man is not in his own hand.

How are they said to be blessed that wait on the Lord as a God of judgment? 1st, As judgment is opposed to anger and severity, and as it imparts the bridle of modera-



tion upon the passions and affections. 2d, As it is opposed to injustice. 3d, As it is opposed to folly and ignorance. They are truly blessed who can say, "This is our God, we have waited for him." They shall in the end overcome all difficulties who exercise a patient waiting upon God. As true repentance for the evil we have done, so holy patience for the good we would receive shall never be repented of.

It is very sinful to give over waiting upon God, 1st, Because we are unwilling to wait his leisure. 2d, Because we are displeased with the affliction sent. 3d, Or by turning to methods of our own devising for relief, as if God could not help. Job did not give over waiting on God for any of these reasons, but because he saw no prospect of enjoying what his friends promised him in this world.

A believer can willingly part with all his earthly possessions for heavenly hopes, much more can he joyfully part with all his earthly hopes for the possession of heaven. There is nothing desirable in death, as considered in itself.

*Ver. 14. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister.* This is as if Job had said, as I have made my bed in the grave, so I have called to and saluted the retinue and attendants of death as my friends and kindred. He speaks as if on friendly terms with death, and welcomes it as he would do father and mother, as if he rejoiced in view of it. Believing meditations on the death of Christ, is the best method of preparation for death, and overcoming the terrors of it. O how terrible is death and the grave to carnal worldly men, since corruption will shortly seize upon the most beautiful person. Let no man glory in beauty, honours, or alliances. Man is corruptible while he lives, and when he dies he is corruption. He that, upon good ground, can say to him who died, but saw no corruption, *Thou art my Father* and my all, can say with joy to corruption, *Thou art my Father, &c.*

The next verse seems to intimate what it was that made Job so courageous and comfortable in the near prospect of death.

*Ver. 15. And where is now my hope? and as for my hope, who shall see it?* He that cheerfully questions, Where is my hope? puts it almost out of doubt where his hope is. Job does not mean by putting this question to himself, that his hope was no where. But that it was not where some would have it. Hope may be considered either for a grace acting in us, or for some good upon which that grace acts, Heb. vi. 18. "That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." This teaches us that as there is a hope by which we lay hold, which is the grace of hope; so there is a hope upon which we lay hold, that is, the good for which we hope. God himself, and all the good things of eternal life which he has promised, are this hope. As Job had the grace of hope in his heart, so he had heaven as the object of his hope, which he would not have parted with for all the possessions of this world.

But as hope respects earthly things, Job says, "And now where is my hope?" That is, if I wait and hope about these things, my labour is lost, my hopes are already vanished, as the next clause farther shews. That is, who shall see that which you would have me hope for? If I should take up such a hope no man should see it fulfilled. David, treating of the vanity of worldly things, Psal. xxxix. in the midst of all his enjoyments concludes, "and now, Lord, what wait I for?" where is my hope? it is not in the world, nor after worldly things; he gave up all these with ease; and adds, my hope is in thee. The more hope we have in God, the less we have in and about the creature. Job had much hope in God; but he had none, not only in, but none for the creature. All these hopes were in his sight, as himself was, dead, or dying, and therefore fit only to be buried out of his sight, as he speaks,

*Ver. 16. They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.* Who or what shall go down? There is no express relative in the Heb. He speaks in the plural, *They* viz. All my hopes about this life, are going down to the pit. The best of worldly hopes and worldly things are dying and perishing; mine are to me as already dead. They are interpreted as spoken in derision of those overtures which his friends made to him about worldly happiness. Shall I and the greatness you promise me, live together in the grave? the Septuagint favours this sense, "shall my goods go with me to the grave?" The apostle affirms, "That as we brought nothing into this world, so we can carry nothing out," and therefore, what docs riches, &c. avail a dying man? But was it not Job's sin, to refuse to be comforted, when his friends laboured to assure him of deliverance? Job was willing to be comforted, but

he did not like this way of it ; for the promises which they made him, carried an implication of his guilt ; they never spake of deliverance but on supposition of his repenting of the wickedness with which they charged him ; whereas he utterly denied their accusation in the sense they laid it against him.

But we cannot altogether acquit Job from blame in judging his state so remediless. For though, humanly speaking, there was no probability of his recovery, yet he should have remembered, that as the hand of God was very visible in his affliction, so his deliverance might have been as extraordinary, and that God could have put forth as strong and as visible a hand to restore, as he had done to cast him down, and as he was sufficiently able, so he actually did raise him up in his own time.

The design of Job's affliction was to set forth a pattern of patience, so that his patience might have a perfect work in bearing the full weight of his affliction to the end. He had not the least belief that it should, as to this life, be taken off, or have an end.

Thus Job finishes his answer to the proud charge of Eliphaz.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said.* For this second dispute he rather reproves than answers. Instead of arguing we sometimes fall to inveighing, and instead of conveying convictions, give personal provocation.

*Ver. 2. How long will it be ere you make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak.* He seems to charge Job with making too long or unprofitable speeches, and then with neglect of what was spoken to him.

As deliberate consideration must go before speaking, so we must compose ourselves to hear with attention if we mean to hear so as to understand ; be swift to hear and slow to speak. Who would speak to him that hath no ears, or to him that pays no attention ? Some sleep with their eyes open, though they hear all, yet they mark little, and practice nothing of what they have heard.

The apostle, Heb. ii. exhorts " to give the more earnest heed," or, to mark " the things that we have heard." Now, if we do not mark as we hear, we cannot remark the things that we have heard ; that is, consider and enter into a due meditation of them. Every minister may say to his hearers, as Bildad to Job, *Mark, and then we will speak.* Words exciting attention are as necessary as words giving instruction.

He next charges Job with pride and evil speaking.

*Ver. 3. Wherefore are we accounted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight ?* The Hebrew is singular, As if we all did make but one beast, having neither reason to judge nor ability to speak. He that wants understanding, is (as a beast) ruled only by affections and passions, Psal. xlix. " Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." Bildad complains of Job's unfriendly censure of him and his friends, as if they had been not only ignorant in matters of doctrine as beasts, but also sinful and unholy in matters of practice, as the worst of men. But though Job said, chap. xii. " Ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee," &c. and chap. xvii. " Thou hast bid their hearts from understanding," &c. Yet it does not appear that he said it from a reproaching spirit, but only in the heat of dispute, to shew how far they were mistaken. He cannot endure to be low in the eyes of others who is high in his own ; and indeed to be undervalued is a very great trial. Hence we see the amazing self-denial of our Lord Jesus Christ, who made himself of no reputation. As the same word signifies polluted and vile, we may observe, That every person who is defiled with sin is also vile. In scripture style the vile person is the person polluted with sin, Psal. xv. 4. " In whose eyes a vile person is contemned." This vile person is not the poor man, but the wicked man. Wickedness obscures all our greatness ; nothing but grace can make us truly honourable, and nothing make us truly vile but sin. We are usually more troubled at the effects, than at the nature of sin. But we should look to the nature of sin. As we are to call no man father, that is, to give no man power over our judgment or conscience ; so we should take heed of undervaluing men, by accounting them like beasts ; both extremes are equally to be avoided. Let us give every man his due.

*Ver. 4. He teareth himself in his anger.* There is an anger with ourselves which is commendable ; when we are angry with ourselves when we have done evil, or have not done the good we might have done. Indignation against others is seldom without

sin, and revenge in our own cause is always sinful. They are to be repented of, and cannot be the effects of godly sorrow. It must therefore have been indignation and revenge against themselves, because they had done evil, that the apostle observed and commanded, 2 Cor. vii. It is a duty to be angry with others, when we see them depart from their duty. We are angry for God's sake, when we are angry because he is dishonoured. He has no zeal for God who cannot be angry with man on this ground. There is a vehement furious anger, both towards others and ourselves; it is this kind with which Bildad charges Job. But though Job discovered some passion and impatience in this conflict, yet all put together did not warrant this charge. It is hard to distinguish trouble of spirit from passion and distemper of spirit.

Furious anger may hurt others, but it hurts ourselves worst. To avoid and prevent anger under provocations, we should look upward as David did when Shimei cursed him, and then how calm and meek was his spirit. As that is a good anger that is for God's sake, so looking up to him will prevent sinful anger. Another means of preventing anger is to look inward. He that looks much into himself will find so much to blame, that he will not find much to blame abroad, at least he will not do it with passionate anger. The apostle says, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Anger may pass through the mind of a wise man, but it rests in the bosom of fools."

In the next clause, Bildad blames Job with pride and self-conceit.

*Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place?* This proverb is in general applicable to any thing that is very difficult or impossible to be done by man. Having charged Job for a wicked man, an hypocrite, because he suffered such things, and observing his impatience, tearing himself in anger as if he had suffered unjustly. It is as if Bildad had said, Dost thou expect that God for thy sake, should alter either the method of his justice, or the ways of his providence which he has settled as firm as the earth. He seems to intimate, that it is more unreasonable to divert the course of justice, and let the wicked go unpunished, than it would be miraculous to overthrow the whole course of nature.

*Ver. 5. Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine.*

*Yea*, imports the certainty of the downfall of the wicked from the height of prosperity. Though he seems to have as much light as the sun, yet he shall be put out like a candle, and the very spark of fire shall not shine, so that the threatened destruction of a wicked man shall be total. Their prosperity is like the light of a candle which consumes itself. A wicked man is usually the cause of his own ruin. Fire is proper to the house and family. Light shines abroad everywhere, which imports that as the renown, fame, and glory with which he shines to the world shall be extinguished; so his family lustre shall pass away. Both in his public and private capacity he shall be destroyed.

*Ver. 6. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him.* He shall never enjoy good, if any good remains for him to enjoy. Though after great sufferings he may have some ease, yet that shall be a pain to him. As it is the privilege of the saints that their darkness is light, so it is the curse of the wicked that their light is darkness. If that which should comfort a man turn to his sorrow, how great is his sorrow. So here is a peremptory exclusion of all that is or can be refreshing to a wicked man; his light is darkness, and his very blessing a curse to him. The sun is the light of the day and the candle of the night; and as the full prosperity of a people is set forth by their having so much light, that they need neither sun nor candle, so the total ruin of nations or persons is described by their having neither sun nor candle. The wicked man's candle shall not be left to consume and wear itself out, it shall be blown out by violence. Bildad reckoned this as the portion of Job, and it is that which is due to every wicked man, though he do not always receive present pay according to his deserts.

The four following verses shew the misery of wicked men under the allegory of hunting and fowling.

*Ver. 7. The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down.* By *steps*, we are to understand his actions and undertakings.

*Strength* may be understood, either of the strength of his understanding, of his authority, of his body, or the strength of his alliances by his friends and confederates. The steps of all these strengths shall be straitened. To be *straitened*, is to be afflicted, outward afflictions are straits, and the foresight of these put many to inward straits.

Our Lord said, "How am I straitened." That is, How is my soul afflicted at the approach of the bloody baptism of my sufferings. Sin brings not only wicked, but even good men into straits. When wicked men bring themselves into straits, they either despair of help, or they look to the creature for it. But when God brings his own people into straits, their eyes are towards him for help. The word of God is one hedge, his rods are another. It is best to be kept within bounds by the former, but it is well if even the latter do it. Wicked men shall be straitened when they think themselves farthest off from straits; for there is no strength of the creature that can protect it from the judgments of God. By strength shall no man prevail. However great the single or united strength of creatures are, acting against the design of God for his people, they need not fear, for the steps of that strength shall be straitened, and by his counsel he shall not only not be able to help himself, but he shall be overthrown and cast down by it. Counsel is the quintessence of reason, it drops out and distills itself into counsel; yet this may prove ruinous. I never heard of a man cast down by the exercise of faith in, and love to God, nor undone by meekness and humility. But O how many have been injured by their proud wit and high parts, by their cunning and their counsels. Hence learn, The vanity of all helps without God, who can turn the counsels and projects of the wisest of men against themselves.

*Ver. 8. For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare.* That is, he is overcome by some temptation or corruption, and so is ensnared. Sins are soul-snares and shackles; and the offers that sin makes are as the bait of the snare; for it is the pleasure or the profit of sin—some advantage or satisfaction,—that is held forth to entice affection. Moses was invited by such a bait; but he saw they were but the pleasures of sin for a season; therefore he would not come into the net.

He is said to be *cast into a snare by his own feet*; not as if the man did actually contrive and promote his own inclosing, but God so disposes of his plots, that he makes his own feet carry him into the net, while he fancies they are carrying him into a paradise of freedom and content, at least that he is making an escape from danger, and that at next step he will be beyond the borders of fear and trouble.

Both clauses are of the same signification. The former notes a more violent and sudden action. *He is cast.* Here *He walketh*, which implies an ordinary course of life; so his whole life is a life of changes. *He walketh upon a snare.*

Hence observe, That an ungodly man may be secure, but he is never safe. For his table, riches, learning, relations, are all snares to him. Yea, a profession of religion is a snare to him. And what is worst of all, when he has Christ in his mouth, in his talk he is but walking upon a snare. "If the Son make us free, we are free indeed," John viii. 36.; but none are more awfully in bondage than they who are but seemingly freed by the Son. "To them that believe, Christ is precious; but to the unbelieving and disobedient, he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, that they may stumble, and fall, and be broken," 1 Pet. ii. 8. What a woful condition are such in, who not only cast themselves into a net, into troubles and vexations, but whose highest enjoyments, temporal and spiritual, their profession of religion, yea their pretensions to Christ himself, are a continual walking upon a snare.

*Ver. 9. The grin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him.* The wicked man is caught in his own snare; and here there is a snare laid for him. It is the same word, Cant. iii. 4. "I caught him, and I would not let him go." Now, as the soul, putting forth faith upon Christ, lays hold so as not to let him go, sticking close and cleaving to him, so evil doth not only take, but holds the wicked so fast, that it will not let him go.

The *heel* is put for the whole body. Gen. iii. "Thou shalt bruise his heel." The whole humanity of Christ, which is but as the heel to his divinity, was bruised; for though he suffered who had two natures, yet but one did suffer.

The *heel* is taken properly, Gen. xxv. "Jacob took his brother by the heel." It is put especially for the actions and motions of this life. Psal. xlix. 5. "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquities of my heel shall compass me about." That is, when my sin or failings in what I have done come to my remembrance, or are chastened upon me. As the wicked man runs into the snare, so he shall be held fast till the hunter or robber makes an end of him. So the Lord in justice orders both the grin to catch and the robber to prevail against wicked men. However long he may seem to prosper, it will come to an end.

*Ver. 10. The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.*

That is, it is set cunningly, closely, secretly; it may be said to be hid for him by the skill of him that lays it, as well as in reference to their blindness who are taken with it. When man departs from God, who is light, he sees no danger. He has no spiritual, yea no rational sight of that of which he cannot but have a sensitive sight. He falls into the snare which he sees, yet he knows not that he is fallen, which aggravates his misery. They are so blinded with somewhat that sin promises, that though they are warned, they will not take notice of the danger. The clouds are said to drop fatness. But the wicked man's cloud rains a shower of snares upon his head. Thus, when men are lifted up with hopes of great worldly enjoyments, they are but running into the net, and the grin will catch them. Scripture hopes never make us ashamed; but creature hopes always disappoint, and while they offer us a bait, leave us in the trap. As the Lord multiplies to pardon, that is, he pardons many sins, and oftener than once, so he has many ways to vex and afflict wicked men. He can multiply punishments, both of a new kind and of the same kind. Wicked men are to be numbered amongst wild and hurtful creatures. As in a spiritual sense it is our duty to take the foxes as well as to feed the sheep, so also in civil matters. They who are like natural beasts, of a savage and hurtful quality, are made to be taken and destroyed.

Bildad now shadows out the miserable state of a wicked man, ver. 11—16, in which he secretly strikes through the sides of innocent Job. He had heard Job complain of terrors, and now he speaks of them as surrounding him. 2dly, Job spake of spoiling and desolation, and Bildad tells him of destruction at his side, &c. 3dly, He had complained of pain, &c. and now he says that the strength of his skin shall be devoured. 4th, He had heard Job speak of himself as a dying man, &c. and now he tells him of the king of terrors. From all which Bildad in this allegory seems to argue thus: Only wicked men are terrified and tormented with fears of destruction, &c. but by thy own confession it is so with thee; therefore thou art a wicked man and hypocrite, and of right all these evils belong unto thee.

*Ver. 11. Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet.* There is a terror from evil, felt, or foreseen, or imagined. Evils which are not, nor ever shall be, may render our lives as burdensome as those which are. Psal. liii. "There were they in great fear, where no fear was."

Hence observe, that terrors are worse than troubles. The fear of evil is more grievous than the feeling of it. For as God can give a man food and no gladness at all, and riches and no comfort at all. And many a good man hath been greatly afflicted without the least touch of either terror or fear; but terrors usually accompany the troubles of a wicked man. And in allusion to a besieged city, they surround him so that he shall not have the least hope to make an escape. But when a believer is so situated that the creature can yield him no possible relief or remedy, yet he can send to Heaven for help and comfort when the earth has terror on every side. He trusts in the name of the Lord, and he would rather stay upon an angry God than a pleased creature.

Some render the second clause, They shall make him flee or run for it. He would outrun his terrors, or reach a place where they should not find him, but he cannot. Thus the righteous God either keeps wicked men in on every side as close prisoners, that they cannot flee, or else they flee and run from that which they cannot escape, as is further evident in the next verse.

*Ver. 12. His strength shall be hunger-bitten.* The Hebrew is in the abstract, His strength shall be famine. His fulness and worldly abundance shall be resolved into want. Where the blessing of God is wanting, there is famine in the fullest outward enjoyments. Many are hunger-bitten that have more bread than they can eat. Was it not so with Haman, who, because he could not have his will upon an honest man, all that he had availed nothing? A worldly wicked man is never satisfied, and no wonder; for he who makes the world his all could not be satisfied though he had it all.

*Destruction shall be ready at his side.* There is no running from that destruction that is sent by God. Evils which have a commission from him, never fail to find the offender. There is no window to get out at, neither is it possible to escape by being let down in a basket. We can neither outrun the judgments of God, nor stand before them.

*Ver. 13. It shall devour the strength of his skin; the first-born of death shall*

*devour his strength.* This and the following verse contains the second degree or step of the misery of a wicked man.

In answer to the question, What is the first born of death? It is said to be nothing else but a proverbial speech for an extraordinary and extreme bitter death, and famine is said by some to be most proper to this place, as it seems to be the antecedent to this verse. *It shall*, that is, famine shall devour; it eats up both the strength and the beauty of the skin, sucks the marrow of the bones, all fades before the face of famine; it is not an ordinary infirmity or disease giving us warning of the approach of death, but is itself a continued death, and the most bitter death. "They that be slain with the sword are better than they that shall be slain hunger." Lam. iv. 9.

The Lord has various degrees of judgments and of death. Some deaths are but like younger brethren, others are like the first born. Now, as there are degrees of sin, and sinners, among whom some are as the first born, so there are degrees of punishment. The Lord tells Babylon, who was the first-born of sinners, "Judgments shall come upon thee in their perfection." All the power of man fails before the messenger of God. "Gather together, gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces." Isa. viii. No association nor preparation can prevent His judgments.

*Ver. 14. His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.* As if he had said, Though this man was so strong that he grew confident, yet not only his strength but his confidence shall be rooted up, and when confidence gives way it exposes to strong and mighty terror.

*Confidence* signifies such an assurance as puts a man out of doubt. He is neither afraid of danger nor want of success; he sits down secure. Confidence is the mother of security and the daughter of pride. The wicked man's confidence is compared to a flourishing tree, which shall not only be shaken, but rooted out. The confidence of a godly man may be shaken,—now he is well assured, and, anon, he questions all,—but his confidence shall never be rooted out. "The hopes of the righteous shall be glad," the thing he hopes for shall come to pass, "but the expectation of the wicked shall perish." "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." But how can his hope have any substance who has no faith. He can have no true hope in the good of the promise who has no true faith in the truth of the promise.

He is said to be rooted out of his tabernacle, which some think is his body. He trusts in the strength of his body, that it would stand like a fortress against all batteries, but it proves only a tabernacle where stakes are easily pulled up. Others understand by tabernacle, *the place of worship*, and to be rooted up is, That all the confidence that he has or pretends to have in God shall fail him. The wicked man's confidence grows strong upon the consideration that he attends public worship and applies himself to a bodily exercise in outward ordinances. Thus it was with the Jews even when there was false swearing and lying among them, &c. their confidence was in the tabernacle, and what is this but building upon the sand while they are not rooted in Christ, and, therefore, can have no fellowship with him.

But it is asserted, that it means that he shall be rooted out of the place where he dwells; he confides in his worldly prosperity, but all shall fail him. Confidence in that which perishes in the using must needs perish when we come to use it. There is no certainty in earthly things.

Taking the king of terrors to mean death, it is terrible in its nature and consequences, and often in its harbingers. It should be our study, as it is our wisdom, to make this king of terrors a king of comfort to us. Many believers have attained to this. Natural men can say, *all must die*; why should any man fear that which is common to all men, and many endure more pain while they live than all the pains of death. These are poor shifts which they are forced to make to stifle the terrors of death.

But a believer moves upon higher principles, as, 1st, That death cannot break the bond of the covenant between Christ and them. 2d, That though death triumph over the union of soul and body, yet the union between Christ and a believer is inviolable. 3d. Christ has been the death of death by plucking out its sting. 4th. It is a going to God, as our Father in heaven, when believers shall be released from all their labours and enter on that rest that will last for ever. When these are put together, with the resurrection of the body, in due time, believers have no reason to fear the king of terrors.

*Ver. 15. It shall dwell in his tabernacle because it is none of his: brimstone shall*

*be scattered upon his habitation.* Mr. Calvin translates, "He that is none of his shall dwell in his tent;" others interpret "It," that is, destruction, or want, shall dwell in his tabernacle.

*Wo to him that builds a house by unrighteousness.* What wo shall be upon him. He shall not long enjoy what he has built, and the wrath of God shall inhabit it, after he is out of it destruction shall dwell there because it is none of his. It was unduly gotten and unjustly kept. That which is justly got is a gift from God; but that which is obtained by unlawful means is stolen from man. The dwelling of this wicked man shall either pass away to others or misery shall dwell in it, or it shall be utterly consumed as by fire. Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation. Bildad seems to say to Job, Thou art the man on thy habitation, brimstone was scattered, thy flocks of sheep were burnt with fire from heaven.

Some suppose that barrenness is the judgment here threatened. It certainly points out that it is sudden, unavoidable, and from the immediate hand of God.

Hence, learn, that as God has judgments of all sorts and sizes, so no creature can stand before the least token of his indignation.

The third allegory is summoned up in these five verses. The wicked man was first apprehended by the messengers of death, and then brought to death, the king of terrors being dead, his goods are confiscate, others enter upon his estate, and brimstone is scattered upon his habitation. This is complete wrath and judgment in perfection.

*Ver. 16. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.* In this the wicked man is compared to a flourishing tree, he has both root and branches, yet he is near declining, yea, he is not far from destruction.

The root may be taken, 1st, For those secret counsels, purposes, and designs, which he lays for himself, these God will dry up. 2d. By the root we may understand his riches, relations, and allies, or any thing by which he thought himself strong or secure. But these things in which his strength lay shall be either taken from or disappoint him.

The word translated *branch*, signifies a crop or harvest; the fruit of a tree is the crop of it. The thoughts of man, in the Hebrew, are expressed by a word that signifies the boughs of a tree, the fruits which our thoughts shoot, blossom, and bring forth, are our actions, so whatever a man puts forth to shew his excellency or virtue, his pomp or splendour by, are his branches. Wicked men may be fully furnished with means for attaining their ends. David speaks of such a goodly flourishing tree, Psal. xxxvii. But what does he make of all the flourishing of wicked men? it is, that they pass away; and in Psal. xcii. where they are said to "Spring as grass," &c. it is added. "It is that they shall be destroyed for ever." The strongest of men are but as grass; in the morning they grow. The best of their worldly beauty is but like grass, for both they and it are cut down and wither in the evening. All these allegories meet in this, That God has prepared and will certainly bring ruin and destruction on wicked men.

In the following verses we have the explication of what he had delivered under the veil of metaphors.

*Ver. 17. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street.* By name in scripture, is meant honour or estimation among men. In the street, where men discourse both of things and persons, he shall have no good name, no honourable name remaining. A good name among men is a great blessing; and hence it is a great sin to bear false witness against another, because it injures his good name.

Good men usually have an ill name among many in the world; and indeed they can scarce be good of whom all speak well. It is no dishonour to be ill spoken of by those that are evil, and their commendation is not to be coveted. Though a godly man may have no name on earth, yet he has a name written where it shall never be blotted out. Christ exhorts his disciples to rejoice in this rather than in the applause which they received from men for working miracles. It is a sore evil to wicked men to lose their name in this world, for then they have lost all. Flatterers may indeed cry them up, while they live in hope to get favour from them; yet when they are in their graves they have no name in the streets but a name of disgrace.

*Ver. 18. He shall be driven out from light to darkness, and chased out of the world.* The word *driven* notes a forcible, violent, compulsory act. But who or what shall drive

him. Some understand his troubles and sorrows, he shall die under the pressure of his afflictions. Others refer it to God ; but whether we apply it to God, the efficient, or to afflictions, the instrument of his expulsion, the sense and tendency of the text is the same. He shall be driven from the light of honour to the darkness of disgrace ; from the light of life to the darkness of death ; from the light of temporal felicity to the darkness of eternal misery. Some allege that there is an allusion to this passage, Matt. viii. 12. "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness." The Jews were the children of the kingdom, and they thought themselves heirs of the kingdom, yea, they presumed as if the kingdom had been entailed upon them because they were Abraham's posterity ; yet Christ saith, even you, for all your confidences, "shall be cast into utter darkness." The kingdom has light all over, but beyond the kingdom there is no light ; being then cast out of all hopes to enter the kingdom, they must needs be cast into that darkness which is without, and all unprofitable servants are under the same doom.

The second clause is similar to the former. To *chase*, as well as to *drive*, notes a violent pursuit ; and he is chased not only out of the society of his friends, but out of the land of the living.

*Ver. 19. He shall have neither son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings.* The posterity of wicked men are swept away for their father's wickedness. Though children shall not be punished for their father's sin if they repent and return to God, yet greater evils fall upon children who do not repent, because of the iniquity of their fathers. Yea, children who walk with God may have some touch, though not in wrath to them, yet in wrath to their fathers because of their evils.

Observe, How he puts this as a special judgment belonging to wicked men ; for though it may be the lot of the godly to be bereaved of their offspring and left desolate, yet this is not so great an affliction to him as to the ungodly. For he that can call God father, and Christ brother, is allied to all the saints in heaven and earth in a spiritual relation, and it can be no great matter to him though he have neither son nor nephew who is an adopted son of God. He has a name better than that of sons or daughters. He that is childless and Christless too may weep and not be comforted because they are not ; and indeed he has no cause to refrain from weeping though he have many sons, while he continues without an interest in Christ.

*Ver. 20. They that come after him shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted.* The marginal reading of the last clause is, Or that lived with him took hold of horror. So the meaning is, that those who were advanced in life before he was born, yet lived with him, and when they saw the judgments of God upon him were affrighted, and others shall be astonished at the hearing of them. Others say it refers to degree, as if he had said, high and low, rich and poor, shall be astonished and affrighted at the fall of this man.

The word rendered *astonished*, signifies to admire greatly and silently. Silent admiration is astonishment ; it signifies also to be wasted and made desolate ; and so strictly, that astonishment is meant which arises from the sight of places or persons made desolate. The Heb. is, They took hold of fear, which intimates that when they saw such judgments, they were active to stir up fear in themselves and turn to the Lord, lest the same calamities should also befall them. Luke xiii. 3. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

It is common to put the word *day* alone, without any addition, to note an eminent evil day. The patience of God bears long with the wickedness of man, but he will not bear always. The wicked plots against the just, being vexed and filled with envy against him. But while he is thus busy against the man whom God loves, God makes sport of him ; the Lord laughs at him, and saith let him plot, let him go on, because he sees his day is coming. What day ? The day of his ruin and destruction shall suddenly come upon him. The apostle says, 1 Cor. iii. "Every man's work shall be tried ;" it shall be made manifest, for the "*day* shall declare it." What day ? The day when God shall come to lay the work and the rule together ; when he shall bring stubble, &c. and the fire together, the day of trial shall discover what every man's work is. Further, it is called *his day*, because it is his of right, or that it is his due ; for all the good days that he lives are *borrowed days*, they are but lent him, only the evil day is *his day*.

As the works of mercy which God hath done for his people are wonderful ; and at the great day of his appearing, he will come "to be admired in all them that believe,



2 Thes. i. That is, he will do such things for them as shall be both to their own and others' admiration. So his works of judgment shall be admired too. He threatens, Deut. xxviii. "I will make thy plagues wonderful." That which makes the ear tingle, 1 Sam. iii. 11, will also make the heart tremble and amaze the hearer.

*Ver. 21. Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.*

*Surely*,—He concludes confidently after having shewed the wicked man in a complete equipage of misery, stript of all his comforts and good things. That the state of a wicked man is miserable, yet we must not assert that he shall be cast away for ever, for it is possible that he may repent and be saved; but if he do not, we may conclude him as undone for ever. As by a man's fruit we may know what he is, and so what he shall be, unless he be changed by the grace of God.

The man who knows not God and the wicked man are the same. No wicked man knows God, and every man that knows not God is wicked. As there is a total ignorance and a false erroneous knowledge of God, so there may be a sound understanding of the doctrines of revelation. But when a person acts contrary to knowledge, he also must be reckoned among them that know not God. Indeed a natural man may have the highest knowledge of God that is attainable, except that which gives an experimental taste and relish of the goodness and love of God, with a hearty obedience to his will in all things. He that knows God loves him, and he that loves him keeps his commandments. As men are said not to know God when they do not love and reverence him, when they do not fear and obey him; so God is said not to know those whom he does not love and cannot approve. "Depart from me I know you not."

Bildad and his friends gave large and repeated descriptions of a wicked man, which should undeceive the simple, who are apt to call the wicked happy because of their present apparent prosperity, and to shew that sin will be bitter in the end however backward men are to believe it. It is indeed difficult to convince men that God will pour out so many vials of misery on the despisers of his threatenings. It is said a holy heart hears that twice that God speaks but once. Grace has a quick ear, it makes us swift to hear; but God speaks an hundred times to wicked men and they will not hear once. But if sinners will go on after so many intimations, what can they plead why their dwelling should not be made desolate, or why themselves should not be condemned for ever.

This concludes Bildad's second discourse, wherein he severely reproves Job and sets before him the woful end of the wicked.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Bildad's sharp reproof procures a sharp reply from Job, in which he speaks of himself as the object of man's pity, and of God as the object of his faith. He amplifies his own sad estate from ver. 1—23. He maintains his own integrity, ver. 24—27, and he exhorts his friends to desist and repent lest they draw down the judgments of God upon themselves, 28, 29.

*Ver. 1, 2. Then Job answered and said, How long do ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words.* The word *vex* signifies an internal trouble, such as arises from contempt and scorn. The afflictions of the church of God are expressed by this word, Isa. li. 21. "Therefore hear now this thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine."

As that which comforts the soul is sweetest, so those sorrows that afflict the soul are most painful to the afflicted. Job says, "ye vex my soul," but doubtless they had no such intention. Only God can make our counsels useful. God commands to use means both to save and comfort our souls, but he has reserved the fruit and success of them in his own power. We must at once shew our diligence about the means, and our dependence upon God for the end. The length or continuance of an affliction is more grievous than the weight of it, Psal. cxx. 6. "My soul hath long dwelt," &c.

The question concerning the affliction of the church, Dan. viii. 13. "How long shall be the vision," &c. speaks as if it would render her affliction shorter, merely to know how long it should continue; or as if it would be some comfort to know when the desolation would end. Many are apt to say that if they could but see the end of their troubles they would bear them cheerfully. But no period can be set to the *how long*

of impenitent sinners, and this will make every moment of misery as miserable as the eternity of it.

The word to *break in pieces*, is to break with extreme violence. It is the same word, Isa. liii. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him;" and godly sorrow is expressed by the same word. Job does not say, 'with hard and cruel words,' but leaves us to consider what words were likely to break in pieces. Soft and kind words may melt the heart, but hard words break it.

Unfriendly and reproachful speeches make deep wounds; cruel words aggravate and heighten cruel actions. Our Lord blesses those who suffer by evil spoken against them, as well as those who have evil done them, Matt. v. 10, 11. Reproaches are numbered among our heaviest trials, Heb. x. 32, where the apostle calls them "a great fight of afflictions." He contends with many enemies at once, who is assailed with reproaches; and he is a strong man that is able to stand those assaults and not be broken. Job was strong both in faith and patience, yet he says "ye have vexed my soul."

*Ver. 3. These ten times have ye reproached me: ye are not ashamed to make yourselves strange to me.* Ten times may be taken for many times. They had often endeavoured to put him to shame, as if he had been a wicked man, by reproaching him. The word signifies such shame or blushing as makes us give up any work we have in hand. Many would go on in doing good, and not a few doing evil, were they not ashamed of their purposes. Matt. viii. 39. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me," &c. Now, as many renounce a profession for shame, so some are not so vile and openly profane as they would be were they not ashamed that it should be known. Though ye are my friends with whom I have been long acquainted, yet you keep your distance as if I were a stranger, or so inferior to you that to be familiar with me would disgrace you. Shame is a good effect of a bad cause. They that are ashamed of their sin are most likely to turn from it. Hence shame is put for repentance. "What fruit had ye in these things whereof ye are now ashamed?" That is, whereof ye now repent. And the repentance of Ephraim is so described. Jer. xxxi. "I was ashamed." To do nothing of which we need to be ashamed is best; but it is well to be ashamed of evil deeds. Job charges it as an aggravation of the sin of his friends in making themselves strange to him, that they were not ashamed of it. Among all the trials that Christ underwent, reproach was one of the greatest. But when they reviled him he exemplified his own rule. "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil," &c. Matt. v. That is, when ye have received one injury, instead of meditating revenge, prepare to receive a second. Though we are not to invite injuries, yet grace teaches us to bid them welcome. To be strange to godly friends is an act that we ought to be ashamed of. They break all the bonds of love who refuse or neglect to do good to them who have received and manifest the tokens of divine love, or are strangers in affection to them who are of the household of faith.

*Ver. 4. And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself.* He here concludes what they cannot prove, and it is as if he had said, my error cannot justify you in what you have spoken and done to me; must you smite me with reproaches because God has smitten me with his rod? Suppose that I have erred in opinion, speech, or practice, yet how can you be excused? We may let others work upon a supposition of that which is not, but we must not make a position either concerning ourselves or others of that which is not. No man is at liberty to charge himself falsely. Concessions are sometimes the strongest refutations. If the words are taken in reference to what follows, it is as if he had said, Let it be granted, that after all your counsels and admonitions I still persist in mine error, yet ye ought not to magnify yourselves against me nor reproach me.

*Ver. 5. If indeed you will magnify yourselves against me and plead against me my reproach.* As this verse may be connected with the former, so with the following, and then the meaning is, Let it be granted that I am in an error, and if ye upon that ground magnify yourselves against me and plead against me my reproach, then know that God hath overthrown me, &c. This may put you to silence, and prevent you from vilifying me or overvaluing yourselves. We magnify God by making it appear how great he is. But when man magnifies himself, he would either appear greater and better than he is, or make others appear less and worse than they are. Let them be ashamed that magnify themselves against me.

It is very sinful to magnify ourselves against a fallen brother. Such forget their own frailty, and how apt they are to fall. That corruption and temptation which has

prevailed against thy brother may cast thee down also. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he stands not insult over his brother, but remember that he may be tempted, and therefore take heed lest he falls. It is our duty to bewail and pray for those that fall, and also counsel and help them up again,—to bless God for keeping us from those sorrows and temptations to which others are exposed, and by which they have fallen. Such thoughts will be useful to keep us from self-magnifyings. We may reprove but not reproach a fallen brother. Our zeal for God must be mingled with pity towards man, and restore him with the spirit of meekness. Deal clearly and faithfully, but not reproachfully, with any that are overtaken in a fault. Afflictions are often called reproaches, because they are charged to the afflicted as a reproach, and are one of the greatest burdens they have to endure. An old poet said, That poverty had nothing more grievous in it than this, that it leaves men under disgrace, and exposes them to scorn. Worldly men esteem others by their riches, not by their goodness, or the grace of God appearing in their conduct.

*Ver. 6. Know that God hath overthrown me, and compassed me about with his net.*

*Know.* That is, I would have you know, or you shall know it to your cost. He who has afflicted me may afflict an innocent person, and yet be just himself. And since God has done it, how do you know that it is on account of my sins rather than that it pleased him so to do. God acts that justly towards man by his prerogative, which between man and man were perverting of justice. He deals not with me by the common rules of legal proceedings. God never does any man, nor has he done me any injustice; yet man's justice is not the rule of what he has done to me; therefore you are quite beside the business when all along you charge me with sin and error as the reason of all my sufferings. *Know that God hath overthrown me.*

A godly man freely and cheerfully owns the hand of God in all his troubles; whereas the wicked will not see the hand of God either in favours or judgments. Their sight is bounded with second causes. It is the malice of this or the unfaithfulness of that man that has overthrown them. God is not in all their thoughts.

Hence learn, That God may and often does spoil his choicest servants of all their outward comforts, *without respect* to their sins. And we should beware of vexing any who are already grieved under the afflicting hand of God.

The Hebrew for net signifies also tower, castle, or fort, and some say the following words suit better with the metaphor of a prison-tower than of a net. But the extent and greatness of his afflictions are intended, whether it is net or prison in which he is inclosed. Afflictions may be compared to a net, because there is a contrivance in them. The Lord uses a holy art in preparing them. 2d, Because we fall suddenly into and are entangled with them. 3d, Because the more we strive to get rid of them, we are the more entangled. There is no getting either ease or release from affliction by struggling. It is best to be quiet and patient; and while we use lawful means for relief, we must look beyond them to God for success. We must neither sit still sullenly and negligently, nor move impatiently and unbelievably. Let us give God glory in our net, and he will give support and deliverance in due time.

*Ver. 7. Behold I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard; I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.* He told his friends how they had wronged and censured him; but they would not hear. To be heard imports help or deliverance. But I have no ease, no comfort, nor is any deliverance wrought for me, though I cry out of wrong; yea, when I cry aloud there is no judgment, or there is none to judge between me and my brethren in this case. It is truly deplorable when there is none to relieve and acquit the innocent, or to condemn and punish the guilty. It is said, Isa. lix. 4. "None calleth for justice." There might be many suitors for justice; but there was not one to award it. There are four words, ver. 14. all tending to the same thing, and have an elegant gradation. "Judgment is turned backward;" and then it must not come near, for "Justice stands afar off;" and then it shall not be supported, "Truth is fallen in the streets;" and then, "Equity cannot enter." It cannot find entertainment; and what is the conclusion? See it, ver. 15. "The Lord saw it, and it displeased him, because there was no judgment." Nothing lays a people more open to the judgment of God than the want of a man to execute judgment, Jer. v. 1. When the oppressed cry out, and there is no judgment done by man, both oppressors and their supporters shall cry out because of the judgments of God. If this cry is to God, how does it accord with the promise, Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver? I answer, the Lord always hears so as to give his people the promised good, though he does

not bestow the good exactly as they petition for it. He defers to hear, to prepare his people for deliverance,—to excite their prayers. The heart is usually in the best frame for prayer when our worldly state is out of frame. That faith, meekness, self-denial, and patience, may be kept in exercise, he lets his saints cry out of wrong and does not hear, so as to answer immediately.

*Ver. 8. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, he hath set darkness in my paths.* Job here compares himself to a distressed traveller, who is not only walking in darkness and has no light, but whose way is full of interruptions, so that he is in a great strait, he knows not which way to turn himself. Many cannot tell how they came into trouble, and most know not how to get out. It is an aggravation of trouble to see no way of escape. Those afflictions which are not only painful, but a prison to us, are the greatest trials of our patience. Darkness is put for the uncomfortableness of our condition, whether external or internal. But I apprehend Job in this place principally intends either the darkness of inward trouble, or the perplexity arising from ignorance or doubtfulness as to which way to go, or where to get out of his difficulties. Light is the portion of saints. Psal. cxii. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness;" that is, comfort in affliction. But at times their path is at once painful and obscure. They are full of uncertainties and doubts, both when and where to go. *He hath set darkness in my paths.* And,

*Ver. 9. He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head.* Job further amplifies his affliction by comparing himself to a man once possessed of rich and excellent ornaments, but now stript naked and bare. The word rendered stript, imports the doing of a thing at the persuasion of another, that is, he hath caused or encouraged others to strip me of my glory, which signifies that which is weighty. It may be taken strictly for that which we call fame or renown in the world, consisting in such external things, as children, riches, power, and places of authority, because they render a man honourable, and clothe him, (as the opposite word *stript* implies), with glory in the eyes of men, and when he who was rich is made poor, when he who had many children is made childless, and when he who had great power and authority is cast down and contemned, then it may be said they are stript of their glory.

As the Lord has a peculiar people, so he has a peculiar city of which glorious things are spoken, which are, 1st, Truth of doctrine. 2dly, Purity of worship. 3d, The unity of its members in their profession of the truth and mutual affection. 4th, and chiefly, The presence of God among them. The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there. And, indeed, the peculiar city of God is nothing else but the peculiar people of God living in the order of the gospel.

A crown and glory are so nearly allied that they are often put together as one thing. Whatever a man has in an eminent degree he is said to be crowned with it. Thou crownest him with thy loving kindness. The crown is fallen from our head, that is, our privileges and dignities are departed. It is no wisdom to hold that fast in our affections which we cannot retain in our possession, or love that much which may speedily be lost. But pursue spiritual and make sure of heavenly glory. The crown of righteousness fadeth not away. It is a crown of life. In beauty it is like a crown of flowers, but it is like a crown of gold in duration.

*Ver. 10. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone; and mine hope hath he removed like a tree.* The word destroy signifies any ruining work, but most properly of a building. It is sad enough to be destroyed in any one part, but Job was destroyed round about. Here the work of judgment is as large and exact as the work of mercy once was.

He was formerly fashioned round about. Chap. x. 6. Now he is destroyed on every side. He was not only touched as Satan desired, but destroyed, not only the battlements and beauty of his house defaced, but the very foundation razed and I am gone. That good which we are sure of is as good as if we had it, and that evil which we must feel, or have deserved to feel, is as if we already felt it. My hope is gone as a tree that is removed or pulled out of the ground, he had not the least expectation of taking root again in this world.

Saints may have their hopes of earthly things removed, but those heavenly things which they hope for shall flourish for ever. Hope is not destroyed but perfected by fruition as faith is perfected by vision.

*Ver. 11. He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies.* The word kindled comes from a root that signifies anger, be-

cause anger is the kindling of a fire in our bosom. When that is done upon the creature which manifests the divine displeasure, then anger is said to be kindled in God, but it is spoken after the manner of men. Job was not only sensible that his hope was removed, but he felt by the absence of his inward comforts, some appearance of the displeasure of God. It is more grievous to a believer to apprehend the wrath of God kindled against him than all his other sufferings.

*He hath counted*, that is, he hath reckoned and set me down, or cast me up in the number of his enemies. The love of God is everlasting and unchangeable to his people. But his outward dispensations toward them hath many changes. Job found hard strokes from the hand of God, who did only count him as an enemy, what then shall they receive who are his enemies indeed? Some are open and avowed enemies; others have a cloak of a profession. But while they continue to love and live in sin, however secret, are really enemies, and will continue so till God overcome and change their hearts. It is truly foolish and dangerous to be an enemy to God, but to be a secret one under a profession of love to him, is a crime of a most aggravated nature.

*Ver. 19. His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle.* Job still prosecuting the allegory of war, proceeds to give a more particular description of God's dealing with him as one of his enemies. 1st, The gathering of the army, *they come together*. They come all at once and with one consent. Job had many troubles combined against him; they all came by the same orders.

Hence, learn, that as afflictions are God's army, they are all at his command, and he appoints their number and work. They move only according to his orders. He can raise troops of afflictions out of any of his creatures. 'Therefore, look to the Lord of hosts as the commander of every instrument, and "they raise up or have made their way against me," as if he had said, whatever lay in the way of my affliction they have removed that so they might have a clear mark and make a full charge against me. When God means to try his own people or punish his enemies, neither the power nor political plans of evil men, nor the prayers of good men shall be able to prevent. He will make a way for his anger even though Moses and Samuel stood before him with their prayers and tears.

The Lord's troops being raised and marched, they now encamp round Job; they encamp round about my tabernacle, that is, about all that I have. A tabernacle is a moveable dwelling, and he that gets most of this world, has got but a tabernacle. A little true knowledge of what the world is mingled with, a true faith of the things of the world to come, will easily carry us above all the good and evil of this world.

When God encamps against us, let us speedily give up the strong-holds of sin. But let us maintain the strong-holds of grace, and by faith, patience, and prayer, we shall be more than conquerors over every affliction. It is only by humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God that we may expect a lifting up in due season. The army of sorrows which encamped against Job was never fully withdrawn till he was made to say, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Job having by metaphors and allusions spoken of his sorrow, now sets forth the effects of his afflictions by the unkindness and contempt of his friends and the undutifulness of his relations. At ver. 20, he speaks of the consumption of his body and cries for pity and forbearance, ver. 21, 22.

When intimate friends, who have been trusted with our secrets, whom we love with much entireness, and are endeared to us by long familiarity, when these renounce the laws of love, how heavy is the cross. Yet this was Job's affliction of which he complains.

*Ver. 13. He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.* The desertion of his brethren is a heavier affliction than the invasion of his enemies. The unkindness of those from whom we have least reason to suspect it troubles us most.

The word translated brethren, notes not only nearness but oneness, and when this unity is broken it must produce pain. Job does not say my brethren are gone from me, but he hath put my brethren far from me. He ascribes this part of his affliction as much as any other unto God. It is of the Lord that our brethren are at any time estranged from us. This does not excuse the unkind behaviour of brethren to one another, but teaches us to depend upon God for the continuance and establishment of the affection of our friends as for any other of our enjoyments. As God does not, so

there is no need he should put hatred into any one's heart against a brother, for there is too much of it there already. When Moses says of the Egyptians that God turned their hearts to hate his people, God did not drop hatred into their hearts, but gave them up to the baseness and suspicion of their own hearts. We are all by nature "hateful and hating one another," and unless God renew and keep our hearts for us, we will not only be unsteady in every duty, but act quite contrary to our duty both to God and man.

The knowledge we have of men brings us into acquaintance with them, and the more we are acquainted with them the more we know them. Old acquaintance are often laid by when we find new; and when old friends fall into a low condition (which was Job's case) some will loath them though they have no new.

They are verily estranged from me, there is not the least mixture of love, not the least appearance of good-will to me among them all.

*Ver. 14. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me.* We say out of sight 'out of mind,' but Job's friends cast him out of their mind while they were in sight. To forget, is to neglect and slight. Job complains, either they do not at all visit me as friends, or they do not use me friendly in their visits. They forget all the favours that ever they received from him, and all the professions of kindness that ever they made to him. Adversity is the touchstone of friendship, and friendship continued in adversity is a high commendation of it, it proves the strength, as well as the reality of love. True love is not weakened by time nor hindered by distance. It is full of compassion; it shews itself by deeds, and is as ready to own the person, as to sympathize with the condition of a friend. He loves his friend in good and ill report, (if that report is not raised upon his ill desert) in honour and dishonour, (if that dishonour rise not from his dishonesty;) he is neither ashamed of his friend's poverty nor of his prison, when (not his own sin, but the chastening hand of God, or the unjust hand of man casts him into either.) Thus, a friend loves at all times, and he that loves not at all times is no friend at all. The kindness of friends is comfortable at all times, much more in sad times, and as their unkindness lessens our comforts in good times, so it adds to our sorrow in evil times. When Christ loves, he loves to the end, but we may quickly see the end of man's love. Men are mutable in their condition, but much more in their affections. There are many rocks upon which love hath split, but it is usually some change in the outward condition that makes the change in our affection. Sometimes the prosperity of friends turns our love into envy. Now we applaud, anon we calumniate, &c. It is said, that prosperity hath many friends, yet some cannot rejoice in friends any longer than they stand upon equal terms with them. But it is adversity that especially tries the love of a brother, though they lose the end for which they were born who do not assist an afflicted brother; as our Lord says of witness-bearing to the truth, John xviii. 37. I should lose the very end for which I was born, if I did not bear witness to the truth. To give witness to an oppressed truth, and to assist a brother in distress, are a pair of the noblest works which we have to do in this world. There is no friend upon whom we can fully and safely confide but God. We may hope for most from God when we expect least from the creature. He sometimes purposely stains the beauty of all our creature comforts, to teach us, that while we use them we may enjoy none but himself, and that while we love them, we should live only in and on his love.

*Ver. 15. They that dwell in mine house, and my maidens, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight.* The word is rendered, a tenant, a neighbour, a sojourner, or any passenger whom we entertain in our house for a season. The word *stranger*, signifies also an enemy. Strangers have devoured the land, Isa. i. 7. that is, enemies. Solomon calls the harlot a strange woman; not only because she is a stranger, but as she is really an enemy, and will destroy his peace who is enticed and overcome by her.

*They count me a stranger.* That is, they who have joined with me in the exercises of religion, now that I am thus afflicted, account me as a stranger from the covenant, as an outcast from the people of God, as if I were not the same man. The word here used for *maidens*, does not signify those who are for ordinary service only, but such as have command and trust. Job was not counted a stranger by strangers, but by those who had tasted of his favours. It is inhuman to act towards him as a stranger, who entertained us when we were strangers. And yet it is no wonder that one man is so ungrateful to another, when we thus requite God himself. Every sin is not

only a transgression of the law of holiness, but of the law of kindness. We are unthankful because unholy. The whole world is God's house; yet to how many that dwell in this house, is God a stranger. They live without God in the world; yea, many that dwell in the visible church and profess the name of God, who know not what it is to converse with God; and even they who know what it is, are so formal and seldom in it, that the Lord may justly say. *You that dwell in my house count me a stranger.*

*Ver. 16. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I entreated him with my mouth.* Silence is sometimes a token of consent, but here it is a sign of contempt. Not to answer when called, is incivility in most, and undutiful in some; a servant that does not answer when called, forgets what his calling is. When the apostle says, "Be obedient to your own masters not answering again," he means, not answering by way of contradiction. When masters give lawful commands, servants must answer by submitting, not by questioning. He must give an answer when asked a question, but he must not gainsay when he is enjoined a duty. Some servants are both loud and lazy, quick of tongue and slow of hand. Job did not speak in commands, but in supplication, as if he had at least been his fellow-servant. As his estate was brought low, so his spirit was humble, it is comely when our speeches bear the image of our condition.

The son who said "I will not," afterwards repented and went; he denied his father with his tongue, but he obeyed with his hand, but when Job's servant gave him no answer, he gave him neither word nor work. A man in affliction is apt to lay every thing to heart, and is jealous of every man's carriage towards him. We are sensible of any disrespect from men, when the hand of God is upon us. He that is spiritual, desires to discern the mind of God on the smallest cross carriage of any man towards him. There is much faith seen in bearing a heavy cross, and much tenderness in feeling and duly improving, the very lightest. We are very sensible of a servant's failing in duty to us. When shall we be as much affected as we ought with our disobedience to God, and as ready and punctual in our service to Him as a master expects his servants to be to him.

*Ver. 17. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of my own body.* Some translate *life*, instead of *breath*, because life is continued by breathing. "My life is strange to my wife," that is, I being sick and full of sores, my wife is weary of my life. Others, by his breath, understand his speech or complaint. Words are nothing but breath, formed to express our minds by, so *my breath is strange*, my discourse is offensive by reason of my affliction, I deal so much in groans and sighs that she cannot bear to hear me speak. But perhaps the meaning is, that his breath, by reason of his disease, was noisome and loathsome. As the word signifies, to bewail or deplore, as well as entreat, it may read, My breath or complaint was strange to my wife even when I was lamenting the children of my own body. There is nothing of any long continuance, much less of any long contentment. A wife is made for a help to man, and when does a man need her help so much as in a time of sickness and affliction. The virtue and value of some wives have eminently appeared at such times, when disease has made all others loathe them, they have continued to delight in them. True conjugal love outlives all changes, it knows no decay, either by age or sickness, neither riches nor poverty can change the affections of a virtuous wife, she will do her husband good, and not evil, all the days of her life. True love holds out in duty both to God and man.

There are two motives of conjugal love. Grace in the person loved, and obedience to an ordinance of God, these will continue. But when love is founded upon riches, beauty, &c. it may soon decay. Jacob moves the Lord in prayer by the remembrance of his fathers. And though all names are swallowed up in the name and interest of Jesus Christ as to deserving a grant of what we pray for, yet we may plead with God in prayer for the church's sake, yea, for our own children's sake, that God would do us good, that we may be farther instrumental in doing them good.

*Ver. 18. Yea young children despise me; I rose, and they spake against me.* Some render *Fools despise me*; and none but fools despise a wise man. As Jeremiah called himself a child, and Solomon a little child, when it is evident they were young men; but in comparison of the aged, and in reference to the duties of their station, they esteemed themselves children. So here it must be 'young ones despised me.' *To rise* is a gesture of reverence. Children or young persons ought to rise up and shew reve-

rence to the aged. Job shewed them respect; yet they despised and spake against him.

Job in former times was revered both by young and old, which shewed the greatness of his power and felicity. But now in the depth of his misery he is despised by the very youngest that could shew it.

Hence observe, That to be despised by our inferiors, whether in age or degree, greatly increases our afflictions. Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father. Though we must not flatter or favour any person to the prejudice of truth, yet we must make a difference in the manner of reproving elders and younger men. It is very unseemly for children to behave themselves proudly against the ancients, and the base against the honourable.

*Ver. 19. All my inward friends abhorred me; and those whom I loved are turned against me.*

The Hebrew is, *the men of my secrets*. That is, those with whom we either advise what to do, or whom we tell what we have done or are about to do. As Christ tells his disciples, John xiv. 15. "Henceforth I call you not servants," &c. which is as if he had said, As my Father hath opened his bosom to me, so have I to you.

Job complains, My inward friends *abhor* me. The word implies such an abhorring of him, as that he was not fit to have any familiarity with. A wise man knows how to distinguish persons as well as things. He has inward and outward friends. Neither every judicious man nor every faithful man are fit to be trusted with secrets. He that is fit to be confided in must have a composition of both in him; and such is a rare man indeed. Some are loving and faithful who are defective in judgment. Others have understanding and judgment enough to be the man of our counsel; but they want faithfulness. It is best to see with our own eyes; yet it is not only good, but necessary to use the sight of others. They are fools who are merely led by, or who act only by the advice of others, and they are otherwise who think they have no need to be advised.

Job speaks here distinctly of those that he loved with a love of complacency. As those that were his friends now abhorred him, so those in whom he most delighted were turned against him, as if he had said, "I have had most of their hatred who had most of my love.

Hence, learn, that sometimes those who have received many acts of kindness, not only turn from, but against their benefactors, and become open enemies.

Holy love seldom turns from, but it never turns against a friend. When grace is the cement of affections what can divide them? The special love of God overcomes those that he loves to love him, and though none answers his love with a due proportion of love, and many fall from their first love, yet so powerful is his love that they never fall either out of his love or from their own. But the love of man has no such power over man, and, therefore, many besides Job have had cause to say, "They whom we loved are turned against us."

*Ver. 20. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.* Having shewn that some continued and others proved unfaithful to him in his affliction, he now shews how it wasted and consumed his body as if he had said, "I am become a skeleton." The cleaving of the skin to the bones is a proverbial speech for extreme leanness, Psal. cii. 5. Lam. iv. 8.

Job speaks in allusion to a battle in which he had been in great danger, and had only come off with his life, (and that Satan had no commission to touch), and little else was left him, for he says, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth;" some say, he had nothing left but the instrument of speech, by which Satan hoped to accomplish his prediction, that he would blaspheme God. The expression intimates that his beauty was faded and his strength decayed, and that he was within a step of death. Though a sound mind can bear the pain of the body, yet it cannot but feel and be troubled with any affliction on the body.

*Ver. 21. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me.* This verse may be entitled Job's petition to his friends. He requests their sympathy by a vehement and repeated exclamation, and he mentions that the hand of God had touched him to excite their compassion.

Pity is the moving of the heart to those that are in misery. The original word signifies to shew favour both by word and deed. Good words without good actions are lean and miserable comforters. Some, from a common instinct of love pity those in



trouble, and others out of love to themselves may assist the afflicted ; but only those who, as the elect of God, have put on bowels of mercies, kindness, &c. can shew pity from a pure principle.

Job's address to these men under the title of friends, is the most pressing and lasting argument with the most of men. A special friend is as our own soul, and they are more famous for acts of love and kindness than our relations, even those who are said to be one flesh. *The hand of God* is his power, and is taken either for his helping and protecting, or punishing and afflicting hand.

The word translated *touch*, signifies a grievous stroke, and is applied to smiting with the plague of leprosy. The Lord hath made my wound deep, he has touched me to the quick. Pity is proper to misery, and compassion to an afflicted condition, therefore, the common cry of the afflicted is pity, pity. As all desire that which is good, so especially that which is suitable to present evils. As Jesus Christ has in him a suitable supply of all our wants, therefore we should apply to him as altogether lovely, precious, and suitable in all our distresses.

God does not afflict to teach others to afflict, but to give an opportunity to aid and comfort them. When we see the hand of God wounding others, it points also to us to sympathise with and comfort, as we have ability and opportunity ; and Job urges his friends, by this argument, to shew him pity, "For the hand of God hath touched me."

Job takes notice of his friends acting very unfriendly to him, and yet he seems to retain a good opinion of them, and still calls them his friends.

*Ver. 22. Why do you persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh.* Some suppose that Job charges them with an unwarrantable imitation of God in the manner of their opposition, as being without cause and without intermission, &c. But when we look only to the matter in general, that is, God has afflicted and persecuted me, and will you do so too? What reason is there that you should trouble me because God has done it? Though God is righteous in all he has brought upon me, yet you are not innocent. While you thus afflict me you wound your own souls though it be supposed that you have God himself for your pattern.

We should be merciful as God, and perfect as God ; but we must not be angry nor smite as God. The Lord saith, Isa. xlvii. "I was wroth with my people ; I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand." Yet the Lord reproves them for their severity : "Thou didst shew them no mercy," &c. as if he had said, "Thou should have shewed them mercy when I shewed them none." We must look to the word of God and not to his example for these things. So then, our contrariety to, and compliance with the will of God, cannot be concluded from the difference or identity of the object willed, but from the difference or identity of the actings of our wills with respect to the will of God. Hence, Job saith, "Do not think that you please God or comply with his will while you persecute me as he does ; for though it is his will to do it, yet you cannot produce a warrant that it is his will that you should do it." Some read the last clause affirmatively, "And ye are satisfied with my flesh," that is, you feed upon my sorrow ; others read, "be satisfied with my flesh, with the afflictions and troubles of my body, do not vex my spirit as the Lord is pleased to do ;" and these words are interpreted as expressing both the spirit and the work of detractors and slanderers. Thus, while Job's friends judged him an hypocrite, and declared him a wicked one, he might well say they were not satisfied with his flesh ; for slander robs a man of his credit and reputation, which is of more estimation than life itself. Now, as we may say of all slanderers, they are not satisfied with the flesh of those they oppose, so it is very rare that one man opposes another without some mixture of slander. O my friends, is it not enough that my body is worn out with painful sores, that you pour in the vinegar of sharp invective and bitter scoffs to perplex and afflict my troubled spirit.

*Ver. 23. O that my words were now written ! O that they were printed in a book !* This sorrowful patient having cried to his friends for pity, and that they would forbear to persecute farther, he now begs their attention and serious consideration of what he had now to say, in which he resumes the proof of his integrity, by a vehement wish that his words might be brought to the strictest trial, and by a strong profession of his faith in the Redeemer, and of a happy resurrection to a better life, by which he shews that he was not only willing to be tried by men, but to appear before God. His wish, that his words should be written, may refer to the history of all his actions and sufferings, or to what he had said in his own defence in this contest, but especially what he was

now about to speak, to which these two verses is but a preface, and glorious words they are concerning the Redeemer.

To write a thing notes the preservation of it. The word translated *printed* signifies to set down a thing by way of narration. 2d, It signifies authoritatively to set down a thing as a law or statute which is more carefully preserved than a bare narration.

*Ver. 24. That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!* This verse is the same in substance with the former, and is only a further amplification of his desire. The sin of Judah is said to be written with a pen of iron, which implies its perpetuity; so to write upon a rock is not only opposed to writing on water or sand, but to all the usual ways of writing which are of long continuance, this being once done may be said to be done for ever.

From these two verses, which only express the strength of his desire, that what he had to say might be safely preserved and transmitted to after ages,—Learn, that honest and just desires are graciously accepted and answered by God.

Job's tongue was as the pen of a ready writer, and few words have had such a writing, for they are preserved to this day, and shall be to the end of the world as monuments of his patience and uprightness, and of the Lord's power and faithfulness. The profession and holding out of our faith is an actual conquest and victory over the world. Faith is our shield whereby we quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, whether men or devils. Faith leads us to the fountain of living waters which at once refreshes us and puts out the fire. Job holds forth his shield and makes a noble profession of his faith in God.

*Ver. 25. For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.* Job's argument here is, that he that by faith in the Redeemer waits for the resurrection of his body to eternal life, after death has done its worst, is not a wicked man nor an hypocrite, and this being my exercise, your charge against me is unfounded.

*For I know.* This is upon the greatest certainty, knowing, without wavering. My faith makes this as evident to me now as experience shall hereafter, that my Redeemer liveth, and that my body shall be raised again.

Saints do not see what they believe, yet they know what they believe. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." Who can make things not seen evident to us but he who is every where evident but no where seen, and can make things absent from our enjoyment, present to our comfort, but He who is always present. Knowledge as well as faith is the gift of God.

The word for a *Redeemer* comes from a root which is applied to buying back that which was alienated, and to paying a ransom, or by force rescuing those who have been taken prisoners.

Every word in the confession is precious and weighty. He owns a relation to, and claims an interest in the Redeemer. *My Redeemer.* He speaks of Christ as the Prince of Life, who not only *hath* or *shall* live, but *he liveth*; both you and I are mortal dying creatures, yet *my Redeemer liveth*. He has all life in himself; and all the life creatures enjoy is bestowed by him. From this confession,

Observe, 1. That afflictions do not separate from Christ, Rom. viii. "Who shall separate from the love of Christ," &c. 2. That a believer may attain to the full assurance of his interest in Christ; *I know*, this is assurance; he speaks in the singular number, *my Redeemer*. 3. That Jesus Christ was the Redeemer from the beginning, which confutes Socinians; for how could either the personal teaching or example of Christ reach to, or be conveyed back to them who lived before him. It is incumbent upon all believers to love Christ and live to him, who not only lives for their good, but their life is bound up in him.

*He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.* These words are strictly to be understood, not of Christ's incarnation, nor of his resurrection, though both may be included, but of his second coming, when he will raise the dead and proceed to judgment at the last day.

Hence observe, That the resurrection of our bodies shall be effected by the power of Christ; death itself is under the dominion of the Lord of life. We read of a twofold resurrection, (John iii.) both effected by his power. All men are naturally dead in sin; and as soon as any one of them hears the voice of Christ speaking by his word and Spirit he lives, which is called a new birth, a new life, and a resurrection. There

are but few who attain this spiritual resurrection ; but of the other it is said, that all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth, &c.

Job seems to comfort himself that his case should be impartially judged at last, as if he had said, Though I am severely treated by you, yet my Redeemer shall at the last day stand upon the earth to minister judgment to all, and to me amongst the rest.

From which observe, That it has been known and believed in all ages that there shall be a general judgment ; Enoch prophesied of it, and the Redeemer himself shall be the judge ; and this conveys comfort and speaks joy to saints, and it carries terror to the wicked. What can be more terrible than to be judged by a Redeemer whose grace and mercy we have refused.

*Ver. 26. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.* The word for *skin* in the Heb. signifies in the verb, To awake ; so in the margin it is, After I shall awake. There are three words supplied to make the sense of this one clause, it is literally, And after my skin destroy this ; putting his hand upon his breast, as some say, without naming his body. Job having confessed his faith in the Redeemer, here expresses his confidence of his own personal resurrection. Notwithstanding all the difficulties that might obstruct and hinder it in the former part of ver. 26, and the last part of ver. 27, Yet I believe I shall see God. I shall see him for myself. In both these expressions he sets forth the happiness of the saints after the reunion of soul and body ; and he maintains it shall be the same in kind, the same particular body that he had on earth. I shall see him in my flesh, &c.

As death shall prevail over the whole human race, so the outward man shall consume away ; there is an excepted case, Acts ii. Christ died, but death could not do with his body as Job supposed it might and would do with his ; for God raised him up, having loosed the pains (the bands or cords) of death.

*Yet in my flesh,* or Heb. From my flesh, *I shall see God.* I shall see Jesus Christ God-man, who being glorified in the body shall be seen with bodily eyes ; I shall have a glorified eye to see a glorified Saviour.

As our souls must be changed before they can be fit for glory, so also must our bodies. Yet the apostle does not say, (1 Cor. xv.) that the body shall be changed into a spirit, but it shall be raised a spiritual body, which it may be called, 1. Because the body shall be subject to the spirit ; for as the spirit of man while subject to sinful flesh is called carnal in scripture language, so the flesh, when purely subject to the spirit, may in like manner be called spiritual. 2. It may be called a spiritual body, because of the great strength and activity with which it shall be endowed. It must be a body of mighty strength which is capable of bearing "an exceeding weight of glory." 3. Because it will then have no need of natural helps and supports, and therefore is justly called a spiritual body.

Job, under his present distresses, comforts himself with, *I shall see God*, and that is enough for me. Christ speaks of believers (John xvii. 24.) seeing his mediatorial glory, by which they shall be made like him, 1. In holiness, and therefore, 2. In blessedness ; these cannot be enjoyed separately. They who are holy as God is holy, shall also be happy as God is happy, according to their capacity. The true reason why we are not more like God in this life, is because we see and truly know so little of God. Now as our likeness to God comes by vision, so our satisfaction and rest arises from both. Psal. xvii. "As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness, and then I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

*Ver. 27. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ; though my reins be consumed within me.* I shall not see God as a stranger, much less as an enemy, but as a friend ready to receive me into his everlasting embraces. Believers see for themselves and rejoice."

*Mine eyes shall behold*, that is, with an intense and critical view to discern and rejoice in his beauty and glory. Like Moses, who turned aside to view more exactly and fully that great sight. *And not another*, the sight which I shall then have of God shall not be at second hand, but from mine own personal sight. Saints in glory shall contemplate the ravishing excellencies of God. They shall enjoy as clear a knowledge of God, and free communion with God, as they shall be able to bear. And they shall meet with no interruption, for none but saints, who are all of one mind, will be admitted ; they will love as brethren, and mind the same thing.

Mr. Calvin reads, I shall behold him and none other. As he is the adequate, so he

shall be the sole object of mine eye. He shall fill me with himself. I shall see God. Mine eye shall not wander upon other objects. Though I be totally consumed, yet I believe that I shall rise and see God. Some read, *my reins or my desires are spent*; that is, I have nothing more to desire but a blessed resurrection and the enjoyment of God for ever.

Hence observe, That the faith of a blessed resurrection comforts and supports under the afflictions of this life.

Job having declared his faith, and expressed a longing desire after the enjoyment of God, makes an application of all to his friends.

*Ver. 28. But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?* The Latin reads, Wherefore do ye now say let us persecute him. As if Job had heard them combining together against him, and so reproving them for it. But according to our reading, he blames them with being rash and inconsiderate, and advises them to reflect on what they had said and done, and to ask themselves, why have we troubled him? and why should we trouble him any farther? Indeed we should ask ourselves, What is my design? what is my warrant? before everything we either do or say. A single eye makes all our ways single; yet we must look to our warrant as well as to our design, to our rule as well as to our end. It is also necessary to review our conduct and ask our souls, What hast thou done? and to urge an answer to every particular is an excellent mean to excite us to repentance. With what propriety can we ask, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" till we have asked and answered that question, What hast thou done.

Job believed with his heart, and made an excellent confession with his mouth, therefore they should take heed how they persecute him. Sincerity is the root of the matter in every godly man; and he who is upright in what he says and does, need not trouble himself concerning what others say of him or do against him. Christ in believers is the root whence all their graces come, and true grace carries light to discover itself. Job not only discerns grace in himself, but openly asserts that he has the root of the matter in him.

Hence learn, That a person may not only know that he is a partaker of grace, but in some cases it is lawful, and the duty of a believer to bear testimony of himself in the way of giving glory to God.

Thus Job tries to dissuade his friends from any farther unkind treatment, and in the next verse he threatens them.

*Ver. 29. Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishment of the sword.* The sword is an instrument of death; the magistrate bears it to do justice and maintain peace. It is an emblem of every sore punishment, "Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword."

1. Holy fear enlarges the heart towards God, Isa. lx. "Thy heart shall fear," &c. 2. As holy fear is a bridle to restrain us from sin, so it excites to cleave unto and obey God, Jer. xxxii. "I will put my fear in your hearts, and you shall never depart from me. None live so near God as they who fear him. 3. This fear flows from pure reverential thoughts of God in his greatness and unparalleled excellency, Jer. x. 6, 7. It is said, Deut. xvii. 13. "They shall hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously." Moses shews here what all ought to do on the appearance of judgment, not what they did. Some render the second clause, Because the sword is the revenger of iniquities. When the revenger of iniquity comes, it is high time to repent of the evils we have done, and do so no more. Job intimates that they had provoked God to wrath, and exposed themselves to all manner of evil by their conduct to him.

*That ye may know*; that is, that ye may be made to understand and keep in mind; that you may be made to feel what you will not be persuaded of, *that there is a judgment* both for you and me, and it will be a right judgment. It is easy to make a profession of our belief of a future judgment, or any truth; but while it has no influence on our practice, we may be said not to know it.

From Job's warning his friends of the danger they had exposed themselves to, and putting them in mind of a future judgment, learn that it is the study of a good man to do good to those who injure him.

Notwithstanding Job's confession of faith, and putting his friends in mind of the account they must give at the judgment, Zophar proceeds to persecute him as if nothing had been said.

## CHAPTER XX.

Zophar gives an elegant description of the sudden and dreadful downfall of wicked men. The sum of which is, that they enjoy but a very uncertain estate, however high and glorious they appear; and that after a short time of pleasure, they are cast down and perish for ever. His scope or aim in this is, to convince Job that he was justly censured by them, because God dealt with him as with a wicked man.

*Ver. 1, 2. Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste.* His thoughts did not only contain the matter which he had to answer, but they provoked and compelled him to answer, as if he had said, I have considered the discourse, and seeing how erroneous thou art about God's dealings with thee, *therefore my thoughts cause me to answer*; and thou hast not only threatened, but reproached and censured me, *and for this do I make haste.* I find a motion in me, and that motion forbids all delays. We usually make haste to do those things we delight to do, Psal. xl. "Lo, I come," "I delight to do," &c.

Hence learn, That we should consider before we answer; and it is very proper in every good work to make haste. It is said, "He that believeth shall not make haste," either to do or speak what he has not considered, or finds no warrant for when he has considered; and nothing provokes to a holy haste like faith, Psal. cxix. 60.

Zophar supposes Job's soul diseased and in danger from erroneous opinions and sinful practices, and therefore he makes haste. His supposition is a rule for us to walk by, though his practice is not, for he was mistaken in the object of his haste.

*Ver. 3. I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer.* The first clause seems to refer to Job's persisting in still dissenting from his friends. Every dissent carries a reproof, yea, a reproach in it. To hear ourselves reprov'd and reproach'd, tries and exercises our patience.

*The spirit of the understanding*, is the highest and most refined part of it; or it may be the force and power of it. The spirit is the best and strongest of every thing, and it may intimate that he had sufficient knowledge to answer for himself and to retort Job's reproach, as if he had said, Thou hast spoken my reproach from thy own passion, but I will not imitate thee. I will answer with the best of my understanding.

Hence observe, That we should not answer passionate speeches with passion. We are called upon to "Sing praises with understanding," and since we must not perform any public duty in the dark, so as that others cannot exercise their understanding, so we cannot perform any duty without the work of our own understanding. An ignorant person wants understanding, and a person in a passion cannot use his understanding, both are unfit to object or answer. When we answer as we ought, it is the spirit of our understanding that causes us to answer.

*Ver. 4. Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth.* He charges Job either with ignorance or inadvertancy: Knowest thou not that which every one knows. As it is a shame not to know common principles, so not to know common experience. That which any man may know, every man ought to know, if it be useful, and especially when it is our duty to know it. As God has appointed to every man where he shall be, so how he shall be employed, Acts xvii. 26. It is our happiness, wherever we are, to believe that God has placed us there, and it is a great support in any service or business, to see that God has called us to it.

Zophar proceeds to mention that common truth to which all ages have borne testimony.

*Ver. 5. That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?* Zophar seems to admit that the wicked may prosper; but he boldly asserts that it cannot last long. There are three parallel terms, *triumphing*, and *joy*, the *wicked*, and *hypocrite*, *short*, and a *moment*. The word translated *triumphing*, signifies, joy proclaimed that all may know it. But the height of a wicked man's prosperity, is but like a statue of snow before the sun. For all his enjoyments are in themselves vanishing, and by his own folly he makes them still more vain to him than they are in themselves. From which it follows, That a wicked man is a very miserable man, for his sorrows shall last for ever, but his joy is only for a moment. Whereas, the afflictions of the saints are light and momentary, yet eternal in

their fruitfulness, for they work, (for they work, not by way of price, but of preparation) "an eternal weight of glory."

As Job was a worshipper of God, he might not think himself implicated in what Zophar had said of the wicked man in the next clause, he introduces the *hypocrite*, who makes the highest profession of religion. Now an hypocrite does not merely rejoice in the things of this world as a wicked man doth, for when he hears a well told discourse of the grace and goodness of God, and the joys of heaven, he may "hear with joy," like the stony ground hearers. A man may have a joy in and about spiritual things, and yet have no spiritual joy, as a man may have much knowledge about spiritual things, and yet have no spiritual knowledge of them, and though in regard of its object, it is better than his worldly joy, yet in regard of its duration it is no better. The joy of the saints shall be always as if it were new begun. As there shall be no end of their joy, so there shall be no abatement of it. Zophar having given his opinion about the vanishing prosperity of a wicked man, proceeds to amplify and confirm it. He amplifies it, 1st, by a hyperbolical supposition, ver. 6. the antithesis of which is laid down, ver. 7. "Yet he shall perish for ever," &c. 2d. By an elegant similitude of a dream, and of a vision, ver. 8. Both of which are prosecuted, ver. 9. "The eye also which saw him," &c.

*Ver. 6. Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds.* It is a strong way of arguing when we put the best of another man's case and yet conclude it bad. The Septuagint translate, "If his gifts ascend up to heaven." Gifts may be expressed by this word, because the possession of them lifts a man up to honour, or rather because a man is very apt to be lifted up with gifts. "Knowledge puffeth up." This sense is very suitable to Zophar's description of a hypocrite, who, though he hath not one talent of grace, yet may have five or even ten talents of gifts. This manner of speaking implies, 1st. A high state of honour. 2d. The highest elevation that man is capable of on earth. 3d. That it is unchangeable, which is what man cannot attain unto. The next clause is of the same import, *his head reach unto the clouds.* He may be above the clouds in aspiring projects, while his heart is among the clouds of the earth in covetous and cursed practices. There is nothing in this world so good but an evil man may enjoy it. No power or honour on earth so high, but he may reach after and attain it. But when thus exalted, he has the greatest reason to fear. For as it is the honour of God to exalt the low, so to abase the proud and exalted.

*Ver. 7. Yet shall he perish for ever like his own dung.* Wicked men shall perish disgracefully. Their memory shall rot and nothing shall remain of them but an unpleasant savour. They which have seen him shall say, Where is he? That is, those who have seen his splendour and greatness, and who perhaps have admired and flattered him shall say in scorn,—Where is that rich oppressor, that ambitious prince, or cunning politician? What is become of them and their wealth, honour, art, and wisdom? Or they shall say, Where is he? in wonder and astonishment at the sudden fall, the strange change, and universal destruction of him, who so lately enjoyed a spring-tide of prosperity. O the vanity of man, the uncertainty of all worldly happiness! The eye of God will not spare those, who either think highly of themselves, or love to be highly thought of by others.

*Ver. 8. He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.* These two similitudes illustrate the position laid down in the two former verses. That wicked men shall certainly and suddenly disappear. The Psalmist having learned in the sanctuary, that the wicked are set in slippery places, and that, as in a moment they are utterly consumed with terrors, concludes, agreeable to Zophar's allusion, Psal. lxxiii. 20. "As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." That is, he shall utterly spoil their outward pomp. An image is only valuable for its appearance, not for its use. Such a dumb shew is the glitter and greatness of this world, and so it is called an image or an idol, and also like a dream, which frames images and representations in the mind; which, like characters in the sand, are discomposed and scattered by the first puff of wind.

Hence observe, That the prosperity of the wicked has neither comfort nor stability in it. For as a dream is not real, so it is not lasting. So wealth and greatness shall fly away, they shall not be found. He shall not only fly away as a bird, but be violently chased away as a wild beast, and be forgotten as a night vision.

*Ver. 9. The eye which saw him shall see him no more ; neither shall his place any more behold him.* Zophar takes these words out of Job's mouth, (who spake the same thing in his own case, chap. 7.), as if he would cast him for a wicked man by his own confession, and turn what he had said upon himself. The sum and sense of this verse is just what has been already observed, the total ruin and extirpation of the wicked man, whether hypocrite or profane. Those who saw him flourishing shall see him fading, till he disappear altogether.

Zophar now proceeds to enunciate some of the evils which overwhelm the wicked, when once their tide of outward prosperity begins to turn. The first evil which he mentions falls upon their children.

*Ver. 10. His children shall seek to please the poor.* This sounds like a rare virtue ; yet it is rather a curse, wrapt up as the portion of the children of the wicked man, in that it is said, *They shall seek to please.* That is, they shall be constrained to flatter and fawn upon those whom their father insulted, and on whom he trampled.

Others translate, *His children being poor, shall please.* That is, all shall be pleased to see his children poor. This shews the portion and punishment of a wicked man. It is an eminent display of divine retribution, when either they, or the children of such as have oppressed others, and made them poor, are forced to submit to and seek their favour. This is the honour that shall be done to Zion, and the shame that shall fall on their enemies. Isa. lx. 14. "The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee."

*And his hands shall restore their goods.* Restitution flowing from true repentance and godly sorrow is a work of grace ; but here is restitution without either repentance or sorrow, except because he could hold what he had gotten no longer.

Some read, *His hands shall restore his iniquity.* That is, the things which he has gotten by iniquity. Others read, *His hand shall restore his sorrow.* That is, his hand or his act shall bring sorrow upon him. His own hand may well be said to restore, or bring sorrow upon himself, even that sorrow and misery which he had brought upon others. Psal. vii. 16. "His mischief shall come down upon his own head."

Hence observe, That as he who truly repents does willingly restore what he has unlawfully gotten, so God will force the impenitent oppressor to restore what he has gotten whether he will or not.

Zophar now sets forth their misery from the cause of it.

*Ver. 11. His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust.* That is, they are full of these miseries and sorrows which sins of youth have merited. Some render, *His bones are full of his secrets,*—of his secret sins. The word is used, Psal. xc. 8. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret sins (or sins of youth) in the light of thy countenance." As it is our highest mercy when God lifts up the light of his countenance upon our persons, so it is our greatest affliction, or a forerunner of very sad afflictions, when God sets our secret sins, or the sins of our youth, in the light of his countenance. By *bones* we may understand, 1st, Any thing that is strong or firm. 2dly, The whole outward man. Psal. cxli. "Our bones lie scattered," &c. Our whole body is ready to drop into the grave again. "All my bones shall say," &c. Psal. xxxv. That is, my whole man, body and soul, shall say. Sometimes the bones are put specially for the soul. Psal. li. David prays that God would restore unto him the joy of his salvation, and that the bones which he had broken might rejoice. When a man's spirit is broken we may well say his bones are broken, Psal. vi. 2, 3, and xxxviii. 3. To say *his bones are full of the sins of his youth*, is as much as to say, his youthful sins draw trouble quite through him, they leave nothing of him untainted. So the words imply the universality and extent of the wicked man's punishment ; it shall sink into his bones and marrow. It is impossible to separate the punishment of sin from the guilt of it ; and it is impossible to remove the guilt of it by any means but by the pardon it. Bones full of sin shall not want pain. Cast out sin by repentance ; take hold of pardon by believing on Christ ; and then punishment is cast out, and must let go its hold. The bones of the godly shall be filled at last with the goodness of God, and the bones of the wicked shall be filled with the wrath of God, which their sins have procured ; and as God makes them to possess the sins of their youth in punishment, so they continue to persevere in possessing them, if not in practice, yet in affection and pleasant contemplation. Sin persevered in is the greatest misery. No evil can come upon a sinner so bad as his own sin is. To be given up to sin is the greatest punishment. Unless a man die to sin

before he dies, his sin will live with him when he is dead, and it shall rise with him. And O how awful the thought to appear before Christ in the judgment in sin! O that this consideration would excite us immediately to receive that repentance which Christ is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to bestow freely! O how absurd, foolish, and infatuated it is to pass through life, imagining that we can repent at pleasure, and yet day after day neglect so important, and, as we fancy, so easy a duty.

He proceeds to describe their miseries by a metaphor taken from meats, which are sweet to the taste, but deadly in the effect.

*Ver. 12. Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue.* The scope and intention of this similitude is to shew what it is that provokes carnal men to the pursuit of sin. And it seems to be the prospect of profit and the expectation of pleasure.

In Luke viii. pleasure is mentioned as one of the causes, and perhaps it is the principal cause of choking the word. That is, they will not suffer a man to submit to and practise the word. To whom is the word of God sweet? Only to those who love and obey it. The word is gall and wormwood to a disobedient person. Sin is suitable to corrupt nature, and hath a pleasant taste. Prov. ix. 17. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." There are sinful practices rendered more sweet by secrecy. As the tongue of a good man discovers his sin by confession, Psal. xxxii. 5. so the tongue of a wicked man hides it, by denying, dissembling, and by excusing it. Many hide their sins for shame; but hiding will produce greater shame. *He that covers his sin shall not prosper.* God covers the sin of a believing penitent; but the impenitent covers his own. *He hides it under his tongue.*

Another sense of hiding under the tongue is to meditate or revolve a thing in the mind; for when once a word is spoken, it is out of the tongue's keeping; but while we meditate, we keep it under the tongue. Holy thoughts are said to be under the tongue, when we are preparing to bring them forth, and so are unholy thoughts. Psal. x. 7. "Under his tongue is mischief and vanity." He speaks evil, and is devising how to speak worse.

Thus, as in reference both to good and evil, there is a hiding under the tongue to prepare for speaking, so there is a hiding that the thing may be concealed, which is the conduct of a false-hearted hypocrite. So that Zophar struck at Job secretly as a hypocrite while he spake of hiding sin under his tongue.

*Ver. 13. Though he spare it and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth.* This shews the intenseness of the wicked man upon sin; he will by no means let it go. These words still pursue the metaphor of eating; for a glutton (as was intimated before) eats for eating's sake, or for pleasure, not for strength to glorify God, which should be our end in eating. The word *spare* signifies to spare out of pity and compassion; hence not sparing and not pitying are put together, Ezek. v. 11. It signifies also to spare what should not be spared, even that which it is our duty to destroy. Some, like Saul with the Amalekites, spare from a foolish pity, and from covetousness, or a pretence of devotion. We may be said to spare sin when we do not confess it, and when we do not condemn and pass sentence upon it, and especially when we do not put it to death. We may confess sin and condemn it too, and yet be unwilling to part with it, and so *forsake it not*. To forsake it is to withdraw outward communion and inward affection. The one is the cause of the other. Jer. ii. 13. "This people have committed two great evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters." That is, I have no more of their company, because they do not love me. Solomon says, "He that confesseth and forsaketh shall find mercy. He that has no mind to forsake his sin can never cordially confess it."

The next verse contains the application of the whole similitude.

*Ver. 14. Yet his meat in his bowels is turned; it is the gall of asps within him.* This is the fruit of wickedness. Sin, which is sweet in the mouth, is *turned* not into nourishment, but into poison. There is a gradation in the metaphor. Sweetness turns to bitterness, yea to gall, and not only to gall, but to the gall of asps, which is not only bitter, but poisonous, and is said to kill in four hours, so it is sudden as well as certain death. The "bread of deceit," Prov. xx. 17. "is gravel afterwards;" and the sweet wine bites at last. It may be pleasant to look at in the cup, and agreeable to the taste; but if you be overtaken with it, you will find it turned into the gall of asps. Jeremiah says to such, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." Though sin neither corrects nor reproves; but the



effects of it does both, as he seems to expound. "Know, therefore, and see, (viz. by the event), that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God;" that is, thy forsaking of God (and such is every turning aside to sin) will procure thee much evil, and provoke God to make thy life bitter unto thee. We may say to every one who delights in sin, as Rev. xviii. "How much thou hast glorified thyself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow shall be given unto thee." How much of the one, so much of the other. If, after sin has yielded us a little unsatisfying pleasure, it should only end in pain, this might provoke us to cast it both out of our affections and practice, how then should our hearts be turned from it and rise against it, when we are assured that this pain is as poison, and ends in death. Every sin has the seed of death in it; but sin concealed, by denying or exercising it, is a deadly poison. The Gospel has a remedy against the death which the greatest sins deserve; but it has no antidote against a studied and continued concealment of sin.

*Ver. 15. He hath swallowed down riches.* The similitude is here confined to a particular sin; and the metaphor is taken from wild beasts, which greedily devour their prey. Riches are a sweet morsel to a covetous man; he cares not how it comes; all is fish that comes in the net, though it prove a serpent instead of a fish, as appears from the next clause. For

*He shall vomit them up again.* The gain of fraud and oppression may be said to be vomited up by repentance arising from godly sorrow, like Zaccheus, Luke xix. Happy is it for those who have swallowed down riches unduly, when the Lord gives them the repentance of godly sorrow to vomit them up again. But riches in many an oppressor is like Jonah in the whale's belly, he must vomit them up again, not out of love to righteousness or hatred of sin—not out of pity to the oppressed or charity to the poor, but for his own present ease; and yet if it goes no farther, how poor an ease will it prove? Such a repentance needs to be repented of.

*God shall cast them out of his belly.* That is, out of his barns, chests, and store-houses, wherever he has hoarded his riches, that's his belly, and from thence they shall be cast out by troubles, law-suits, &c. This should admonish all to consider what riches they swallow. He that has got much honestly, may spoil all, by mingling a little with it gotten dishonestly. Christ uses an argument much higher than this, warning men to take heed of unjust gain. Matt. xvi. "What shall it profit a man," &c. A just man considers every penny he gets, and asks himself how he came by it. He is as careful what he puts in his purse, as a temperate man is of what he eats.

*Ver. 16. He shall suck the poison of asps.* That is, he shall find that most bitter and deadly to him, in which he expected much delight. While the covetous oppressor is saying of his unjust gains, it is sweet and good, he little thinks he is sucking the deadly poison of the asp. It is a great mistake to expect happiness from unjust gains; for as there is a sinful sparing, so there is a sinful getting, which tends to poverty, and he who thus gathers, does worse than scatter. *He sucks the poison of asps,* and

*The viper's tongue shall slay him.* That is, he shall be as certainly and suddenly slain, as if a viper had bitten him. The viper's tongue is the emblem of any remediless evil. And such shall befall the covetous oppressor. The mischief that he does to others shall return upon his own head. Sin is the great deceiver. He that lays snares for others, catches himself. "They lurk privily for their own lives;" this was not their intentions but the event proved it. So he "that is wise, (that is, holy and righteous,) shall be wise for himself." That is, though he intends the glory of God and the good of others, wholly denying himself, yet he shall be the chief gainer by it in the end.

Or by the *viper's tongue*, we may understand any opposer who rises up and accuses this fraudulent or violent oppressor. They try to immortalize their memories but their projects fail them, and as they never deserved or had a good name, so they shall not long have a great one. If good men do not cry them down, some or other as bad as themselves shall. *The viper's tongue shall slay them.*

*Ver. 17. He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter.* That is, he shall not enjoy. Sight is so noble a sense, that it is put for all the senses, especially for that which is the desire of all the senses, enjoyment. The sight of the best things without enjoyment, do rather afflict than please us.

*Honey and butter* are put for all good things. *Rivers, brooks, floods*, denote the abundance of them. A worldly man has great expectations from this world; he hopes

to see, that is, possess and enjoy them, but he shall be ashamed of his hope. How many who have hunted eagerly to acquire the things of this world, and have been dreaming of much comfort and happiness in the enjoyment of them, have been suddenly cut short by, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." And how many more, who have been indulging themselves in the use or abuse of what they have accumulated, have had them swept away, so that they could no longer see them. Thus the Lord threatened his ancient people in case of disobedience, Deut. xxviii. 31. "Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof, thine ass shall be violently taken away, and shall not be restored to thee." &c. Zophar, in the next verse, without a figure, gives a farther account of the wicked man's non-enjoyment of that which he had wrongfully obtained from others, in hope to make himself a happy man.

*Ver. 18. That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down.* The Hebrew is, "He shall restore his labour." But how can labour be restored? 1st, Taking labour for the misery which he brought on others. Then to *restore labour*, is to be punished in proportion to the trouble which he put others to. 2d. *He shall restore labour*, That is, the profit and fruit of their labours whom he had wickedly oppressed or defrauded. 3d. *By labour*, we may understand any fruit or profit of his own labour, even when lawfully obtained. Zophar does not say, He shall restore his goods or his estate, but what he *laboured for*; teaching us that men willingly toil for the things of this world. They not only eat bread with the sweat of their face, but with vexation of heart. Men will rather labour for the "meat that perisheth," than accept of that "which endureth to everlasting life," "without money and without price."

*And shall not swallow it down.* It shall not be converted either to his personal benefit, or to the use of his family, he shall not thrive by all his gettings. Though we cannot say that this is universally the case, yet in some it is so with every wicked man. For he is either so soon deprived of his unjust gains, or they do him so little good while he has them, that it may be said he has not had them. He must restore his labour and not swallow it down.

*According to his substance shall the restitution be.* Restitution is an act of communicative justice, whereby the wrong which we have done to another is recompensed. To give to the poor is a duty, yet it is an act of charity; but to restore, (though to the rich) is not only a duty, but an act of justice. God hates robbery on pretence of charity to the poor now, as much as he did sacrifices for himself formerly. In restitution, the damage to the person wronged must be fully repaired. How shall the conduct of those who only pay a part of their debts, be reconciled with this passage, *according to his substance shall the restitution be.*

*And he shall not rejoice therein.* His ill-gotten goods shall administer no comfort to his mind, he shall have sorrow with it. Many enjoy that which they cannot rejoice in; there is a vast difference between having outward things and taking comfort in them, these are distinct gifts of God. The reason why he shall restore what he hath laboured for is stated.

*Ver. 19. Because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor.* That is, having spoiled and peeled them, he left them in a poor condition. To forsake is to withdraw help, counsel, protection, or any thing which might do another good, this is an heinous aggravation of their oppression. Though to give alms and take some care of those we have oppressed, cannot compensate for the sin.

*Because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not.* Some read, he hath violently taken away a house and he shall not build it. His oppression of others shall be punished with disappointment. The whole clause seems rather a description of his sin. *He hath violently taken away, &c.* That is, he hath by force seized upon that which he hath no title to, and never bestowed either pains or cost on it. This is a great sin, and also a great affliction to the sufferer. *House* here is any thing which properly belongs to another person. As there are some idle poor who will not labour for their bread, so there are covetous rich who eat the bread for which the poor have laboured. If drones deserve no honey, such as either violently or craftily take away what belongs to their neighbours, deserve punishment.

*Ver. 20. Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly.* Some view this as a description of his sin that his mind shall never be satisfied. Others interpret it, "Of his misery," I think we may take in both. This is his sin, and this is his punishment,

not only because his sin is his punishment, but because his sin was unquiet insatiable desires, and now he is punished with fresh desires that will not be satisfied. As he gave up himself sinfully, so God gives him up judicially to vile affections. The Tygurine translation renders it excellently, "The man scraps an heap of wealth together, but yet he shall not find that he is wealthy." Prov. xiii. 25. "The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul," he blesses God, though he has but little and is content. "But the belly of the wicked shall want." The punishment inflicted on wicked oppressors is not always by want in their purses, their hearts are in want when their houses abound. It is easier for a man to fill his belly than his eye. The covetous man's belly is his eye, and nothing in this world can fill that, and yet he neither desires nor endeavours to have it filled with any thing but the world. What can appease desire when desire is a disease? Labour to get the distemper that is in your desires cured. Nothing can satisfy desire but God himself. The blessing and favour of God, with what he is pleased to bestow will satisfy us. By the "horse leach," Prov. xxx. 15, may signify *desire*, by the "two daughters," may be meant covetousness and prodigality, the former cries Give, to keep, the latter cries Give, to spend. Hence observe, That as this non-satisfaction is the punishment of a wicked man, so it is also his sin. It is a sin not to be satisfied, as well as it is a misery to be dissatisfied. The apostle, Heb. xiii. 5. says, "Be content with such things as ye have," that is, be quiet, sit down, we ought to feel quietness in our belly with our portion, and bless God for our allowance in every condition.

*He shall not save,* That is, keep, preserve, or maintain that which he has desired. *That which he desired,* That is, of that which he coveted to have, with strong desire, he shall save nothing of it, all will escape and be gone.

Hence observe, That when a worldling has got all that he desires, yet he cannot hold it. How very different are the saints, they shall save the things they desire, and the things they desire shall save them. "O how great is the goodness thou hast laid up for them that fear thee," Psal. xxxi. 19.

*Ver. 21. There shall none of his meat be left; therefore shall no man look for his goods.* This is not a description (as some think) of his expensiveness, or as others of his penuriousness to himself or others, but of his extreme poverty sent upon him as a punishment by the hand of God. The second clause literally is, "Therefore no looking for his goods," which is as much as to say, he hath nothing left, for if a man have any thing, some or other will be looking for it. When a rich man is sick, many gape for his death, hoping that somewhat will fall into their mouths. The scope of the two following verses is to set forth the season or nick of time in which the Lord will reckon with this sinful oppressor.

*Ver. 22. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits.* The word signifies to suffice, satisfy, and fill up; also to clap the hands together, which is done in anger and vexation, Num. xxiv. 10. and also for joy. Sufficiency is at least a competency; but the fulness of sufficiency is abundance. They have enough, and more than enough, yet even then *He shall be in straits.* The word is applicable to any kind of trouble. When a man knows not what to do he is in straits indeed. Every affliction is a kind of prison.

A man may be said to be in straits in the midst of his sufficiency. 1st, As being troubled what to do with his abundance, Luke xii. 19. 2d, How to protect what he has gotten. He is in many straits about how to lay up his treasure, that it be not lent or taken from him. 3d, There is another strait, which is indeed a grievous curse—when a rich man fancies he has nothing, or is worse than nothing. It is the reverse with hypocrites, who think they have a fulness of sufficiency in them, when indeed they are in straits, in poverty, and want. 4th, When they shall say peace, and not only peace, but safety, all is quiet, and will be quiet, then sudden destruction, &c. Nebuchadnezzar was boasting in the fulness of his sufficiency, when he was brought into straits. This is the wicked man's doom; he is not only punished, but surprised.

*Every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.* Then there will be many hands upon him, for there are many wicked. But there is a difference about the word which we render wicked. It signifies a labouring man. So each hand of the injured and grieved labouring man shall come upon him. The word signifies also a man any way distressed or brought to misery; and so not only the hand of the poor who had laboured for him, but the hand of the rich whom he had injured, shall come upon and vex him. The same word signifies labour, misery, and wickedness, because there is so much trouble and vexation in wickedness. God will let out the spirits of evil doers to

take vengeance on him for his evil deeds. As God usually employs wicked men to scourge his own people, so sometimes he makes them scourge one another.

*Ver. 23. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating.* This is of the same import of the former verse, and farther sets forth the special time of God pouring out his wrath. When the man is about to enjoy the fruit of his labours, and promising himself happiness in his self-gratification, then the wrath of God, that had been formerly restrained, is sent out. So that when they sit down to rest, to eat, and to drink, and be merry with what they have gotten, it may be viewed as the presage of their approaching ruin.

The angel, Zech. i. 11. that had gone to and fro, says, "Behold, all the earth sat still, and was at rest." All were about to fill their bellies. By earth is meant the temporal power of Babylon, in opposition to the church of God. They seemed to think the world would never change, but ruin soon fell on the empire. This may comfort the people of God, when they see the real enemies of truth and righteousness in the greatest security, that they are then near a fall. In Amos vi. the people are represented as dissolved into mirth and music; but a woful voice sounded in their ears. *Ver. 7. "Therefore now shall they go captive," &c.* The very *now* of their joy is the now of their captivity.

The last clause is but a repetition and explication of the former. God is said to rain wrath. 1st, To note its suddenness. 2d, To shew that there is no avoiding it. There is no shelter from the storms of divine wrath but Christ, who is the only covert from the tempest. 3d, It points out the quantity. It is not to distil as the dew; but he shall rain wrath; and as this refers to abundance, so does the rain of righteousness, Hosea x. that is, till he send Christ, who is made of God, to us, righteousness in abundance; or till he pour out his Spirit, who will cause you to bring forth the fruits of righteousness abundantly.

In the description of the judgment, Matt. xxiv. 38. that came upon the world, it rained upon them indeed, when they were eating. "They did eat and drink, &c. till the day that Noah went into the ark." These things are not sinful, but they used them sinfully, to satisfy their lusts, and please their senses; therefore God brought the judgment at that very season, while they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. He rained on them the fury of his wrath. And Psal. lxxviii. "While their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them." He rained wrath upon them while they were eating.

Zophar having said that God pours out the fury of his wrath upon the wicked man, when he thinks himself safe, even in the fulness of his sufficiency God deals with him while he is eating, and mingles his blood with his bread, and his tears with his wine.

He proceeds to mention other ways and instruments by which he shall be ruined.

*Ver. 24. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through.*

*Iron weapon* signifies all sorts of hand weapons, as the sword, or spear. Some take it figuratively of the pestilence, which in 1 Chron. xxi. is spoken of as a sword: "The Lord commandeth the angel, and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof;" and in Psal. xci. the arrow signifies the plague. This metaphorical sword and arrow of the pestilence is a weapon from which many flee as fast as from the sword of the fiercest enemy.

*He shall flee.* Flight is the pace of a coward; the righteous will rather die than run if duty bids him stay, but the wicked defends himself with his feet at the approach of danger, but though he flies to avoid one evil he shall fall into another. The bow of steel shall strike him through. That is the arrow or bullet with which this steel bow is charged, which shall strike him through, cut him off, or destroy him."

It is said, "In the tower of David there hung a thousand shields," that is, shields enough. Now, as the Lord has defensive weapons for the protection of his people, so he has a thousand bows and arrows to destroy his and their enemies. How can God want weapons who can make any thing a weapon? When the Jews boasted of their fleshly descent from Abraham, as if God were tied to Abraham's line, "I tell you," saith John, "God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham," as if he had said, "Think not that God will be straitened for a people if he remove you, for he can raise up another people to himself out of those who are as unlikely, and, in human reason, as much indisposed to show forth his praise as these stones are." When

God intends to punish a wicked man, the means which he employs shall be effectual. As no weapon shall prosper against any of his people, so every weapon he sends, however insignificant of itself, shall answer the purpose for which he sent it, so, trying to evade or escape is vain. Happy those who study to improve their afflictions, by humbling themselves under his mighty hand, applying to him for support and relief, turning to him that smites, saying, thou art righteous.

*Ver. 25. It is drawn, and cometh out of the body.* That is, out of the body of the wicked man, against whom it was, that it strikes him through, and comes out of his body beyond him, and so it is a circumlocution to express a deep and deadly wound.

*Yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall.* As if he had said, "As soon as he is stricken through with the arrow he shall be run through with the sword too." The word which is translated *glittering sword*, properly signifies *lightning*. When a man brandishes a well furnished sword it glitters in the eye like lightning. So Ezek. describes the sword, ch. xxi. "It is furnished that it may glitter." What makes such speed as lightning, and therefore, to say a sword or an arrow shall pass through the gall as lightning, intimates how sudden and unexpectedly it comes. Thus Zophar describes the unavoidable as well as sudden destruction of wicked oppressors. He that is stricken through the gall is past cure. The wound that God gives his enemies, whether nations or individuals, is incurable. Job complains, ch. xvi. "He hath poured my gall upon the ground," that is, "He hath given me a deadly wound."

To shew the inward effect of these judgments, it is added,

*Terrors are upon him.* The word is *emims*, a sort of terrible people, Deut. ii. 10. the name is from a root signifying *fear*, because their great stature raised the passion of fear in their beholders. This argues the completeness of a wicked man's misery, he shall not only feel the iron weapon, but he shall be filled with inward terrors; his soul is wounded worse than his body. Man can both speak and act terribly, but God only can send out terrors, he can wound within and without.

*Ver. 26. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places.* As God is all light, and in him is no darkness at all, so the portion of this man is all darkness, and no light, no comfort at all. Trouble shall lie close like a thief to surprise him. As men hide themselves in darkness, so this man's darkness shall be hid. It may refer to trouble upon his spirit. The mind and conscience are secret places. Now, as the mind and conscience of the wicked man is defiled, Tit. i. 15, as well as his hand and tongue, so there shall be nothing but darkness in his mind and conscience.

From its being said that *he shall flee*, some interpret he shall go into retirement and all darkness shall be hid there, that is, he shall find no safety in those places to which he flees for refuge. The darkness of sin brings the darkness of sorrow. If we hide sin and provide secret places for it, God will hide darkness for us in our most secret places. They who love darkness more than light shall meet with darkness where they most expected light.

*A fire not blown shall consume him.* A stone cut out without hands, and a fire kindled without blowing, are expressions of the same general tendency, teaching us what great things God can do without being observed by man. This should make us afraid to blow up the fire of divine displeasure against us, seeing the Lord can consume us by invisible flames. It should make all nations tremble and take heed how they lift up their hands against God, who can break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, the gold, that is all their power, even their most solid and best compacted power, and without any visible means or human preparations. There is no standing before the least of God's judgments; when he commands execution shall be done.

*It shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.* The word translated *left* is applicable to things and persons, therefore, some restrain it to his estate and goods; others extend it to his children and relatives. As he himself shall fare ill so they that are his shall fare no better.

*Ver. 27. The heavens shall reveal his iniquity.* Zophar now brings his discourse to a conclusion, with a farther description of a wicked man's misery, by the joint suffrage of heaven and earth against him, and by the determinate counsel and purpose of God concerning him.

In ch. xvi. Job had said, "O earth, cover not thou my blood, my witness is in heaven." Zophar tells him he shall have his wish, heaven and earth shall unite in discovering his sin, and shall testify against and condemn him.

*The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, &c.* By heavens, some understand the inha-

bitants of heaven. God himself, the angels, and saints, shall in their several degrees and capacities *reveal his iniquity*. Those judgments that fall from heaven cry out and reveal the iniquity of men on earth. Some think that he here intimates the fire from heaven that consumed Job's sheep, and the wind that smote the house in which his children were killed.

The heavens declare, when their influences are stopped, when they withhold the rain. "The heavens that is over thy head shall be brass," Deut. xxviii. That is when they yield no more moisture than brass. When God by withholding rain by storms, &c. injures the persons or possessions of men, the heavens may be said to reveal his iniquity.

*And the earth shall rise up against him.* That is, all earthly things shall appear his enemies, and proclaim war against him. When the Lord strikes the earth with barrenness, when the fruits of the earth are burned up, this may convince man of his barrenness in doing good and fruitfulness in doing evil. All the creatures are obedient unto the Lord of Hosts, and he can muster an army of the most contemptible creatures that will effectually punish proud man.

*Ver. 28. The increase of his house.* The word *increase* signifies properly a bud or blossom, and is, by a metaphor, applied to their children, and properly to their riches and profits. They may bud and blossom in outward prosperity.

*I saw the wicked like a green bay tree, but they shall depart ;* or, as it may be translated *go into captivity*. His children shall be captives, and his treasure spoiled or become the portion of strangers.

Again, as the verb signifies *to depart* and be led captive, so also *to reveal*, or *to make a thing appear*, so it is translated in the former verse, and so some read, *the increase of his house shall be revealed*, his hid treasures shall appear ; so the words are a predicted threat against the hoarded riches of the wicked man's house. God shall discover these treasures to the spoilers ; others say, it shall be made appear that he obtained his riches by oppression, deceit, and guile.

Hezekiah fell under the temptation of pride and vain glory, he was ambitious to have it known in Babylon what a rich prince he was, therefore, the Lord laid this judgment on him, "The increase of thy house shall depart and be carried captive." Thou hast been so foolish as to make a show of thy riches to strangers, therefore, they shall be carried to Babylon. Our glorying in riches, or in any thing besides God, provokes him to stain our glory. Thus, Zophar threatens the wicked man, *The increase of his house shall depart*, and without the supplement.

*Flow away in the day of his wrath.*

*Flow away.* It is a metaphor taken from waters ; either from water spilt upon the ground that cannot be gathered up again. Or as floods are carried with a mighty force, so the goods of a wicked man are carried away as with a flood. At other times their worldly enjoyments do not flow away violently, but slowly and insensibly, it is divided into many streams and dries up imperceptibly. Thus, "the increase of his house shall flow away."

And when? *in the day of his wrath.* That is, when God appears angry and manifests his wrath, for there is no change in God. When judgments are poured out, it may be said to be a day of wrath ; yet there are days of great affliction to the godly when the increase of his house departs, and all his goods flow away like a stream ; and yet it is only a day of trial without a drop of wrath in it. "Whom I love I chasten." Floods of temptation does not drown but wash the furniture of grace, that increase of the soul never flows away. But judgments on the ungodly are always mingled with the wrath of God. Woe to a provoking people when judgment appears, for it is the appearance of wrath. When God smote the people, (Numb. xvi.) Moses saw wrath in it, and said, "There is wrath gone out from the Lord," and hastened Aaron to the duty of his place ; "go quickly to the congregation and make an atonement for them," which typified the atonement of Christ, who alone can deliver us both from present and future wrath. When the wrath of God goes forth against a man no good thing will stay with him ; it makes those things which are looked upon as firm as a rock of adamant, lands, friends, and every comfort, dissolve like snow before the sun. But God is wroth with thousands whose increase does not depart, but rather flows in abundantly ; but if God once let out his wrath their fulness turns to emptiness, and their increase hastens to be gone, 1. By their own prodigality God gives them up to spend that vainly which they get unjustly. 2. By the oppression of others. As he took violently or fraudulently from others, so God gives him up to sons of violence and

fraud who take all from him. Or, 3. His increase flies away by a secret curse. Now, as some grow rich they know not how, so others grow poor they know not how. What Haggai speaks of wages earned is true of all other gains, it is as put "into a bag with holes;" and holes in the bag are nothing else but a secret curse. If God do but blow upon our good things in anger, they are blasted and melt away. The mountains of human strength, riches, and greatness, flow down at the presence of the Lord, Isa. lxiv. 1.

*Ver. 29. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed him by God.* As if he had said, Consider my words again, I cannot retract one title of them. Both parts of this verse carry the same meaning. This is the portion of the wicked man from Elohim the Judge, and the heritage appointed him by El, the strong God or the puissant, therefore let not the wicked man think (though it be a hard sentence) to avoid the execution of it; for as the judge is just to determine that which is his due, so he is strong to execute what he has determined.

*This is the portion,* or thy part, in allusion to the manner of feasting, where the meat is divided into several messes or portions. The portion of a wicked man is sometimes called *wages*, at other times an *inheritance*. When God assigns him a portion of good things he is dissatisfied with the quantity; and when his portion is in wrath by severe judgments, then he cannot submit to them. The portion and heritage of the saints are also of God's appointment, and they are well pleased it should be so; they have no desire to be the carvers of their own lot.

The Septuagint renders, *This is the heritage appointed him by the bishop or overseer*; which intimates that the eye of God is upon all the ways of men to protect and reward the righteous, and to punish the wicked. The very present prosperity of wicked men is a punishment unto them; for, 1. Prosperity hardens their heart, and so it becomes a spiritual judgment. 2. Prosperity is fuel to lusts, it draws out and multiplies the acts of sin; our suffering for sin is not only deserved but proportioned to our evil doings. 3. Because present prosperity only increases future sorrow and adds to his misery. For though God for holy and wise reasons may, and often does give a rich portion of outward blessings, causing their cup to overflow with the fading and dying comforts of this present life; yet while they are under the curse and exposed to the threatenings of God's laws, their present enjoyments will only increase the weight of their misery.

This finishes Zophar's attack on Job, he makes no farther reply.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Job's friends having concluded their second charge, in which they still assert as in the former, that great sufferings are allotted to the worst of men, Job now requests that they would hear him as he had heard them.

*Ver. 1, 2. But Job answered and said, Hear diligently my speech.* In which speech he refutes their arguments more clearly than he had done before. The scope and sum of his reply may be expressed in three propositions. 1. That all wicked men are not always afflicted with great evils in this life. 2. That wicked men only are not afflicted with evils in this life. 3. That many wicked men enjoy much good in this life, and their children succeed them in the possession of these outward blessings. These assertions being confirmed, the whole of what his friends have said will be overturned.

*Hear diligently my speech.* The Heb. is, *Hearing, hear.* By doubling the call to hear, he at once reproves them for their manner of hearing formerly, and calls upon them to hear with calmness and in a meek and patient manner.

Hence observe, That it is no easy work to hear well. As it is a natural work, it is indeed easy; we do it freely without teaching. There is need of diligent hearing to receive instruction and direction in civil matters. But hearing about spiritual matters requires double diligence or attention; it is, 1. A work of the ear to take in the impression of words. 2. It is a work of the understanding to consider and try the truth, goodness, or suitableness of what is spoken. 3. It is a work of the affections, of love, joy, and delight; many receive the truth who do not receive the love of it. The stony-ground hearers understood the word and received it with joy, but it went no farther; but in spiritual hearing there is, 4. A work of faith to believe what is spoken, a work of meekness to submit to what is spoken, and a work of new obedience to practise and follow what is spoken.

It is our duty to stop the ear from hearing vanity, and ordinary attention is sufficient for ordinary things; but we cannot be too diligent in attending to that which is of eternal concern. Man is more ready to speak, yea, to judge and censure others, than he is to hear. The Apostle James intimates that those who are readiest to speak are the most careless hearers; he puts a bridle upon the tongue, James i. 19. "Slow to speak," but, as it were, spurs the ear, "be swift to hear."

*And let this be your consolation.* Some understand it thus: It shall be a comfort to you, I shall speak such things, and in such a manner, that ye shall have reason to say that it has been good for you to hear. Others conceive that he intends his own consolation; "Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolation;" that is, Let this be instead of those consolations which you as friends should administer to me, and which I have long waited to receive from you.

Hence note, That it is pleasing to any man, and a special comfort to a man in affliction, to be heard patiently and diligently.

Job bespeaks attention from a second argument.

*Ver. 3. Suffer me that I may speak; and after I have spoken, mock on.* Do not judge before you hear. As approving, so mocking or disapproving should follow judgment, and should follow hearing. The word rendered *to suffer*, signifies to bear a thing as a burden.

Some men are never so burdensome as when they are speaking. Vain words burden the wise, and the words of the wise are always burdensome to fools. And because no man is willing to bear a burden, therefore Job says, bear with me while I speak; and further, the words imply, that as it was a burden to Job's friends to hear him, so likewise to Job that he was not suffered to speak.

It is as grievous to be hindered or interrupted in doing some things, as to be enjoined to do some others. Job supposes his speech would be burdensome to his friends, because he knew it would cross their judgments. Men hear that pleasantly which suits their humour or coincides with their opinions or corruptions. As Paul says "Ye suffer fools gladly," therefore suffer me patiently while I commend myself; though it has a shew of vanity in it, yet it is for the vindication of my apostleship, and is intended for your benefit.

Job's friends having not only blamed him for what he spake, but for having spoken too much, he seems to solicit their audience while he should speak a little more. *Suffer me to speak*, and then *mock on*. That is, when I have spoken again, if I do not answer your arguments, and offer that which may satisfy any reasonable man, I am content to be laughed at. *Mock on*. Let me speak my mind, and then come on it what will, I have done my duty. Ezek. ii. 7. "Thou shalt speak to them, whether they will hear or forbear." It is sinful, and so dangerous enough, when the truth faithfully delivered is not received, much more when it is scorned and mocked.

Hence note, that some are readier to mock those who oppose them (as it is far easier to ridicule) than either to answer their arguments or to recover them from their supposed errors. It is likely Job had noticed such a spirit appearing in his friends before he suggested it unto them. A man of judgment and candour treats the person of his opponent with civility while he overturns his argument with reason. A tender heart mourns over such as he apprehends to be in an error, but neither mocks nor tries to triumph over him.

Some say it is an ironical expression, *Let me speak out, and then mock if you can*. The Septuagint renders by a direct negative, *Let me speak, and when I have spoken you will not mock me*. A Greek interpreter gives it, *When I have done my speech you will be quiet*. You will give over mocking by the time I am done speaking.

Hence observe, that when truth is brought home, it will make the wittiest give over jesting, and the proudest forbear scorning. The word of God subdues the soul; it makes the scorner serious, and the lofty lowly. They have not had a word more to say against the word, much less to scorn it.

Lastly, These words, *Mock on*, may very well be considered as a dreadful threatening. There are many terrible threatenings in the word of God against such as continue in sin; but to be bid continue in sin is the most terrible of them all. Their danger is great who walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and still greater is theirs who stand in the way of sinners; but those who sit down in the seat of the scorner, their case seems desperate.

*Ver. 4. As for me, is my complaint to man? and if it were so, why should not my*



*spirit be troubled?* Job was both plaintiff and defendant. While he defended himself against man, he was forced to complain of men to God.

*Is my complaint to man?* Is he the object of my complaint? or do I make my moan to him? Job speaks passionately, and appeals to their judgment. Can ye shew me a reason why I should not be troubled, when you consider that my affliction is not only from man, but from God. You must confess that it is as hard for me not to complain as to keep my complaint in due bounds. He does not deny that he complained; and what man in such pain as Job was can forbear to complain? He only denies that man was the sole object of his complaint. The question put by the prophet, Lam. iii. 19. is as if he had said, What reason hath a man to vex himself and murmur against God, when all his sufferings are procured by his own sins? And hence an ancient version reads, *Why doth the living man complain? Let each man complain for his own sin.* Though the people of God complain under the feeling of affliction, yet they must not murmur at affliction, but bewail their own transgressions. Every complaint which hath murmuring in it is evil, and all the complaints of evil men are murmurings. "There are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts," Jude 16.

Observe, that a good man eyes God chiefly even when he is complaining to man. There is little good gotten by complaining only to man; and as there are but few who can give any ear to our complaints, so there are not a few who increase and add to the distress of the complainer. For, 1st, They do not regard the complaints of the afflicted, and even reckon it burdensome to hear the complaint. 2d, Others hear, but do nothing to aid those who with good reason complain. 3d, And some mock at and despise complaints, and refuse help to the afflicted. Lastly, Many indeed are unable to help those who complain to them. As these considerations shew how vain it is to complain to man, or when we do so, to have our eye to God, who is always able to help, and ready to hear all who cry to and confide in him. The persuasion that God is able to help, is not only a motive, but the ground of our complaining to him. Heb. xi. 6. "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." As it is our duty to believe this when we come to God with our prayers and complaints, so unless we believe this, we have no true foundation of hope when we do come. He that considers the all-sufficiency of God, and the insufficiency of man, in all his troubles will see reason to say with Job, *As for me, is my complaint to man?*

Christians would do well to remember David's question, "Why art thou disquieted? O my soul! Why art thou cast down?" rather than follow Job in saying, *Why should not my spirit be troubled?* Our danger is great when sorrow is in power. It unfits the soul for duty, and exposes to temptation, to sin against God, by becoming careless of the concerns of God's glory, as well as of what regards our own good or that of others.

*Ver. 5. Mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth. Mark me.* The word properly signifies to turn the eye or face upon some remarkable object. It was not his person, but his cause, that he would have them look at; and he seems to beg their attention to what he was going to say, and also to consider his state and condition. *And be astonished.* Strange events, or things seldom heard of and rarely seen, are apt to astonish us, which is a degree beyond admiration. Thus the posture of the neighbouring nations at the fall of Tyre is represented: Ezek. xxviii. 19. "And all they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." The fall of mighty princes is matter of amazement and terror to all who hear of or behold it. And the Lord himself calls the heavens to astonishment, Jer. ii. 12. at his people's sinning without and beyond example. "Hath a nation changed their gods which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory; that is, their God. Now when such a thing as this was done which was never done before, then *Be astonished, O heavens!* Now as Jerusalem's sin was unparalleled, so also was her punishment; and therefore she calls all to behold it. Lam. i. 12. "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow," &c. So Job seems to say to his friends, was there ever man's sorrow like mine? *Mark me, and be astonished.* By which he seems to intimate, that they had not considered his sufferings, and if they had, they must have been astonished. The works of providence, whether of mercy or judgment, are full of mystery. "They are great, and sought out of all that have pleasure in them." When we examine them, we must stand amazed at the wisdom and power of God displayed in them.

Hence observe, that the dealings of God with some good men is matter of astonishment; and the reason we are so little affected is want of due consideration. What God did to Jerusalem for the punishment of her sin he did to Job for the trial of his grace, even such things as no man who knew his integrity would have believed if it had been told him before he saw it; and therefore Job had reason to say, *Mark me, and be astonished.*

*And lay your hand upon your mouth.* A proverbial speech, signifying that we will say no more, or that we have no more to say. Prov. xxx. 32. "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth." That is, if thou hast done evil, do not defend it, but repent of it; or if thou hast framed evil thoughts in thy heart, yet let not thy mouth speak them out in evil words, for it will increase thy sin, and procure thee shame. Job may be supposed to advise his friends to be silent. 1st, Because the reason of God's dealing with him was secret and dark; and 2dly, That he intended to answer their objections with so much plainness of speech and evidence of reason, that either they should not be able to resist him, or it would be very dangerous for them if they did; and therefore, saith he, *Lay your hand upon your mouth.*

Job next produces his last argument to excite their attention.

*Ver. 6. Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh.* When what I am going to say has such an effect upon one as to make me afraid and tremble, surely you should attend and mark what I say.

*When I remember what?* say some, the trouble and affliction, the pain and sorrow which I am now enduring. Others say, when I observe the prosperity which God gives the wicked; as ver. 7. *Trembling taketh hold of my flesh.* I do not only tremble, but trembling taketh hold of me, as a serjeant takes hold of a man, to arrest and carry him away. When Habakkuk had only a prophetic vision of the judgments of God, he speaks in the highest language of amazement. "When I heard my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice," &c. There always was a difference between the godly and the wicked in the manner of their behaviour under the judgments of God. The one trembles and is afraid of God's righteous judgment, while the other disregards the operation of his hands.

Job having finished his preface, proceeds to refute his friends, which he does chiefly in this place by experience, as the following seven verses are a continued description of the wicked man's prosperity. In his person, ver. 7. In his children, ver. 8. On all within doors, ver. 9. On his cattle without doors, ver. 10. And in the joy and gladness of the whole family, ver. 11, 12. And then in his death, ver. 13. which sums up his prosperity.

*Ver. 7. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea are mighty in power.* As if he had said, Do you see all or many wicked men in an afflicted estate, why then have you thus concluded against me, that I am wicked, because afflicted?

*Wherefore* may refer to the opinion of Job's friends, who said that God distributes evil to the wicked in this life. Now, says he, reconcile your principle with this experience, *Wherefore do the wicked prosper?* It is no wonder to see a godly man prosper, for he has the promise of this life. But to see him afflicted, and the wicked prosper, has puzzled many. It may be so ordered by God, to teach his people patience, and give them an opportunity to exercise their grace, and to teach them to say in the most trying situation, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" A godly man is established indeed when he neither thinks the worse of himself because he is afflicted, nor the better of wicked men because they prosper. They do not prosper, because God loves their persons, or approves their ways, but to glorify his patience and long-suffering. "What if God willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," Rom. ix. 22.

*They live.* To live signifies not a bare subsistence in the world, but to live comfortably. The word which we render to *become old*, signifies to continue strong in old age. In this Job opposes what Zophar had said, chap. xx. and affirms not only that wicked men live, but live long; they become old in prosperity; whereas Zophar had said, *the triumphing of the wicked is short.*

*He is mighty in power.* The word signifies also riches. They grow old and gather riches; so that now we are at the height of the wicked man's prosperity; he lives

many days, has abundance of riches, power, and authority; he is the head, and doth what he pleases; he speaks, and all obey him. *He is mighty in power.*

From the personal prosperity of wicked men Job proceeds to that of their relations.

*Ver. 8. Their seed is established in their sight with them.*

*Their seed.* That is, their children, as well as themselves, are established, which is a great addition to their worldly happiness. Abraham was possessed of great riches and power, and God said, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," which was far better than all his possessions, yet he said, "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless." This want soured all his enjoyments. So Job describes the prosperity of wicked men, not only by their riches, but by their children. *Their seed is established.* The word signifies to stablish firmly and orderly, and it adds to the blessing, that their children should not only prosper, but that they should see it. The Heb. is, *before their face.* It is a great aggravation of the sorrow of parents when children come to misery before their face. And the glory of the children of God shall afflict the wicked, because they shall see it. Luke xxiii. 28. "When ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, sit down in the kingdom of heaven, and ye yourselves shall be thrust out."

The word in *their sight* is used sometimes comparatively, chap. iv. 19. "They shall be crushed before or as soon as the moth." The Heb. is, before the face of the moth. That is, as soon as you can crush a moth, so are the proudest crushed by the hand of God. *And their offspring before their eyes.* The word *offspring* signifies the shoot of a tree, or a sprig that grows out of the ground. Children are as plants and sprigs. In both parts he answers Zophar, who told Job, chap. xx. "That his children should seek to please the poor." And also Eliphaz, who said, chap. xv. "He shall cast off his unripe grapes as the vine," &c. But Job's reply is, I have seen the seed of the wicked established; they have taken root and come to maturity.

Isaiah xiv. 20, 21. seems to contradict Job's experience, and accord with his friends. But besides that the words may be rendered, "The seed of evil doers shall not be called (or renowned) for ever," the Lord shews his sovereignty, and permits the seed of evil doers to prosper for a time; but he will make it good in the end, that the seed of evil doers shall never be renowned.

*Ver. 9. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.* That is, they have peace in their houses, a house full of peace is a house full of good things, there is no contention, no bitterness of spirit, no breach among their children or servants. Harmony among domestics is a great mercy. Dissensions endanger families as well as nations, and hinder their prosperity. As it notes good agreement among the persons, so the quiet possession of their goods; thieves do not break through and steal, nor any son of violence come openly upon them to make them afraid. And as they are free from present danger, so from the very fear of it. What can be desired more to complete their outward prosperity and to set forth the perfect happiness of this wicked man in temporals. Job tells us that as he is not molested with either neighbours or strangers, neither is the rod of God upon him. The rod of God may be opposed unto the rod of man, or we may understand those afflictions that we receive immediately by the hand of man. Isa. x. 5. "O Assyria, the rod of mine anger." God made that prince his rod to scourge his own people. Some explain the words, That there is no heavy, no sore rod upon them, and in compliance with this exposition, 2 Sam. vii. 14. is as if it had been said, If thy son sin he shall not escape the rod only, I will correct him gently with the rod of men, I will not bring heavy judgments upon him. Job having thus discovered the happiness of wicked men in the settlement of their seed, and in the safety of their family, shews it next in the increase of their cattle.

*Ver. 10. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf.* In Psal. cxliv. it is said, "happy is that people that is in such a case, having their oxen strong to labour," &c. "But most happy is the people whose God is the Lord." The men of the world receive their blessings from the general providence of God which his own people have by special providence. And though many wicked men have corn and cattle from the Lord, yet none of them have the Lord for their God. How many have goods laid up for many years, who neglect to lay up any thing for eternity.

*Ver. 11. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance.* Thus they live in pleasure. The word translated, *little ones*, signifies any sort of children

who are yet under government and tuition. The word has a double derivation. First, from a root which signifies a *yoke, or labour*, importing that they are fit to be sent forth to labour in the world. Secondly, from a root that signifies *evil or wickedness, unrighteousness, naughtiness*, intimating that little ones by nature are corrupt and depraved, and if they were not so, they should not bear it in their names. For the Spirit of God usually gives names or denominations proper to the state of things and persons. Their little ones they *send forth like a flock*, which implies, First, that they had many children; to send forth a flock is a proverbial speech for a multitude. When Ezekiel, chap. xxxvi. describes the increase of the people, he says, "As the flocks of Jerusalem in the solemn feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men." Secondly, It implies that they are under inspection. Wild beasts have none to take care of them, but flocks of sheep have their overseers. Thirdly, It points out their unity and affection. The church is called a flock, because it is at unity within itself, under the government of Jesus Christ its King and Head. There is a holy combination among all its genuine members, every breach there is a departure from their duty and order. Thus he describes their felicity in the education and discipline of their little ones.

*And their children dance.* He still pursues the allusion to a flock for the word rendered to *dance*, is applied to calves, Psal. xxix. 6. and to rams and lambs, Psal. cxiv. 4. "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." Thus they send forth their children like flocks, they dance and skip, which indicates the prosperity of the family, and they have music at their dance.

*Ver. 12. They take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ.* It may be rendered, they play upon the timbrel and harp. This is a description of their education, they are sent forth as a flock in a dance, playing upon a timbrel, &c. very different from the account given of Abraham the father of the faithful, "who taught his household to keep the way of the Lord, and he and the other patriarchs had riches and children, &c. but they did not rejoice in them, they accounted themselves pilgrims. But worldlings rejoice at the sound of the organ, saying, who will shew us any good. But there is not a word of rejoicing in the goodness of God, nor of thankfulness to Him who enriched them with all their temporal benefits, they only make themselves merry with them. A godly man can rejoice in the Lord when he has none of these creature comforts; he can rejoice in the Lord more than in all manner of music, yea, even then, when he wants not only music, but meat, Hab. iii. 17. "Though the labour of the olive shall fail," &c. "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord." God is a feast to him in famine, and when there is nothing to be had from the world he has all in God. He rejoices when he has the creature, but he rejoices not in the creature, his joy is in the Lord. But the carnal man rejoices in the world itself, and indeed he has nothing else to rejoice in.

Spiritual joy is either purely about spiritual things, or when we rejoice spiritually about worldly things, which is one of the highest actings of grace. There is a natural sensitive joy which in itself is neither good nor evil, it belongs to man as man, in this sense, the word *pleasure* is used, Eccl. xii. 1.

There is sensual pleasure when the heart is drunken with delights, James v. 5. "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth," &c. Therefore he threatens them, ver. 1. "Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl," pleasure has been your element, now ye shall be filled with sorrow, and weeping shall be your employment. There are some joys sinful in their very nature, others in reference to circumstances; we may understand this text in both senses. Moses chose affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He did not refuse pleasure and comfort in this life, but the pleasures of sin, that is, any evil that was in the enjoyments of this life.

*Ver. 13. They spend their days in wealth.* The chief business of a worldly man is about his wealth. He spends his days in getting, keeping, and seeking pleasure in his wealth. Some get wealth, but have no heart to use it, others get wealth and abuse it in feeding their lusts and pleasing their appetites. *Mammon* calls for the whole man, and stands in the way both of grace and glory. "The poor have the gospel preached to them." But is it not also preached to the rich? Yes, they hear it, but the poor receive it, or as the word imports, are *gospelized*; they receive the love of it and feel the power of it. Whereas the rich usually hear only a sound of words, but have no knowledge of the power. They who are very diligent about laying up or laying out their wealth, rarely give diligence to make their calling and election sure, or about laying up treasures in heaven. They are indeed rich in grace, whose graces are

not injured by riches. It is indeed prophesied, Psal. xlv. "The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour," that is, either the favour of Christ or of the church, by reason of that spiritual excellency and inward glory which she has received from Christ. Now to see the rich bring their gifts, and which is the thing chiefly aimed at, giving up themselves to Christ, is a remarkable work of grace. As those who have wealth are in danger. Let them suspect their own hearts, and labour to have, a just estimate of riches, and for this purpose consider, first, That wealth is only an inferior good, second, That it is a mutable good, and third, That riches are to us as we use them. The grace of God finds us evil and makes us good. But no man was ever made good by worldly wealth. It has found some really good and retarded their progress, and it has found many seemingly good, who soon appeared to be stark naught. Job's character of these men may serve all men who, having wealth have no faith in God. *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.*

Some expound this clause of the miserable end of a wicked man, who though he hath all outward good things, "though he be mighty in power," &c. yet he suddenly vanishes out of the world and goes to hell. Others take it as their comfortable death. They die suddenly without any trouble of conscience or any pain in their body. Some allege it would be better for wicked men to die of a lingering disease, for they might possibly repent. I answer, 1st. Job does not speak of the spiritual or eternal state of wicked men, and as to their temporal state, a speedy death is preferable. 2d. They who neglect repentance in health, seldom mind it in sickness. Death is never sudden to those who are duly preparing for it.

Job having thus confuted the opinions of his friends about the present state of wicked men, and God's dealing with them both in life and death, proceeds to shew how they took occasion from their outward prosperity, to arm and encourage themselves against the Lord, who poured out their earthly blessings upon them in abundance, and exercised long-suffering and patience towards them, while they spent their days in pleasing themselves and provoking him.

*Ver. 14. Therefore they say unto God, depart from us.* Therefore, or for this reason, because they flourish and are full, *they say unto God depart from us.* Some are so bold and impudent as to say it explicitly; and all who do not love God in their hearts speak daily the same language internally, Rom. ii. "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge;" and others say so by their works," Titus i. 16. "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him," &c. Profane persons are ashamed to profess the knowledge of God, and they are more consistent than those who boast of their profession while their practice proves their hypocrisy.

*Depart from us.* The word signifies to recede from a place, or to give and make room, as if wicked men should say to God, *room for us*, as if one place, yea, one world, could not hold God and them. So, every man who has no love to God in his heart, bids him begone and goes himself a whoring from him, that is, he embraces the creature, and gives his heart to the world, therefore, he is called *a man far off*, whereas, the people of God are called *his nigh ones*, who say it is good for me to draw nigh unto God. Lev. x. 3. Psal. lxxiii. 28.

There is nothing so joyous to the righteous, nor so grievous to the wicked, as to have God near them. But how is God near the wicked? Though they are far from the love and the favour of God, they are not far from his eye and knowledge; yea, wicked men find and feel God often; in their consciences they are troubled at the thoughts of his justice and holiness, though they never found him in their affections. "God is not in all their thoughts," that is, they do not meditate on God, nor seek communion with him in their inner man.

Purely to love and pray for the presence of God is a good proof of a gracious heart. Psal. xlii. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after thee, O God." He was the one thing, the only thing he longed for; all was nothing to him without God. Psal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord that will I seek after," that is, I will earnestly pursue and unweariedly persevere till I obtain the grant of my request, "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord," &c.

Though God himself is the chief object of a wicked man's enmity, yet it is discovered in a dislike and opposition to the will and ways of God.

*For we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* Which carries an affirmative. We dislike, yea, hate the knowledge of thy ways, that is, in general, these ways which God hath appointed and commanded man to walk in, and he who has no desire of this

knowledge, is not only ignorant but in love with ignorance. Though some exceed others in the love and practice of sin, yet all natural men, (even the most temperate), meet in this, that they desire not the knowledge of the ways of holiness.

Knowledge, especially divine knowledge, is the gift of God, yet it calls for our industry, not only to do what we know but also to know what to do. If it were only a knowledge of the ways of God for speculation it would be sought after by many a carnal man, but because we are called upon to know the commands of God to do them; and the ways of God, to walk in them, therefore we wish to remain ignorant of that knowledge which will only sting and pain us when we neglect what we know to be our duty.

Some desire not the knowledge of God's ways, because they appear unequal and rigorous as well as fruitless and unprofitable, which prejudice is expressly mentioned in the latter clause of the next verse.

*Ver. 15. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* The question is asked not out of a desire to know who he is, but in scorn and derision of what they vainly and ignorantly conceive him to be even too mean to be served by them.

No man can serve two masters, that is, of opposite interests and gives contrary commands. Every wicked man serves more masters than two, he serves at the pleasure of every lust, and he cannot serve God while he continues to be a self-seeker and esteems his service slavery.

Christ's yoke is easy and honourable to the saints; they who have tasted that the Lord is gracious will rejoice in his commandments, and it is as much their desire to serve him as it is their happiness to be served by him. The wicked are strangers from the covenant of promise, and therefore, instead of receiving the law into their hearts, cast it behind their backs, saying, What is the Almighty that we should serve him?

*And what profit should we have if we pray unto him?* We may turn the argument and say, What profit shall we have if we do not pray? Though God may, and often does give before we ask, yet we have no ground to expect till we have asked. The very worst of men receive many good things from God which they never asked for, while they do not own him as the author of every thing they enjoy, but ascribe all to their own attentions and industry, they can neither pray to nor be thankful to God.

*If we pray to him. The Hebrew is, if we meet him.* This represents those who rise up when grave and great men come towards them, and in honour to their persons go forth and meet them. Since God has appointed a meeting place, and condescended to meet him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, it must greatly aggravate the sin and misery of those who contemn and despise a meeting with him.

The meaning of the query is, that prayer yields no profit, and that serving God is a very poor trade. *Mal. iii. 14.* "Ye have said, It is in vain to serve God," as if they had said, we get nothing by the service, and not only so, but those proud ones who rebel against him get all, they are happy. Those who follow Christ for the loaves leave him when the loaves are done. Saints find reward in their work, but hypocrites must be rewarded and paid in hand for their work, or also they will yield it.

*Ver. 16. Lo, their good is not in their hand, the counsel of the wicked is far from me.* As if he had said, I have not asserted the great success of wicked men, as if God neglected the affairs of the world, or as if I envied any of their felicity, for I am well assured that God disposes of all things in wisdom.

*Their good is not in their hand.* As it was not attained by their own power, so it is not in their power to retain it. This is true of good as well as evil men; every good gift comes from above. Outward comforts are not from the hand of man either meritoriously or efficiently.

Observe, That it is not in the power of man to procure or perpetuate his own prosperity. Job did not look on wicked men as truly happy, though he spake so much of their outward enjoyments. That which will do any man really good never was in the hand of a wicked man.

Job makes a modest comparison between the condition of the wicked and his own.

*The counsel of the wicked is far from me.* What is the counsel and course of a wicked man? It is to follow the world, to heap up riches, &c. Godly men are not at all pleased with the way of the wicked how much soever they thrive in it. The ways of the godly and wicked differ as much as their ends, and their counsels are as distant as their final end will be.

And as the godly are far from the counsel of the wicked, so they are as far from the

counsel of the godly. Psal. xiv. 6. "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor," And why? Because the Lord is his trust. "His counsel doth depend on the Lord; trust in the Lord, walk in his ways, shelter yourselves under his protection." This counsel the poor man gives, and he must needs be a godly man that gives this counsel. This counsel you have shamed, that is, despised. So the wicked man scorns the counsel of the godly.

There are two opinions concerning the general tendency of the latter part of this chapter. Some think that Job, having declared the outward happiness of wicked men, doth here, as it were, turn the tables, and describe their misery. His friends said that evil men receive only evil; no saith Job, evil men receive abundance of good in this world, yet I do affirm that they receive evil also, so that there is no ascertaining a man's spiritual estate by his temporal sufferings or enjoyments. Others understand this context to ver. 21, as if Job were still describing the prosperous state of the wicked, and so the questions are to be expounded negatively.

*Ver. 17. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out?* The first word that we render *how oft*, is expounded sometimes by way of increase, sometimes by way of diminution. In the former sense, *how oft* means a thing done very frequently, and in the latter sense as very rarely done. The candle or light of the wicked can be nothing but outward prosperity, so the word is frequently used. Prov. xiii. 9. "The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out." That is, their prosperity shall cease.

*And how oft cometh destruction upon them?* The same word signifies a cloud, and also destruction. When clouds dissolve an inundation follows, which sweeps all away. Isa. xxviii. It is called an *overflowing scourge*; that is, a judgment that breaks all the banks and fences which the wit and power of man can raise against it. Christ is a covert from the tempest, and an hiding place from the wind; but wicked men will not flee to him as their covert, therefore destruction comes irresistibly upon them.

*God distributeth sorrows in his anger.* The word implies to divide by lot, and it signifies a cord or line. God distributes sorrows by a line, as the portion and inheritance which wicked men shall receive, Luke xii. 46.

*In his anger.* That is, God being angry, or when he is angry, he distributes these sorrows.

Hence note, That sorrow is the portion or inheritance of the wicked, and they are distributed to them by a holy, just, and righteous God.

The Psalmist exhorts to "Kiss the Son," that is with a kiss of homage and submission "lest he be angry." Why, what is the danger of that? The next words show it, "and ye perish from the way" (of your purposes, and never reach your ends,) "when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." He thus leaves us to imagine how cursed and miserable their estate will be who provoke God by refusing to submit to and trust in Christ Jesus.

The afflictions of God's own people are often very grievous; but they are more afraid of the anger of God than of rebukes and chastisements, hence they join David, Psal. vi. "Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." All the sorrows of God's own people have a mixture of love and mercy in them; but those who combine to break his bands and cast his cords from them, and would thereby prevent the grand design of the Father in advancing the sceptre of his Son over the world, "he will speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."

*Ver. 18. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away.* That is, they are as easily dissipated, and as quickly carried away. Every man in regard of his natural constitution is like chaff easily carried away; but wicked men are much more so before the indignation of God.

The word *storm* signifies a violent one, a kind of hurricane. Wicked men are compared to stubble, because of their vanity and want of solidity, and on account of their little value. In Psal. i. when contrasted with the godly in their stability, it is said, "The ungodly are not so, but are as the chaff which the wind driveth away." Wicked men are of no more value in comparison of those that have true grace, than the chaff is to the wheat.

The Lord's anger is a storm or a wind, and the meanest worm that he employs as a new sharp thrashing instrument to break wicked men into chaff. And this he does in his anger, not only to single persons in power, but to the most powerful nations of the world, as is represented in the vision, Dan. ii. 35. This great image represented all

the powers of the world opposing the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, openly or secretly, directly or indirectly, and they are all as stubble before the wind; the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

*Ver. 19. God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know it.* The same word signifies iniquity, pain and sorrow, because they who do iniquity suffer pain and sorrow for it.

There are various expositions of these words, but most interpreters agree that Job describes the misery of a wicked man, and the judgments of God upon him, in his own personal sufferings, and also in those that befall his family and children. "How oft is the candle of the wicked man put out? How oft doth God drive him as chaff before the wind; yea, and not only so, but God lays up his iniquity for his children;" that is the punishment of his iniquity; they shall be wrapt up in these calamities which were bred in their father's sins and perfected in their own.

As many parents by sinful means store up riches to their children; so on this account God stores up wrath for them. And as God may justly punish the sin of a man in his cattle and estate, so also in his children, because they not only belong to him, but are a part of him, and have succeeded to their father's property. Parents do what they can to make their children miserable, by the very devices they use to obtain wealth to make them great and happy.

But is it not said, The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father? He shall not bear it in reference to eternal punishment, or if he do not approve of his father's sin nor follow him in it; but if the son tread in his steps he makes his father's sin his by imitation, as much as his own is by commission, then he must bear his father's iniquity as well as his own. It is children's imitation of their fathers' iniquity which brings the iniquity of their fathers upon them; and when they do so they may expect to suffer, since they have taken delight and pleasure in their fathers' sins. Since some children do suffer in outward things for their parents' sin who do not imitate them, it is no wonder that those suffer who do imitate their parents' sins.

Tertullian, treating of this point, supposes that God spake in reference to the hardness of their hearts, that if no other argument would move them to take heed of idolatry and false worship, yet mere compassion to their own children might do it. So that even they who do not forbear these sins from a principle of love to God, may yet be moved by a principle of natural love to avoid those sins for which by name God tells them he will surely afflict and punish their children.

*He rewardeth him, and they shall know it.* The word signifies the paying of a debt, and properly to be at peace; the reason is, when debts are paid a man is at quiet; no more can be demanded. Such a reward as a wicked man deserves he shall have, and as the matter of the reward is not expressed, it imports the greatness of the punishment. But however great it is in this life, it is less than sin deserves; but in the life to come God has a reward suitable to it. Wicked men will not know the evil of sin till they find it.

*He shall know,* or be convinced of what he would not know before, 1st, That there is a wise and powerful providence overruling and disposing of the affairs of this life. 2d, That God has appointed wrath for the portion of all impenitent sinners.

*Ver. 20. His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.* The sight of destruction doubles the torment of it. The sight of evil is a grief to us as well as the feeling of its pain. Sorrow comes in at every sense as well as joy, 1 Pet. i. 8. "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, ye rejoice;" by which he intimates that saints shall love and rejoice in him, much more when once they see him. To see good has so much of joy in it, that heaven is called sight or vision. Now, as the sight of good is to joy, so the sight of evil is to sorrow, it increases and heightens it.

The drinking of wrath may be considered two ways, 1st, That pure wrath shall be put into the cup of a wicked man; or, 2d, That however pleasant his cup may be, yet wrath shall be mingled with it. God has abundance of wrath ready for wicked men, and there is no avoiding it. Every soul that hath not an interest in Christ, who drank the cup of his Father's wrath, will have to drink a cup of wrath, for the Almighty is able to make good his word in its saddest effects.

*Ver. 21. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his thoughts are cut off in the midst?* Some men seem to desire nothing more than the advancement of their children. But as when they are dead they can take no pleasure,



nor feel any pain in reference to those that are left behind them ; so while they lived, they proclaimed to all good men by their conduct, that they had no due regard to the prosperity of their posterity when the number of their months shall be cut off in the midst.

Hence observe, That God often shortens the lives of wicked men, and cuts the number of their months off in the midst. Though every man lives out the full time that God has appointed him personally ; yet many wicked, and some good men, are cut off in the midst of those months which God has appointed to mankind generally. Some have the number of their years or months cut off in mercy ; very many have them cut off in wrath.

*Ver. 22. Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high.* Job having stated his experience of the dealings of God with wicked men, now gives his approbation of it. He challenges all the world to propose a more convenient course for the disposal both of things and persons here below than the method of the divine procedure. The words imply, 1st, A downright negation—God cannot be taught. 2d, It plainly teaches, that God knows all things ; he is infinite in wisdom. 3d, This question intimates, that some men are so daring as to speak and act as if they could teach God. All who are displeased with and murmur at any of the dispensations of God's providence, thereby declare that they could teach God knowledge. 4th, This question says, that to attempt to teach God, or to find fault with his procedure, is an intrusion on the prerogative of God, and discovers pride and presumption.

None have reason to complain respecting the prosperity of the wicked or the afflictions of the godly. All is done in wisdom to the one and in mercy to the other, and according to the unquestionable sovereignty of God in both. Let no man, therefore, dispute the ways of God, but submit quietly to his will as revealed in his word or manifested in his providence. Mere human reason is not a competent judge of the ways of God, Isa. lv. 8. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord." To say to him, what dost thou ? is, in effect, to teach God knowledge.

*Seeing he judgeth those that are high.* What is here meant by judging ? 1st, To judge, is to discern or look through the state and condition of a person and thing. 2d, It is to give judgment upon due examination. 3d, To judge is to punish, so the word is used, 1 Cor. xi. 31. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged ;" that is, not afflicted, not punished. The high ones are the judges and princes of the earth, who may draw a curtain between themselves and their inferiors, but they cannot screen themselves from God. No man is so high but God can punish and pull him down ; and none who continue in sin shall escape.

God is so wise that none can teach him ; so powerful, that none can controul him. And as this appears from what Job has already asserted ; so also from what follows, he spares and smites when he will. He summons one to the grave when he is most likely to live, and no decay in nature to indicate the return of the flesh to dust ; while another pines for many days in pain of body and trouble of mind. Thus Job proves his general assertion concerning the sovereignty of God, and his various dispensations toward men, All things come alike to all.

*Ver. 23. One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet.* This may refer to one when he has perfect health and much strength. 2d, In the strength of his outward estate of riches and relations. 3d, In the strength of his spirit, for a man may have much strength of body and strength of estate, and yet be in perplexity of spirit ; and then he is far from being in full strength. "The spirit of a man," that is, his mind and conscience being sound and whole, "will sustain his infirmity," that is, it will cause him to bear up under every bodily distress, and every change of condition, but neither health nor wealth can support a wounded spirit. The man who has this threefold strength, is in full strength indeed. Yet death will break this threefold cord even when he is in as good case to live as any outward advantage or interest can make him. When his comforts are so pure that he has no acquaintance with what is called sorrow, when he has not a cloud in his day, nor any taste of bitterness in his cup, Then, even then, he dies.

*Ver. 24. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow.* This is only an amplification of what he said before, and intimates the strong and healthy constitution of the body. Thus Job tells whom he means, by the man that dieth in his full strength, &c.

Hence observe, 1st. That health and strength are no defence at all against death. Let not death be a stranger to you because you are not acquainted with sickness, for death can do its work as easily and speedily in health as in sickness. Only grace and holiness have the promise of long life. Every command has a threatening and a promise implied in it, but the first command with a promise expressed, is of long life, Exod. xx. and Prov. iii. "My son, forget not my law, but let thy heart keep my commandments: For length of days." That is, Heb. Years of life, or comfortable years, thou shalt have a life not only long, but pleasant; for a man lives no more years indeed, than he lives comfortably. What the moralist said of an idle life, I may say of a miserable man, he is a living man buried. Observe, 2d. That we should live preparing for death even when there are no symptoms of its near approach. We should remember our Creator in the days of our youth, because evil days are coming. But it is an equally good argument to do so, because death may arrest us before we are aware, when in full strength. 3d. Observe, That death does not observe the laws of nature, but obeys the appointment of God. As "it is appointed for all men once to die," so God also appoints the seasons. And therefore death attacks and carries away the strong and healthy young man prisoner to the grave as often as the weak and sickly.

*Ver. 25. And another dies in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth in pleasure.* This verse stands in opposition to the former, and may be read, Another dieth in a bitter mind. The bitterness of the soul is the sadness and sorrow of it. Afflictions are compared to wormwood and gall, Lam. iii. 15. Godly sorrow is also expressed by bitterness, Zech. xii. 10. Sorrow is a bitter cup, worldly sorrow is also a deadly cup, but godly sorrow is a wholesome and medicinal cup. Spiritual, natural, and worldly sorrows are all bitter to the soul. Pleasure is the sauce of our meat, and this sauce is in the eater's heart, not in his dish. He that hath not sauce there, though he hath plenty on his table, and a song and music besides, yet never eateth in pleasure. To eat in this pleasure is the peculiar portion of saints. I cannot, saith one, taste my meat, or if I do find it sweet to my palate, yet I have such sour sauce with it, so many afflictions press my spirit, that pleasant bread is as gall and wormwood to me.

Hence observe, That the difference which God makes among men, even in outward things, is very great. One is wholly at ease and quiet, another knows not what it is to be at ease; one has pleasant bread prepared for him every day, another not only eats the bread of sorrow, Psal. cxxvii. 2. that is, bread obtained with the sweat of his face, with hard labour and care, but eats his bread with sorrow. As the sleep of a labouring man, so his bread is usually sweet to him, whether he eat little or much.

When our hearts are filled not only with food but gladness, let us be thankful to God and remember that many of our fellow creatures, of better desert than we, eat ashes for bread, and mingle their drink with weeping. Wicked men do nothing but sin, and then what is their due but sorrow? And as the wicked do nothing but sin, so the godly sin in all they do, therefore God is not unjust when he mingles sorrow with all they have. Shall any repine at pain which comes but seldom, when we hear of others that never eat in pleasure?

*Ver. 26. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.* However many distinctions are among men while they live, they will be all removed at death, for *they shall lie down alike*, that is, they shall lie down in the dust, and in the dust they shall all be as one. The grave quickly blots out all distinctions, and *the worms shall cover them*. Isa. xiv. 11. "Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee." These words are a holy scorn cast upon the funeral pomp of great men. Dust shall be their down-bed, and worms shall be their bed-clothes. Living man is but a worm, and when he dies worms consume him, and here there is no difference between good and bad, between the dust of holy and unholy men. In this world they are in some things alike, and in others very unlike; but the difference between the righteous and wicked in their soul state is always great, but it is not always plain, yet a time will come, when the difference will be easily discerned, that there is a reward for the righteous, and that the wicked were but reserved to a day of wrath. They will at last appear as unlike as goats and sheep, chaff and wheat, &c.

Job proceeds to draw up his conclusion to all that had been spoken by his friends from the beginning of the disputation.

*Ver. 27. Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine*

*against me.* The Seventy translate, "Behold I know you", as we use to say to a man whose intentions and designs we suppose are known to us, *We know you well enough, which is as much as to say, I know your thoughts.* No man knows the meaning of another man's thoughts, while he is speaking, unless he speaks as he thinks, which some do not, only God can reach the thoughts of man; and therefore Jesus Christ must be God, for he knew what was in man, he knew their thoughts. But Job only means, I perceive your meaning, I know what you would have me understand, by your so often repeating and insisting upon the destruction of wicked men and the overthrow of the ungodly. Though you speak in generals and in a third person, and though you do not bring it home to me, saying, "Thou art the man," yet I perceive clearly what and whom you drive at, Prov. xx. 5. "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water: but a man of understanding will draw it out" by argument and inference, yet it is but conjecture at best, and therefore we should be cautious in our guessing at the thoughts of others, as we are in danger, not only of a breach of the rules of love and charity, but of justice and righteousness. If Job had not more than bare presumption, his presumption had been very blameable. Broughton renders the second clause, And your injurious imaginations against me. The word for *wrongfully imagine*, signifies to snatch a thing by force or violence, and the text may more strictly be rendered, I know your thoughts, and the devices which you violently catch up against me; you act as if ye came rather to catch than to comfort me, and even strain yourselves to find me guilty. Like those, Jer. xviii. 18. who said, "Come let us devise devices against him." They did not find him guilty, but they resolved to make him so, and they who intend no good to a man, can easily think and insinuate evil enough of him. As some offer violence to the word of God, 2 Peter iii. 16. "Unlearned and unstable men wrest the Scriptures." So some censorious persons wrest the speeches and actions of others, and even the dealing of God with them, and draw unnatural conclusions from them.

*Ver. 28. For ye said where is the house of the prince, and where the dwelling place of the wicked.* These things had been said in effect before by Eliphaz, chap. xv. 34. By Bildad, xviii. 21. By Zophar, xx. 28, 29. In these they give a general description of the devastation of the dwellings of the wicked, and therefore conclude, that since the same destruction had come upon Job, they reckoned him of their number. The word rendered *prince*, signifies one that is liberal or free, a bountiful man, which all princes ought to be, Psal. li. Uphold me with thy free (or princely) Spirit. The Spirit of God is infinitely free, ready to do good to all. As the former part of the verse speaks of a *prince*, and the latter of the *wicked*, it may imply that princes are commonly wicked, as they have more temptations, and the same corruptions as other men.

Hence observe, That wickedness is the ruin of the houses and estates of princes. *Where are the dwelling places of the wicked?* If any still doubt and desire a farther resolution of these queries, the next verse contains another question, which shews how and by whom they may be satisfied. Or taking the queries of the former verse as put to Job by his friends, *Where is the house of the Prince?* and Job replies,

*Ver. 29. Have you not asked them that go by the way, and do ye not know their tokens?* Ask the next man you meet, and he will inform you. I dare refer my cause to a mere stranger, whether learned or unlearned; they will give you so many tokens or instances of what I have asserted, as may warrant your assent. It is a metaphor from travellers, and is as if Job had plainly said, You seem much offended with what I assert respecting the afflictions of good men, and the prosperity of the wicked. But why are you ignorant of that which every passenger knows, and can produce proofs of the truth, that God deals variously with men? for the wicked often prosper; and it is only sometimes that they are destroyed. Desolation comes suddenly upon some of them, while others are reserved for future judgment. Thus Job rebukes their negligence and ignorance of what is universally known.

Hence observe, That some doctrines and providences are so plain, that any man may know them. Some truths are so mysterious, that they amaze the understanding of the wisest. 2d, That the examples of former ages are for our instruction, and therefore we should be willing to learn of others (though our inferiors in many things) what we do not know ourselves. 3d, Observe, that the wise and prudent are sometimes ignorant of these truths, which mean men have attained to, Matt. xi. 25. It is possible for men that go by the way for common ordinary men, to understand the matters of faith and worship, as also the works of God, more solidly and soundly than they who are learned and knowing men.

The two following verses contain the report which they who *go by the way* were supposed ready to make, had they been asked the question, Where is the house of the prince? &c.

*Ver. 30. That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.* The word rendered *reserved*, signifies to stop, hinder, restrain, &c.; yet he is reserved not so much from, as to a day of destruction, as appears in the following words: *They shall be brought forth in the day of wrath.* The change from the singular to the plural number here may intimate, that though here and there a wicked man may escape present judgment, yet they shall all be as it were chained together at last, and brought together to a day of wrath. The day of destruction may be understood of lesser judgments, and the day of wrath of the most terrible and dreadful judgments, implying that though the wicked may escape the judgments of this life, yet there is a day of wrath, when they shall be brought forth, and none shall escape.

The scope and general tendency of this text is contained in three observations. 1st, Some wicked men are preserved from present judgments. Job insists upon this point in answer to his friends, shewing that many wicked men flourish though they are under a sentence of condemnation, yet they are relieved from execution. God spares them in his patience and long-suffering. 2d, Observe that a day of wrath is coming, in which they shall be brought forth to judgment. The wicked often escape trouble, but they are never delivered. "The Lord hath made all things for himself." It is the privilege and happiness of God to be his own end in all that he does; whereas nothing more aggravates the unholiness of man in what he does, than to make himself the end of doing it. "Yea even the wicked, for the day of evil." That is, he has destined him for that special day, in which he will call them to an account, and manifest the glory of his justice upon them. Prov. xvi. 4. may be translated thus: "God has made every thing for that which shall be answerable to it, even the wicked, for the day of evil." Now what is more answerable to an evil man, than an evil day. Sin and sorrow will meet at last, and do always match best together. 3d, Observe, that wicked men are not spared in mercy, but in wrath. The long-suffering of God has a tender of mercy in it; but wicked men who go on in sin, and despise the way of God's appointment for their deliverance, make that patience which is in itself an act of grace prove an aggravation of their sin.

*Ver. 31. Who shall declare his way to his face? who shall repay him what he hath done?* In scripture a man's usual practice, whether good or evil, is commonly called his way. 'To reprove any for sin is a hard service, especially such as are rich and great. And as many dare not, so there are few fit to declare their ways to their faces; for it requires a man of knowledge, prudence, integrity, self-denial, and contempt of the world. To declare to the face implies both boldness and smartness in speaking. When Micah was sent to declare the ways of wicked men to their faces, he tells us how he was fitted for it. Chap. iii. 8. "Truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." Who but an Elijah could have declared the sin of Ahab to his face? Many will speak truth enough of their neighbour behind backs, who will not declare their way to their face. To be reprov'd hath so much good in it, that it is said, Prov. xxvii. 5. "That open rebuke is better than secret love;" and "Faithful are the wounds (that is, rebukes) of a friend." That is, by these a friend gives testimony of his faithfulness; "But the kisses of an enemy (that is, his flatteries and soothings) are deceitful." To hate a brother, and not to rebuke him, are equivalent expressions, Lev. xix. 17. Hence we infer, that as it is a sin to hate our neighbour, and an affliction to be hated by our neighbour, so it is a sin not to rebuke, and an affliction not to be rebuked, when there is cause.

This is as if Job had said, who dares either be a witness to accuse, or a judge to condemn this wicked man? which sense appears more evident from the last clause, *And who shall repay him what he hath done?* that is, who shall punish him according to the desert of his deeds? If no man can be found to find fault with him for what he has done, surely none will be found to repay or punish him for what he has done. And therefore no marvel if the wicked man pass through this world unpunished.

*Ver. 32. Yet he shall be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.* In the former verse the wicked man was represented so stout and daring, that no man

durst punish him, or shew him the evil of his ways in the glass of truth. But this verse checks him to purpose, and is calculated to cool the desire of mortals after the enjoyment of this world, and to prevent their pursuit of sensual pleasures.

Some render, *Yea, he shall be brought to the grave.* As if he had said, besides all that I have spoken of the outward felicity of the wicked man, I add this further, *He shall be brought to the grave*; that is, he may have an honourable and a solemn burial—his dead body is not thrown into a ditch. He lived in state, and he shall be brought to the grave in state. And it has been no small part of some such men's care, to give directions for their funeral. They who never had a truly serious thought how to dispose of their souls at death, sometimes shew much anxiety about the disposal of their bodies; and while their friends are scrupulously attending to the orders given for the interment of their bodies, their souls, separated for ever from God, as well as for a time from their bodies, are tasting the wrath of God without mixture. Whatever honour may be conferred on the bodies of wicked men at their burial, it is only the bodies of the saints that shall be raised in glory. A believer does not care much where his body finds a grave, so be his soul finds rest in Christ.

*And shall remain in the tomb.* Margin, *He shall watch in the heap.* The original word signifies both to *watch* and *remain*. Some read, *He shall be watched in the heap.* They shall watch, either as mourners or protectors of his dust. Living men are of so little permanency, that they can scarce be said to remain anywhere. Only the dead know nothing of removing. He shall not only be brought to the grave with honour, but remain in safety. Job mentions this as a privilege which a wicked man may have. He still goes on.

*Ver. 33. The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him.* Though death may be bitter to a carnal man that is at ease in his possessions, yet it may be esteemed sweet to a man in pain and in bitterness of soul. The figure seems to intimate, that the bodies of wicked men are as free from pain, care, or fear, in the grave, as the bodies of the saints are.

*And every man shall draw after him.* Every man is daily drawing to the grave. Every living man is drawing on to death, and all who are alive shall soon follow him that is already dead. It is no objection to Job's assertion respecting the prosperity of wicked men that they die; for it is common to all, both good and bad.

*As there are innumerable before him.* A great multitude are gone before, which no man can number. Most men are unwilling to die as if none had gone before them; and indeed it is but poor encouragement to die because other men like ourselves have died before us. That which makes a man die with true courage, is believably to remember that Jesus Christ died and lay in the grave, not only before us, but for us. And the consideration that he ever liveth to make intercession for us, affords infinitely more encouragement to us in the near prospect of leaving this world, than that innumerable are gone before us, or even if we should be allowed to live till all mankind were gone before us.

Job having replied to the answer of his friends, concludes that they had not administered any solid comfort to him.

*Ver. 34. How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?* Job seems to say to his friends, ye came to comfort me, instead of which ye have grieved and vexed me. All that you have said is in vain, and the reason is given in the last clause.

*Seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood.* He does not say that all their answers were false, or that they had knowingly falsified in their answers. All that he charges them with is, that there was falsehood in their answers. That is, that their answers contained false or unsound assertions, such as these,—1st, That godly men are rarely afflicted in this life. 2d, And that when they are afflicted, they shall be speedily recovered. 3d, That wicked men seldom or never prosper in this life. 4th, That if they do, yet their prosperity shall soon be blasted. Thus, while his friends, by these affirmations, attempted to vindicate the justice and holiness of God from any compliance with wicked men, they unawares set limits to his sovereignty and power. As if God were not at liberty to dispose of these outward things when and to whom he pleases. These positions, saith Job, I have proved false, and ye have not yet taken off the force of my arguments by any of your answers. Therefore there still remains falsehood in them, and so you have laboured in vain to comfort me.

Hence observe, 1st, That erroneous principles can never produce true comfort.

For it is the office of the Holy Spirit to comfort as well as to sanctify ; and the Spirit of truth will not work by a falsehood. 2d, That good men may be mistaken, and err in judgment. For their understanding, as well as their will and affections, have some remains of corruption. They may continue long in their mistakes, and persist in repeating their errors. Job's friends persisted in their second dispute to maintain what they had asserted in the first.

This finishes the second dispute between Job and his friends.

## CHAPTER XXII.

*Ver. 1. Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said.* Eliphaz seems resolved to contradict, though he cannot confute what Job has said in his own defence. But though he turns upon the same hinge in general in this as in his former answers, yet he varies the manner of his argument, and is as if he said, The cause or reason for which thou sufferest must either be found in God or in thyself ; if thou sayest that God does it by his prerogative, it must be only a conjecture in which thou discoverest thy folly in prying into his secret counsels ; and, after all, we can as easily deny as thou canst affirm. But while thou wilt not confess that thy own sins are the cause of thy sorrows, thou only discoverest thy hardness and impenitence of heart under his afflictive hand. This seems to be the sum of this whole discourse.

Eliphaz proceeds to reprove and rebuke Job.

*Ver. 2. Can a man be profitable unto God?* Eliphaz reproves Job for insisting so much upon his innocence ; or as if he trusted in and boasted of something he had done by which God was become his debtor. It is as if he had said, However holy and righteous a man may be, the Lord receives no advantage by him. But though the supposition was false, yet the position is true, for the best cannot merit anything at God's hand ; he is absolutely independent and perfect in himself.

Hence learn, 1st, That we should not murmur at, nor be discontent with our estate, whatever it is. The consideration of our unworthiness, and that we cannot profit God in anything, should mortify our pride and self-conceit, from which all discontent proceeds. 2d, That since the creature cannot be profitable unto God, then all that God does for man proceeds from his own free grace ; therefore no man should dare to come to God on the ground of his own worthiness, and none should fear to come because of their unworthiness. 3d, That God aims at our profit in all that he requires of us, and not at his own, for he needs no service from his creatures, and their best services cannot profit him. The Lord commands us to believe the gospel for our own good, and this holds of all the commands of God. The Sabbath was made for man ; that is, for his advantage ; and those who profane it, not only trample on God's authority, but despise their own mercy. 4th, Let us bless God for the many favours he bestows on us for which we can make no return. Our obedience can no more profit him than our sins can interrupt his happiness.

What is that wisdom that Eliphaz means, when he says that *he that is wise may be profitable to himself*. It is not the political and crafty wise, but the man that is spiritually wise, his wisdom will bring him profit. The godly man is the truly wise man ; a carnal man looks to and loves his work for the sake of the reward. A godly man may look to and love his reward for the work's sake, Prov. ix. 12. " If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself ; " that is, the fruit of thy wisdom shall drop into thy own bosom.

Eliphaz at once asserts that it is possible for a man to be profitable to himself ; and that it is impossible for any man to be profitable unto God, which he farther explains in

*Ver. 3. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous?* The word for pleasure signifies the *will*. So it is used in Psal. i. 2. " Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of God. " That is, whose will is there. Then we take pleasure and delight in a thing when we conform to it or close with it.

*That thou art righteous*, or holy, or as some translate, *pleadest justice*. Dost thou justify thyself and think to please God. He is almighty and all-sufficient ; he has all within himself, and has no need of aid from abroad ; he is self-sufficient, and he hath a sufficiency for all others.

*Or is it any gain to him that thou makest thy way perfect?* Gain signifies or includes covetousness ; for covetousness has gain for its object, and so it provokes men

to seek gain. Jethro says, (Exod. xviii. 21.) that magistrates should be men fearing God and bating covetousness, or hating gain; that is, not only all covetous practices, but inordinate desires of gain, for these lead to unlawful ways of making gain, even to pervert justice.

*Thy way perfect.* That is, thy life, conversation, or course. The perfection of our way is the simplicity, sincerity, and uprightness of it. As it seems strange to assert that it is no pleasure to the Almighty that a man makes his way perfect, therefore I shall state the sense in three affirmative propositions, and then in three negatives, 1st, The Lord delights in his church and takes pleasure in every individual believer, as he is adorned with the righteousness of Christ, and as he glories in him. 2d, He takes pleasure in the heavenly conversation of his people; and how can it be otherwise, when it is not only his image, but produced by his own power and grace. 3d, As it is the duty of his people when falsely accused, to vindicate their good name; so the Lord will take pleasure in their doing so, and will approve of them at last to the shame of all who have unjustly traduced their characters.

Negatively, God has no pleasure in them who boast of their own righteousness to justify themselves before him. 2d, He is highly displeased with those who justify themselves and condemn others. 3d, God cannot be said to take pleasure even in the justifying righteousness of his people, as if it could add to his happiness.

*Ver. 4. Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? or will he enter with thee into judgment?* Both these expressions are of the same meaning, and may be read, Will he reprove thee? or will he enter into judgment with thee for fear of thee? and the answer is in the negative, he will not, &c.

The word *reprove* signifies not only to dispute, plead, but to correct with blows. If we take fear actively, as the fear of Job, then we are to understand his religion, and is as if Eliphaz had said, Dost thou think that God doth punish thee for thy goodness, or because thou art righteous. No, he can find sins enough to do it for. The same word is used, Psal. l. 8. "I will not reprove or judge thee for thy sacrifices." That is, when I determine concerning thy righteousness, I will not do it respecting thy religious course; even thou hast been continually conversant in holy exercises; I will only declare thee righteous as thou by faith takest hold of my covenant. When God enters into judgment with us, we may boldly plead our interest in the Mediator, but we must not mention our fear, the grace or holiness either of our persons or services. Thus we are taught to glory in nothing but the free gift and grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As fear is taken passively, "Will he reprove thee for fear of thee?" That is, Is God afraid of thee? does he seek occasions against thee when there is none, only lest thou shouldst oppose him? As some through the prevalency of their own fears dare not do justice; so others, through the influence of fear, do that which is unjust, for instance Pharaoh and Herod.

But the Lord does not reprove any man for fear of him. He reproveth man because he has sinned against him, not because he is afraid of him, as Eliphaz shews in the following words.

*Ver. 5. Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?* This question may be taken conjecturally. May we not suppose that thy wickedness is great? and that first, from the general state of man by nature; he being sinful may sin without bounds. All men being sinful by nature, art not thou extremely sinful in practice?

Again, he might make the supposition on the ground of his present condition. Thy afflictions are not of an ordinary size, therefore, is not thy wickedness great and thine iniquity beyond the ordinary measure? Upon this common rule he might suppose his sin to be very great. Wickedness may be distinguished from iniquity; the former specially respects those acts by which we hurt or wrong others; the latter, those in which we pass by or neglect the duty which we owe to others.

The word *great* may signify both magnitude and multitude. Though every sin, as a breach of the law of the great God, is great, and in this view there is no sin little, yet, comparatively, some are little and light, others great and weighty. And as some godly men are faithful and fear God above many, so some wicked men are sinful and dishonour God above many.

Hence, observe, that it is our duty not only to take notice of our sins, but of the degree of their aggravations. Sins small in their kind may become exceedingly sinful by additional considerations, as, 1st, To sin against light; 2d, To sin against mercies

received, and notwithstanding warnings and repeated admonitions; 3d, When we persevere in sin in the midst of divine judgments, especially those which we have engaged to abstain from. 4th, When sin is committed deliberately, especially after a profession of repentance and sorrow for the same sin.

Iniquity implies frowardness in sinning. There is no end to thine iniquity. God is infinite as he is without end and without bounds. Though sin, properly speaking, cannot be infinite, yet we usually say that is infinite which exceeds ordinary bounds.

But had Eliphaz any just ground for this surmise against Job? None, but the greatness of his affliction; God seemed to set no bounds to Job's sorrows, therefore, he thought Job had sinned beyond all bounds. Besides, he saw that Job looked to other reasons for his affliction, and, therefore, Eliphaz directs him to his own wickedness, which he supposed to be the real cause, and, indeed, sin is so often the cause of suffering, that it is no wonder that we suspect it is the cause of all sufferings; and though the Lord has other reasons for sending affliction, yet it is a seasonable duty to search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord when his hand is upon us, when the Lord is smiting we should be searching.

Hence, observe, That in times of suffering it is good to excite ourselves and others to a strict enquiry into the number and nature of our sins. We should watch against harsh judging of others, or trying to hide and extenuate our own sins.

Eliphaz proceeds from suppositions to direct charges.

*Ver. 6. For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing.* The word also signifies to bind a thing as with a cord, because a pledge given is an obligation to perform the promise made, or pay the debt contracted. A promise is an audible bond, but a pledge is a visible bond. It is no sin in itself to receive a pledge. In these words there are three aggravations of his supposed, 1st, He took a pledge; 2d, That he took it of his brother; 3d, That he took it for nought.

Eliphaz had formerly spoken of Job as an hypocrite, but if these things were true he must have been openly profane, and if he is viewed as a magistrate it highly aggravates the sin. A tyrant is defined as "One that rules so as to turn all to his own private use and benefit," which Job is charged with here.

Hence, observe, That violently to take, or unjustly to detain a pledge, is to act the part of an oppressor. 2d, That as it is unjust and uncharitable to wrong any man, so it is a high aggravation to injure our relations.

The margin reads, *without cause*, that is, without any necessary cause thou might have trusted him, but thou wouldst not further than thou hadst security put into thy hand; or rather, thou took it forcibly into thy hand. True charity must and will make some ventures. A good man is a merchant, and will trust his bread where he has no more assurance of a safe return than the merchant has of his ship and lading while exposed to wind and waves. Our greatest necessity cannot excuse our sin, but to sin where there is no necessity is a great aggravation of our sin.

By these words, *Thou hast striped the naked of their clothing*, we may understand all the necessities of this life. Isa. iii. 6. "Thou hast clothing," that is, thou hast goods, &c. "be thou ruler over us."

To oppress the poor is the highest and greatest oppression; cruelty joined with covetousness knows no bounds.

Eliphaz having mentioned the particular evils that he supposed Job had done, proceeds to his sins of omission.

*Ver. 7. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withheld bread from the hungry.* Job is blamed with not giving water, to set forth the hardness of his heart, in refusing to do the smallest charity. So when our Lord assures us that the least kind office done to a distressed saint, because he is a believer, shall be rewarded, he speaks of a "cup of cold water," by which he means the least favour, and this he withheld from "the weary, the thirsty," who had much need of it. We may warrantably refuse to give water, or any other refreshment to those who have enough, not only to the rich who have it in their power, but to those who, in use or abuse rather have more than enough, as the intemperate and the drunken. Hab. ii. 15. "Wo unto him that giveth his neighbour drink," &c.

We should honour the Lord with our substance, and our charity should not only have cost but liberality in it.

If the Lord should command us to give some great thing to testify our charity,



should we not do it. How much more, when he saith, give but water to the weary for my sake, by which he intimates that it is not the quantity of the gift but the affection of the giver that the Lord takes notice of. The covetous hard hearted worldling cannot give so much as water, he never thinks that himself hath enough of this world, or that any other has too little. It is an hard matter for him to give or to do at all, but it is impossible for him to give with a ready mind out of love to God or in compassion to a poor saint.

Hence, note, That to be destitute of compassion to the Lord's poor, is an evidence of a wicked worldly disposition. "How dwelleth the love of God in him," is a question of the Apostle John, 1 epist. iii. 17. The love of God either as taken for the love of God to us, or for our love to God, dwells not in him in whom there is no love to man.

The inhabitants of Tema are commended for their tenderness to men in distress, Isa. xxi. 14. "They gave water and bread unasked." How unnatural then are they who deny water to the thirsty who beg for it. To give ease and refreshment to the weary and heavy laden has not only bounty and liberality, but pity and compassion in it. Matt. xi. 28. "Thanks to God who hath remembered us in our low estate," Psal. cxxxvi. 23. As the goodness of God is most seen in giving water to the weary, so is the uncharitableness of a man in denying it.

Eliphaz charges Job farther, *And thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.* The word is sometimes rendered, *to hide, to deny, or to deceive* a man of that which is due to him. We are said properly to withhold only that from a man which he has a right to. As hunger and thirst are put for all manner of extremity, so bread and water are put for all manner of supplies. This clause is of the same sense as the former, yet from the word *withholden*, which implies a wrong done to the poor,

Observe, 1st, That the poor have a right in what rich men have. By the law of love it is a duty to do good to those that are in want. Rich men must not think themselves stewards only to receive in, but also to pay out what their Lord calls for. 2d, To neglect to relieve the poor is a species of injustice and oppression. To give good words and no supply can neither profit the poor nor please God.

Eliphaz having charged Job with neglect of the poor, seems to blame him with an undue and partial respect to the rich.

*Ver. 8. But as for the rich man, he had the earth; and the honourable man dwelt in it. The mighty man.* Heb. "The man of arm." And it is usual in scripture to call a strong man a mighty man, or a man in authority *a man of arm.* Ezek. xxii. 6. "Every one of them were in thee to their power to shed blood;" or *they were to their arm.* That is, as far as they could reach forth their arm, or to the utmost of their power to shed blood. They who are evil know not how to bound themselves in doing evil. And as the power of man, so the power of God is expressed by this arm. Job xl. 9. "Hast thou an arm like God?" Others understand by the *arm* of the wicked, their servants. Evil men have their seconds, or instruments to do evil; they have many helpers. He speaks indefinitely, as if all the earth were his. *He had the earth.* Wicked men are called men of the earth, Psal. x. 18. But are not all men of the earth? I answer, Though the saints live upon the earth, they have their conversation in heaven, and therefore are not men of the earth. Carnal men are earthly minded. They are not only earth in their constitution, but in their affections; therefore they are called men of the earth.

*The honourable man dwelt in it.* Heb. "The man whose face is lifted up." That is, passively, the man that is lifted up by others, who is respected according to his place and worth. The same word is used, Gen. xix. 21. "See, (said the angel to Lot), I have accepted thee." Heb. "I have lifted up thy face." That is, I have respected and honoured thee, by granting thy request. Or actively, the man that lifts up the face dwells in the earth. To lift up the face is to accept persons in judgment for private ends. Some oppress openly, others secretly and cunningly. The man of this strain *dwelt in it*; which notes to *continue*; and the word signifies also to *sit*; and to sit in scripture language notes authority; he *dwelt or sat in it.* That is, he was the man in authority, and the great places of government were entrusted in his hand.

From both these observe, 1st, That evil magistrates are apt to pervert justice in favour of those who are great in power. 2d, That it is a great sin in any judge to favour a man because of his greatness and power. The poor man should have the earth that belongs to him as well as the rich. Justice gives every man his own, with-

out respect to the owner. 3d, Consider the words as a charge brought against Job, as being a man in authority, by office.

From which observe, that a man invested with power, who suffers wicked rich men to oppress and wrong others, betrays his trust, and exposes himself to the judgments of God. Good old Eli, being chief magistrate in Israel, for only reproving his sons for their evil conduct, and not restraining and punishing as he ought to have done, in virtue of his office, had an awful threatening denounced against him and his house. The angel and church of Thyatira are threatened for suffering a false prophetess to teach, &c. Rev. ii. 20. That is, he did not use that power that Christ had committed to the church, to admonish and cast out, by a due exercise of spiritual power, that seducing, erroneous, and immoral prophetess, but allowed her to continue to infect the church, and thereby exposed them to sore judgments. The more power a person has to prevent either spiritual or civil evils, the greater is the sin and danger of neglecting to do it. If Eliphaz had not supposed Job a magistrate, he could not have laid this burden upon him. But he still perseveres, and arraigns him for another very great crime.

*Ver. 9. The widow thou hast sent empty away.* The word *sent* implies a putting away with a kind of violence. Thou hast not only let them go from thy house unrelieved, but thou reviled and thrust them away because they asked relief. What! thrust away the widow whose heart is thrust through with many sorrows—who is unable to manage her own cause, and defend her own right. Yet thou hast sent widows away *empty*. That is, without any help or comfort. They were sent away empty. 1st, That is, not filled or relieved by thy charity. 2d, Thou hast given them no relief by thy justice, when they applied against their oppressors. 3d, Thou hast emptied them. That is, thou has taken away what they had. Covetous magistrates care not how or of whom they get it; they empty the widows' purse to fill their own. Matt. xxiii. 14. "Wo to you Scribes, for ye devour widows' houses." It is bad enough to deny widows charity; it is worse to deny them justice; and worst of all, to ruin them by injustice.

*The arms of the fatherless have been broken.* By which we are to understand, whatever is the strength, or makes for the defence of the fatherless. The arms of the fatherless are broken by denying them protection, as well as by oppression. It is not only improper, but unlawful, to make the dealings of God with any man a ground of suspicion against him. It is not enough that we do not judge our brother maliciously; we must not do it ignorantly. As God is known by the title of a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widow, in his holy habitation, so those who are gods on earth ought to make it their special business to judge them. Hence we find they are commended by name to the care of the magistrate, Psal. lxxxii.; and the neglect of it is often complained of in scripture as a sin that ruins nations, and draws down divine judgments, Isa. i. 17. and Jer. v. 28. "They judge not the cause of the fatherless;" that is, not impartially nor righteously. In James i. 27. he sums up (as it were) all religion into this one duty. Not as if this were the all of religion, but this is the practical part, or the true practice of religion, without which all religion is vain. Therefore when the apostle had said, ver. 21. "Receive with meekness the ingrafted word," lest any should think he had done enough, when he had been a hearer, he adds, "Be doers of the word;" that is, look to the practical part of religion; be diligent in the duties of love to men, as well as in those of the worship of God.

Inference 1st, Seeing God takes so much care of the widow and fatherless, "Let them trust in God," to which they are encouraged, Jer. xlix. 11. A word of promise from God is a better portion than all the wealth of the world. 2d, Seeing the Lord is their protector, and has promised to provide for them, they ought to be full of zeal for God. Special promises call for special obedience, as well as for special faith. The more God engages to do for us, the more should we engage ourselves, in his strength, to do for him. None have more reason to be rich in faith and love to God than the poor and fatherless.

Eliphaz now shews the sad fruits and effects of his sin.

*Ver. 10. Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee.* The various expressions in this and the following verse are of the same import, and signify all manner of evils, which Eliphaz seems to assert have come upon Job for those crimes which he has laid to his charge. They may have an allusion, 1st, To a besieged city; thou art now hemmed in on every side with trouble. 2d, To impris-

sōnment. 3d, To the nets of fowlers ; good things often become a snare to the undoing of evil men, and evil things are often made a snare to the troubling of good men.

*Sudden fear troubleth thee.* That is, the appearance or apprehension of some terrible thing causeth thee to fear. To such as are unprepared, evils are always sudden however often they have been warned of them. Thus death and judgment shall come suddenly upon all ungodly men. Unless threatened dangers be believed they are never feared, and unless they be both believed and feared they are never avoided. Noah by faith being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world ; that is, the then world of unbelief and hardness of heart.

*Ver. 11. Or darkness, that thou canst not see ; and abundance of waters cover thee.* As if Eliphaz had said, Darkness veils the eye of thy understanding that thou canst not see either the hand of God upon thee for thy sins, or these thy sins which have caused God to lay his heavy hand upon thee. This intellectual or internal darkness is twofold. 1st, Natural. Every man is so dark or ignorant that he cannot discern the truths that are in the word of God, nor comprehend the works of God. 2d, Judiciary or inflicted, Isa. vi. 9. The proper work of the word is to open the eyes and enlighten the mind. But when a people have long shut their eyes against, or only trifled with the light, then God shuts their eyes and darkens them with light.

The word rendered *abundance* signifies a company or troop of waters which meet and march together. Afflictions are compared to waters, as they swallow up and overwhelm ; for as water is not man's proper element, neither is affliction, for though it be due to our sin, yet it is not proper to our nature.

In Psal. xlii. By deep calling unto deep, by water-spouts, waves, and billows, the Psalmist elegantly sets forth his distress in allusion to a ship at sea in a vehement storm, when the same wave upon which the vessel rides out of one deep plunges it into another. Thus the afflicted are tossed and overwhelmed in a sea of trouble till they are at their wit's end, if not at their faith's end.

"Surely in the floods of great waters," that is great dangers, "they shall not come nigh him," (that is the godly man,) to hurt or drown him. Sometimes prayer keeps the flood off, and it will always deliver the godly man out of the flood. The floods shall not come nigh the godly man for his hurt when he draws nigh to God in prayer with his heart.

From this protracted contest we may observe, That it is hard to convince those who have taken a side, whether about persons or doctrines. Let Job say what he will in his own case, he cannot be believed by his friends, and they will continue to repeat what has been before fully answered. Even the appearance of a probability will amount to a proof against either person or doctrine which we do not like. But the clearest demonstration will hardly raise a jealousy against what we like. From which learn,

That we ought to love judiciously as well as affectionately. So that true love will not overlook the faults of another, nor will it approve against light ; yet true love is ready to entertain any light offered, that grounds of suspicion may be removed and a right understanding restored.

*Ver. 12. Is not God in the height of heaven ? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are !* In this and the two following verses Eliphaz charges Job with a still higher crime, even impiety against God ; as if he doubted, if not denied the providence of God about what is done here below.

There are two clear truths held forth, (ver. 12.) from which Eliphaz makes a wrong conclusion, ver. 13. as if he had said, God being in heaven cannot know, much less judge, of things below. He endeavours to prove his suggestion, (ver. 14.) that God hath other and higher concerns, and therefore thou thinkest that God takes no care at all about the ways of men. This is the scope of these three verses ; they are a new charge of impiety upon Job, as shutting up or restraining the providence of God to the things of heaven alone ; but it will appear afterwards that he never had such thoughts.

Since the place of God's special residence is in heaven above, our heart and eyes should be lifted upwards. The eye looks up naturally, but it requires gracious affections to make a heart look upwards. It includes a serving the Lord with reverence and holy fear, as an omnipresent God always ready to hear and help us.

From the call to behold the height of the stars, let us learn to consider it a duty to contemplate the excellency of the creatures as a mean of leading us to admire, adore, and obey God. Some study the heavens much, but their lives are earthly ; they study

the stars for the stars's sake, and not for the sake of leading them to God. As to make gods of the creatures, so not to see God in these creatures is to deny the God that is above.

Eliphaz now makes an inference, which he draws by way of supposition from Job's own mouth.

*Ver. 13. And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud?* Eliphaz seems to speak thus, We have heard thee say, That the wicked prosper, and that the godly are afflicted, and what need we any farther witness of thy blasphemy. That thou sayest, *how doth God know?* and to deny or doubt whether God knows all things is to deny his existence, for God must know all things. If Eliphaz's inference had been true, it would have proven Job a wicked man; but he never denied, but adored the providence of God.

Those scriptures which say, "That God dwells in darkness, that clouds and darkness are round about him," teach us that God and his ways are much hid from us; we are not able to see clearly what he does, much less can we discern his counsels. The clouds and darkness which are about him only hinders our sight of him, but no way prevents his sight of us. "God dwells in light that no man can" (no, nor ought to) "approach unto." We may come near his light by faith, but we cannot come near his light by knowledge.

*Ver. 14. Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not.* This is an answer to the question, Can he judge or see through the dark clouds? he certainly cannot; for "thick clouds," &c. So that as we cannot see God, so he cannot see us. The second clause is brought forward as an additional proof of Job's persuasion.

*He walketh in the circuit of heaven.* That is, he hath enough to do in heaven, and therefore hath no leisure to attend to what is done on earth. Yet he not only sees, but weighs the thoughts as well as the ways of man, for God is omniscient, nothing can be secreted from him. Thou sayest, *How doth God know?* if thy reason do not teach thee thy feeling may, for by thy suffering thou mayest find that God sees what thou hast been doing.

Let us consider, that if to make a worship of our own for the true God is indeed to set up a false god, what then do they who frame conceptions of God which he never gave ground for in his word, but set up a new god in their hearts. Such was the notion which Eliphaz had of Job. And what he lays to Job's charge falsely, is often charged upon wicked men truly, Psal. x. 11. "He hath said in his heart God hath forgotten;" that is, he hath forgotten the poor, therefore I may safely oppress him. "He hides his face, he will never see it;" that is, God will never take any knowledge either of my doings or of their sufferings. When the followers of Christ are charged falsely, let them remember that Christ himself was called a blasphemer, yet he reviled not again.

Eliphaz having thus detected and reprov'd, as he thought, those assertions of Job which detracted so much from God, as if he did not mark the ways of men, proceeds to put the question to him, whether he had well marked the ways of wicked men.

*Ver. 15. Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden?* To mark notes a diligent observation, Psal. xxxvii. "Mark the perfect man;" that is, take special knowledge of him. Some read, Hast thou marked the way of the old world? others, Hast thou taken up the way of the old world? Art thou a follower of their erroneous opinions and abominable practices; they blasphemed God, contemned religion, and were proud and ambitious, which appears from the titles given them, mighty men, men of fame or renown.

*Or the old way,* may be taken for the way of punishment. Hast thou considered how the Lord swept them off as rubbish from the face of the earth.

*Wicked men* are men of iniquity; that is, men given up to sin in general. The word *trodden* refers both to a sinful and suffering way. As it refers to a sinful way alone, it notes their boldness and determination to sin. A trodden way is one that a man has often gone, and in which he is not afraid to go.

Hence observe, 1st, That the way of sin and error is an old way. 2d, That God in all ages has punished sinners in their sinful ways. Though some sinners have gone unpunished for a time, yet there never was an age wherein sin was not punished in some workers of iniquity. The Lord gives a moral stop to sin perpetually; that is, by his laws he declares against it. No man is blest at any time who comes at last to be miserable. 3d, That it is our duty to mark the way of sinful men, and also the way

in which God punishes their sin. The lapsed angels, the old world, and especially God's dealings with the Jews, are recorded examples for caution to all ages to observe the way of their sin and punishment, and to avoid it.

*Ver. 16. Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood.* That is, they were suddenly destroyed and cut down in little time. The second clause seems to hint at some particular event in the days of old, as the deluge, the destruction of Sodom, or the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. But more particularly, *whose foundation* refers to a material building; it is the stability and strength of it. In a metaphorical sense, it may be riches, power, wisdom, friends, or whatever is the support of their worldly state is their foundation. *With a flood*, which in Scripture means all sorts of afflicting evils, which points out the sudden and irresistible nature of the judgments of God, and Eliphaz calls it the overflowing of their *foundation*, to shew that they were utterly ruined.

Hence, observe, That the storm or flood of the wrath of God will overthrow the strongest foundations of wicked men however securely they rest upon them.

A wicked man is in greatest danger when he thinks himself in safety; when they appear most happy they are truly miserable. But a godly man is happy even when he appears most miserable. What can be added to their felicity who are in an estate so good (in the nature of it) that they need not desire a change, and so sure in the foundation of it that they need not fear a change far less an overflowing flood.

Eliphaz proceeds to show how these wicked men express their wickedness.

*Ver. 17. Which said unto God, depart from us; and what can the Almighty do for them?* These words are filled with the very spirit of malice against God himself. Natural men may have some impressions and notions of God, but they are full of mistakes and false principles. They suppose they can do well enough without God, and therefore they all practically say, *depart from us*. The ways of God, as well as himself, are grievous to them. The very outside of spiritual work is grievous to them, how then can they maintain communion with God in spirit and in truth? It is impossible. For whoever does not feel an emptiness and insufficiency in himself, and so place his all in God makes a god of himself.

The best of good things is refused, and the worst of evils chosen by those that are evil. As their understanding is blinded, so their will and affections are so perverted that they embrace darkness for light, &c. And so it is no wonder they say to God *depart from us*, while they have such a view of God as appears in the next clause.

*And what can the Almighty do for them?* Almightyness itself is questioned as weakness, and omnipotency as impotency by unbelievers.

Hence, note, 1st, That worldly wicked men have low and mean thoughts of God. They are not able to discern his power, wisdom, &c. They do not understand what God affirms of himself nor credit what he hath promised. 2d, They are mercenary, they count the service of God unprofitable; if they can gain by godliness they will attend to what has a show of it; profit will make any thing pleasing to a carnal mind.

Some read, *what can the Almighty do against them*; it is so translated, ch. xxxv. *If thou sinnest what dost thou against him?* Surely the Almighty is not able to hurt us; we expect no good from him and we fear no evil.

There is a threefold false and presumptuous apprehension which men have of God, 1st, Some presume that God will protect them from evil while they are doing evil. Micah iii. 11. "The heads thereof judge for reward," &c. yet will say "none evil can come upon us." 2d, Others presume that at least God will not be so severe as to inflict the evils he has threatened. He will neither reward nor punish, Zeph. i. 12. 3d, Those in the text came to a still higher pitch of presumption. To think that God will protect us though we persevere in sinning, or that he will not execute his threatenings against sin, are high acts of presumption. But to speak as if he could not punish sin is presumption of the highest kind.

*Ver. 18. Yet he filleth their houses with good things.* When God bestows good or withhold evil from those that are evil, the language of God is *repent, repent*; yea, it as it were takes one by the hand leading him to repentance. And all who despise the divine goodness will be left inexcusable to suffer divine judgments.

Observe, That though carnal men receive many good things from God, yet they do not know God as the author of them; they cannot own God purely either in good or evil. When we give honour and thanks to second causes, and creature helps to our own wit or industry, &c. we put them in the place of God.

Isa. x. 14. "By the strength of my hand I have done it," &c. See how the Lord checks this insolency, ver. 15, "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith," &c. Men I grant are living instruments, yet an axe or a saw can do as much without man as man can do without God, yet vain proud man is as full of boasting as if he could do or had done all alone. Not only are spiritual blessings undeserved, but even the things of this life. The Lord gives them to his enemies even to those that say to him *depart from us*. He sovereignly and freely bestows them as he pleaseth.

*But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.* This a proverbial speech by which our abhorrence and detestation, either of things or persons, is set forth to the utmost. When Job used the same words, ch. xxi. 16. it was to show that though he was afflicted while many wicked men prospered, yet he was not of their principles nor conduct. And that, therefore, his friend's assertion, who numbered him with the wicked because he was afflicted, must needs be false. Eliphaz seems to retort this upon Job, and to say, if this be so, then surely God has laid aside the care of the world, for if He took notice of men He would never suffer the wicked to prosper nor to escape unpunished. And seeing thou so repeatedly assertest that thou dost not suffer those grievous calamities for thy sin, thou seemest to me plainly to comply with their blasphemy. How, query, *How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud?* This counsel of the wicked is far from me. From those who either deny the providence of God, or think they can hide themselves from him.

Hence, observe, That the spirit and way of the godly and the wicked are as opposite as their end and conclusion shall be.

Eliphaz still pursues the ruin and extirpation of wicked men. Having shewn us their evil practices towards man, and the folly of their opinion in saying to God *depart from us*, who had never given them any reason to weary of his presence, unless they were displeased that He *had filled their houses with good things*, for which cause Eliphaz rejected both them and their way, he now acquaints us with the event or issue of their counsels, and how the righteous behave when God reckons with the wicked for their irreligion.

Ver. 19. *The righteous see it, and are glad; and the innocent laugh them to scorn.* When the act of seeing refers to the person seeing, it notes both the privilege and pleasure of the righteous. When the act of seeing is expounded of the object seen, then it imports both the certainty and publicity of it. As the Lord works many glorious salvations for his people, that the wicked may see it and be ashamed, so he brings many visible destructions on the wicked, not only that the righteous may see it and rejoice, but that the wicked also may see it and tremble and reform. But how is it lawful to rejoice at the overthrow of any, when it is said, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth." It is indeed sinful to rejoice merely because an enemy is fallen into misery, or because we hope to be gainers by it. But the righteous may be glad and merry in the Lord for the protection granted to themselves and others when they see the judgments of God poured out on the wicked, or when persecutions of the church are removed, and they have a prospect of peace and safety.

But their chief joy at the overthrow of the wicked is, 1st, Because God is thereby honoured in his justice, Rom. ii. 5; Rev. xv. 3, 4; 2d, In the truth of his threatenings; and 3d, In the attribute of his power. Psalm cvii. 40, 42, "He poureth contempt upon princes," and "the righteous shall see it and rejoice." Psal. xcvi. 8. "Zion heard and was glad," because of thy judgments, O Lord. Isa. xli. 15. "When worm Jacob has threshed the mountains," that is, the mighty ones of the earth who set themselves against the ways and designs of heaven. Then, ver. 16. "Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel."

The righteous, in the former part of the verse are the same with the innocent in the latter part of it. To be innocent is, 1st, To be free from sin; 2d, To be free from trouble or punishment. But how is it consistent for a holy person to laugh to scorn any that are in distress? I answer, that when human affections are attributed to God, such as to repent, and to laugh at the calamity of the wicked, &c. we say it means only an effect upon the creature, but not a change of affection in God. So when these actions which are unsuitable to the renewed nature of man, are attributed to the saints, such as these to "wash their feet in the blood of the ungodly, or laugh them to scorn in their sadest miseries," we must say that it is rather what the wicked deserve than what the godly do; there is that in wicked men which is worthy to be laughed to scorn. The

laughter of the saints in their dispensations is serious, the acting of their graces not of their corruptions. And thus it is said of God himself, Psal. ii. 4. Prov. i. 26. "I will mock at your calamity," &c. that is, I will not pity you who have been scorers of my word, &c. any more than men pity those whom they laugh to scorn; such is the laughter of the saints at the calamity of the wicked.

Hence, note, That wicked men are not only miserable but ridiculous, 1st, Because they do such things as cannot reach the end they desire; 2d, Because they are often entangled in the snare they lay for others; 3d, He overrules all their plots so as to fulfil his own counsels.

*Ver. 20. Whereas our substance is not cut down.* This shews the state of the innocent, who are brought in, saying, Our life, and that by which we and our families subsist is not cut down.

The second part of this elegant conclusion shews the state of the wicked. *The remnant of them the fire consumeth.* That is, the wrath of God, in some visible judgment, consumes the remnant, which may refer to their persons, their goods, or any thing that remains, even the very remembrance of them, the fire shall consume that which they thought most desirable and honourable.

Hence, observe, That the righteous are often preserved in common calamities. Psal. xx. 8. "They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright," and when the innocent and wicked are taken away in one way and at the same time, the Lord makes a difference, He has a different fire for the righteous and wicked, He purges, cleanses, and refines his own people while he consumes the wicked. It is true the God of believers is a consuming fire, but he is not a consuming fire to them. Even believers ought to be overawed with a holy fear of that in God which they shall never feel. He will never consume either their graces or spiritual interests though he will consume their corruptions.

Eliphaz having thus far given a description of the sin and ruin of the wicked, in which he evidently insinuates that Job was the person aimed at in this discourse. In the latter part of the chapter, he gives a serious exhortation to move Job to repent and seek God, giving him many assurances and promises, that, (in case he did so) it should not be vain.

From Eliphaz taking this course and method with Job. Learn, That in dealing with sinners, we are not only to threaten, but to persuade and propose the promises of peace to them. Hopes of mercy prevail with many, more than the fear of wrath. Though Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar of a decree past in heaven against him, yet he gives him faithful counsel, and exhorts him, "To break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor," if it may be a lengthening of his tranquillity.

*Ver. 21. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee.* Eliphaz speaks to Job as one that had departed from and broken off communion with God, and on supposition that it was true, he gives him excellent counsel. *Acquaint now, &c.* As sin is a turning from God, so repentance is a returning to him. It is a change, first of our mind, and then of our way.

But how can we who are at such a distance from God, acquaint ourselves with him? We must be made nigh by the blood of Christ as to our state, and then we draw nigh or acquaint ourselves with him. 1st. By meditation and prayer. To meditate, is to think of God and maintain an inward converse with him, by which acquaintance with him is not only begun, but is confirmed and strengthened, and prayer is the lifting up of the soul to God, making our request to him. 2d. By a careful study of his works of creation and providence. 3d. And especially in going to God for counsel, by examining his word. 4th. By a daily holy walking, which is the sum of all our acquaintance with God, and our fullest acquaintance with God, is but the issue of our holy walking. Our acquaintance with him consists in a spiritual and fiducial knowledge of all his revealed perfections. We may notice, That there is a seeking unto God, 1st. From necessity, Isa. xxvi. 16. "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee." 2d. From pure love to God, which is a sweet and precious duty, and we notice, 1st. That all our acquaintance with God must be through Christ as Mediator, and 2d, That the more we are acquainted with God, the more we will be transformed into his likeness.

*And be at peace.* That is, if thou acquaint thyself with God, thou shalt have peace. To be at peace is a distinct duty from that of acquainting ourselves with God, yet necessarily following it.

*Be at peace.* That is, be quiet and content under the chastening hand of God. Do

not murmur nor repine. To be at peace in ourselves when all is unquiet about us, is a blessed sight.

Hence observe, That it is only by an acquaintance with God, that we can enjoy either peace with God or with ourselves. The wicked is like the troubled sea, because they are strangers to God. And to excite or provoke Job to seek to obtain this peace, Eliphaz adds, *therefore good shall come unto thee*. This is by way of inference, from whence observe, That while we continue estranged from God, we are strangers to all good. We may have that which in the nature of it is good, and yet have our good by it.

*Ver. 22. Receive, I pray thee, the law at his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart.* The word for *receive*, is rendered by some to *buy*. Receive the law as a thing bought, and carry it home with thee, Prov. xxiii. 23. "Buy the truth and sell it not." This spiritual trade is continued by buying only; it will be our profit to have this commodity always on our hands. We buy it when we take pains to obtain a knowledge of the truth and endeavour to receive it in love. The Hebrew word here signifies to receive with an earnest desire. He that teaches, gives, and he that learns, receives. The law is diligently to be observed and considered; we are always to look into and meditate upon it in every part. For the whole law is so joined, that he that offends in one part, offends in all. We may be said to receive a rule or a law from the mouth of God, when we receive that which God has at any time manifested as a rule or law for mankind to walk by.

It is our duty to receive the law from God, which includes in it, 1st. To believe the law. 2d. To honour and reverence it. 3d. To obey it, and subject ourselves wholly to the mind of God in it, and as it is in the next clause. *Lay up his word in thy heart*. That is, let thy affections be warmed with it while thy memory retains and keeps it, and thy understanding is enlightened with a true notion of it.

Hence observe, That the word of God is a precious thing, and that the heart is the ark or cabinet in which it must be laid up. Now as Christ has been the ark of the law, to protect and cover us from the condemning power of it, so the heart of believers must be the ark of the law, where it must be laid up with a readiness of mind to yield ourselves up to the commanding power of it. The neglecting to lay up the word in the heart, is the great cause of the deficiency in the things of God, even with some saints, and many are at a loss, in the use of that grace that they have, because they have not laid up the word of God in their hearts so carefully as they ought. Eliphaz proceeds to enumerate the blessed advantages Job should enjoy upon his returning to and acquainting himself with God.

*Ver. 23. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up.* Some translate, Return home to the Almighty, stay not short of Him in your repentance, that is, repent fully, seriously. Eliphaz seems to hint to Job, that all his former shew of repentance was but feigned, for if thou hadst really turned from thy sins to God, thou wouldst have been relieved from thy afflictions. In scripture, we read of God returning to his people, which he does when he repents of the evil of punishment that he had brought upon them. And they return to God, when they repent of the evil of sin, as being against God. Hosea vii. 16. "They return, (that is, they make a shew of repentance) but not to the Most High," and Jer. iv. "O Israel, if thou wilt return, return unto me!" All our returns are but wanderings, unless we return to God. "True repentance is a returning home to God." That is, from a deep sense of sin, and a real grief of heart, because it is offensive to and dishonouring to God, and not merely on account of the smart we feel from it.

The wicked are serious and cordial in sinning, and they must be so in repenting. But one may say, I have gone too far to return. No. Jer. iii. 1. "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me saith the Lord." And ver. 14. Backsliders are invited to return. Eliphaz having shewed Job that it is his duty to return to God, says, *Thou shalt be built up*, that is, thy ruined estate shall be repaired. Affliction and trouble, which are the fruit of sin, lay us waste and pull us down.

Hence note, That returning to the Almighty is the most certain way of obtaining relief from, or support under affliction.

*Thou shalt put iniquity far from thy tabernacles.* The word imports, putting away with indignation, and to the utmost distance. Iniquity may be taken, either for sin, or the effects of it, that is, punishment. *If thou return, &c.* Then thou shalt rid thyself and thy house of all the troublesome effects of sin.



Hence observe, That in true repentance, sin must be utterly cast away, not only from the practice and conversation, but it must be put out of our hearts and affections. Again observe, That all who truly turn from sin to God, will endeavour to purge sin from their houses as well as from themselves, Gen. xxxv. 2.

Eliphaz having encouraged Job by a general promise, proceeds.

*Ver. 24. Then shalt thou lay up gold as the dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brook.*

*Then*, That is, when thou hast acquainted thyself with God, and laid up his law in thine heart—when thou hast returned to the Almighty thyself, and put away iniquity from thy household, then thou shalt have abundance, and even more than enough. The Vulgar translate, He shall give thee for earth a rock, and for a rock streams of gold, which is a proverbial speech, implying a change for the better. Junius connects it with the former, and renders the whole verse.

*Thou shalt be built up, &c.* and that by giving thee for the dust the choicest gold, and for the rock, the rivers of gold of Ophir. Thus assuring Job of a happy change in his civil state, upon his returning to the Almighty, &c. The next verse is a continuation of the promises almost in the same words, and therefore shall make the observations from both together.

*Ver. 25. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver.*

*Yea*, intimates, that this is a higher degree of mercy than the former. As if he had said, thou shalt not only have gold, but better than gold, even the Almighty for thy defence, or God, who is better than gold, will be thy defence, and the defence of thy gold. The Hebrew is, “defences,” which intimates, 1st. All sorts of defence. 2d. Strong defence.

Hence note, That God himself is pleased to be the Lord protector of all who turn to him, both in their persons and estates. Eliphaz seems to intimate to Job, that he had now lost his defence, and exhorts him to return to the Lord, and he will again become his defence. How safe are they, and all that they have, who live under the shadow of the Almighty. Many have store of riches who are perplexed how to secure them. Return to the Lord, and he shall be an Assurance-office unto thee, he shall protect thee against all winds and weather, and every enemy. When all the goodly and precious things were carried to Babylon, even then Jeremiah said, “The Lord is my portion.” They who have God for their gold and silver, are happier and richer than gold and silver can make them. What can be said more, to draw our hearts to God than this promise. That God will not only give us riches, but that himself will be our riches. What can be said more to the ambitious, to the voluptuous, and in a word to all sorts of sinners. You shall find all that your sins can offer you, and infinitely more in God. One said well to this point, “That man is too covetous who is not satisfied with God.”

Hence note, 1st. That godly men may lawfully possess earthly riches, and that true godliness is the best and nearest way to attain them. 2d. That as riches are at God’s disposal, so he bestows them in plenty, and continues or removes them at his pleasure. Lastly, That a good man may lawfully possess abundance of earthly good things. We should study to lay up the gold of grace, as the dust; and the silver of sanctification, as the stones of the brook. While our desires are fixed on eternal objects, they cannot be immoderate, but in temporals they quickly may, it is sinful to make abundance our aim. But when God gives abundance in the lawful use of our callings, we may thankfully use it as a blessing from God. It is not unlawful to have much of the world. But as want tries our patience and dependence upon God for a supply of what we have not; so abundance tries our temperance, humility, and liberality, yea, and our faith in God, for the sanctifying blessing to render that a comfort to us which we enjoy. When a rich man sees an emptiness in his abundance, without the enjoyment of God in it, he discovers as heavenly a frame of mind as that poor man does, who enjoys a fulness in God in the midst of his outward emptiness, and therefore Paul puts both these alike upon a divine teaching, Phil. iv. 12.

*Ver. 26. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, &c.* The word *for*, is as if he had said, God will not deny thee comfort in the creature, seeing he will give thee the highest comforts, even delight in himself, these being indeed nothing in comparison of himself.

*Then*, that is, when thou returnest to God, and not till then, thou mayest expect to receive much consolation from him. Delight signifies to take contentment, thy whole

delight shall be in the Lord. So to delight in the Almighty, implies, 1st. A suitability in our souls to the Lord, 2d. The soul's reflecting upon the Lord, as good and gracious, and of course suitable. Though the Lord has provided delights for us in the creature, yet it is our duty to delight chiefly, yea only in the Lord, and to delight in nothing but in reference to him.

Hence observe, That all holy delighting in the Lord is accompanied with mourning for and turning from sin. That soul cannot delight in the Almighty who continues in the love of sin. If any such profess delight in God, it is but a false boast and a high presumption. The hypocrite may delight in something received or expected from God, but he cannot delight in the Almighty himself. It is impossible in the nature of the thing, for a man to delight in sin and in God too, for sin separates between God and the sinner, Isa. lix. 2. That is from those joys that his people take in him, for the soul that loves sin cannot have any holy converse with God, Psal. xxxvii. 4. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." That is, all who delight in the Lord, have all their desires fulfilled in this one thing, which is quite different from worldly delight. 1st. This is a real delight. The joys of a hypocrite are like his holiness, mere appearances of joy. 2d. It is strengthening, Neh. viii. 10. "The joy of the Lord is the strength of the soul." 3d. It is durable. Not like the "the laughter of the fool," Eccl. vii. 6. (which may be either the profane man of the world, or the hypocrite in the church) that makes a noise and a blaze for a while, but are presently extinct. 4th. It is holy and purifying; the delights of the world are impure, and they defile us. But the Lord being altogether holy, they that delight in him must need be made and kept holy. Solomon says of "laughter it is mad, and of mirth, what doth it?" It does many things, it makes men vain, foolish, dissolute, &c. But does it make any man better, more wise, holy, or fit for duty? No, it can do none of these things. But delight in the Lord can do all this, it is added,

*And shalt lift up thy face to God.* As soon as Adam sinned, he hid himself, he durst not shew his face before God. But when we are delivered from guilt, then we have boldness, reconciliation is accompanied with the spirit of adoption. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; that is, freedom from sin, a readiness to do good, and a liberty of speech, or access with boldness in all our holy addresses unto God.

*Ver. 27. Thou shalt make thy prayer to him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows.* In these words we have a farther promise, leading to another duty; as before, the duty of returning to the Almighty had a promise annexed to it, of lifting up the face to God, or boldness in prayer. So now the promise of being heard in prayer, is followed with a duty. The payment of vows.

The words, *make thy prayer to him*, notes the pouring out of many prayers. It is not only a duty to pray, but to pray much and with fervency. Cold asking invites a denial, it is effectual fervent prayer that prevails much. If we connect this with these words: *If thou return to the Almighty.* Then shalt thou have thy delight in the Lord, then shalt thou make thy prayer to Him, we may observe, that until we turn from every sin to God by faith and repentance, we are never in a fit frame for praying.

As the Lord will not hear us when we pray, if we regard iniquity in our heart, so neither are we fit to speak to God in prayer, if we regard any iniquity in our hearts. Repenting and praying must go together; we must be daily repenting while we are daily sinning.

*And he shall hear thee.* To hear prayer is to grant what is prayed for. To hear prayer is the peculiar prerogative of God, and it is great condescension for him to respect the person or prayers of any man. And as to have prayer heard is the sum of all mercies, so to have them rejected is an awful judgment. "God has not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed," this precious fruit of faith and prayer, or the prayer of faith, "shall doubtless," there is no peradventure in the case, "come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." His showery seed time shall be blest with a fruitful and plentiful harvest. But the prayers of the hypocrite shall neither glorify God nor profit himself.

*And thou shalt pay thy vows.* Eliphaz is not exhorting Job to pay vows, but he assures him that his prayers shall be so fully answered, that he shall have cause to pay them both fully and cheerfully. A vow is a solemn, free, and voluntary promise made to God, of things lawful, weighty, and possible, to further and help us to glorify God in our obedience. The word to pay a vow signifies also to give peace and quietness, implying that a man cannot enjoy peace while he neglects to pay his vows. We

are at liberty whether to vow or not ; but we are not at liberty to question whether we will pay or not. Eccles. v. 4. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools." And such are all they who attempt to flatter God, with rashly making vows, and then mock him by their slowness in or neglecting to pay them.

From the whole verse observe, that the answer of prayers is an obligation upon us to pay what we have vowed unto the Lord in prayer.

*Ver. 28. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee ; and the light shall shine upon thy ways.* Here Eliphaz gives another excellent promise.

*Thou shalt also, &c.* That is, moreover and beside what I have said, I add this, *Thou shalt decree.* The word translated to decree signifies properly to divide or separate one thing from another, and determining upon that which we conceive most just and reasonable. Thou shalt decree that which is good and right in itself, and good for thee. As this is an exposition of the former promises, *Thou shalt be heard, and Thou shalt pay thy vows,* the decree is, that thy prayer shall certainly be performed ; they shall not be lost ; no ; they shall be as the statutes of heaven. Eliphaz speaks as if he had the command of heaven and earth, as if he carried the keys of the clouds at his girdle. 1 Kings xvii. 1. "There shall not be dew nor rain three years, but according to my word." The apostle James tells us, "that he prayed earnestly that it might not rain," and his prayer was as certainly performed to him as if he had the whole power of decreeing what he would have. As the persons, so the works of all men are in the hand of God, both as to the performance and success of them. They suppose themselves to be more than man who decree or resolve to do lawful things without leave from God. To be established means only the accomplishment of those decrees which this godly man should make. These shall be established unto him for his good ; he shall have the comfort and benefit of them while he aims at the glory of God in them.

When Eliphaz says, *Thou shalt decree a thing,* he does not express by whom it shall be established ; but we may easily understand who it is, even God himself, for he alone establishes all things. The success of every decree of man is from God, and when our lawful undertakings prosper, it is a mercy for which we should be thankful to God. The Lord confirms the word of his servants, and the reason is, because there is a suitableness between the words of his servants and his own decree. For the servants of God desiring that their decrees may be suitable to the revealed will of God, they are seldom unsuitable to the decrees of his hidden and secret will.

In the last clause Eliphaz is as if he had said to Job, 'Thou didst complain. Chap. xix. 8. "That God set darkness in thy paths." Do thou now return unto the Lord, "and the light shall shine upon thy ways." 1st, A light of direction. Thou shalt see what to do along with the light of the word. Thou shalt have the light of the Spirit to direct thee in making thy decrees, and direct thy whole conversation. "The law of his God is in his heart, and none of his steps shall slide. 2d, Light shining upon his ways implies the prosperity of his ways. From which observe, that those who turn unto the Lord shall have a blessing in their way, or their way shall prosper. God is a sun to give light, and a shield to protect ; for no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. 3d, He shall not only prosper in his way, but he shall have personal comfort and contentment. Though their way be dangerous, dark, and full of labour and trouble, yet the light shall shine upon the way. To the righteous there rises light in darkness, as it follows in the next verse.

*Ver. 29. When men are cast down, then thou shalt say there is a lifting up, and he shall save the humble person.* Eliphaz gives an assurance to Job that he should be exalted when others are cast down, or that he shall be safe in times of common calamity.

*When men are cast down.* That is, when God comes to ruin his enemies, and make them desolate.

*Thou shalt say there is lifting up.* Thou shalt pray for or firmly expect and depend on God for protection and deliverance. Both Noah and Lot experienced this lifting when all around them were destroyed.

*And he shall save the humble person.* Or as the Heb. strictly is, *He shall save him that is low of eyes.* So a humble person and a person of low eyes is the same, Psal. cxxxi. 1. And a proud heart and an high look is put for the same person, Psal. ci. 5. This humble person, taken *passively*, is one that is cast down and laid low by affliction.

tion, who stoops down quietly to take up and bear his cross, and does not audaciously slight it or foolishly play with it, but is serious under the rebukes of God; and it may be taken *actively*, and then it is the person who is low in his own eyes, and walks humbly with God and men when most exalted. The rich brother is exhorted, James i. 10. "To rejoice in that he is made low." This means a lowliness of spirit, not lowness of station.

Hence observe, that the Lord takes special care of humble ones. James speaks as if none were saved but under the name of humble. "He giveth grace to the humble." That is, he favours and respects them because they are gracious, and he adds to their graces. Psal. xviii. 27. is parallel to Eliphaz and James, "Thou wilt save the afflicted people," &c. God knows how to make a distinction between the humble and the proud, when he makes none between the mean and the mighty, Isa. v. 15.

*Ver. 30. He shall deliver the island of the innocent.* The promise is continued to the man that returns to God. *He shall deliver the island.* That is, the inhabitants of the island; all shall be safe; the island and all that dwell in it. In the next clause he speaks in the second person, perhaps purposely, to shew that he meant Job.

*And it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.* He means the pureness of his actions and administration. While our doings are holy, our works righteous, just, and good, it may be said our hands are pure. Thus Eliphaz promises not only that Job shall be lifted up when others are cast down, but that his family, and the nation or island in general, should fare the better for him.

Hence learn, that a godly person is a common good, as delivering from or obtaining good. The Lord will accept his prayer and hear his request for the deliverance of a place, though there be many wicked in it. How often did Moses turn away the wrath of God when it was breaking forth against the people of Israel, Psal. cvi. 23. The Lord speaks to Jeremiah, chap. v. 2. as if one man should deliver the city, he puts the whole issue upon this, "If thou canst find a man," &c. and I will pardon it. That is, they should be pardoned or saved from destruction for that time, if such a godly man could be found among them. Godly men may be said to save the wicked, by their good counsel, instruction, and example, also by their prayers and intercessions. It is well known that God hath spared a people for the sake of some godly among them, and in answer to their prayers. Yet there are cases when the Lord will not hear the best of men's prayers for a sinful people.

We see wherein under God the strength and safety of nations consists. It is neither in the wisdom of statesmen, nor numerous fleets and armies; no, nor even union at home, nor leagues and confederacies abroad, nor all these combined, that can preserve a people from the judgments of God. True godliness is the strength and safety of a nation; therefore let the powers of this world take heed of despising or insulting those who have the honour and privilege to be deliverers of a land or island. As these are the best friends of a nation, so they are the worst enemies. It is better to have armies attacking you, than one (upon just ground) secretly praying, or but complaining to God against you. Do not provoke your own horsemen to fight against you, and your own chariot wheels to run over you.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

In this and the following chapter Job replies and defends himself against the charges that Eliphaz had brought against him. In this chapter he defends his own integrity, and in the next he overthrows the foundation on which his friends built their general opposition, affirming that there is neither any certain time or way in which the Lord doth punish wicked men in this world, and therefore no judgment can be formed of any man's condition by his present state, or the external dispensations of God towards him.

*Ver. 1, 2. Then Job answered and said, Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.* This is at once a preface to what he was about to say, and his apology for what he had already said.

The word *complaint* is rendered prayer and meditation, Gen. xxiv. 69; 1 Sam. i. 16. Many complain who do not pray; some pray who do not complain, and others meditate who neither complain nor pray. Yet we should meditate on what we are to pray

about, and pour out our complaints in prayer respecting those sins, wants, and mercies, which we have discovered by meditation.

*Bitter* denotes anything that is grievous or unpalatable. Affliction is a bitter pill. "Thou writest bitter things against me," chap. xiii. 16.

*My stroke is heavier than my groaning.* This is as if he had said, If ye inquire why my complaint is so bitter, it is because my stroke is so heavy. A man when sore afflicted can hardly judge aright of himself, and is seldom rightly judged by others. I would therefore say to all, judge charitably of such as complain bitterly, for as a man in a low condition does not know what he would either be or do were he advanced to honour and power; so he that is at ease cannot know how he would behave in pain and perplexity. The afflicted may expect to be censured; but let them not think it strange when they suffer either from the hand of God or by the tongues of men. It is dangerous to complain without a cause, or even more than the cause will justify.

In 1 Thess. v. 18. it is said, "In every thing give thanks," and the reason is, "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. And as thanksgiving and complaining are opposite; so it must be contrary to the will of God that his people should complain. It should stop their complaints that their stroke might have been heavier, and they deserve far greater; and the belief that they shall prove beneficial should make them thankful.

*Ver. 3. O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!* This implies a sense of self-insufficiency and a strong desire to obtain what he wanted. Though it is not expressed, yet he could mean none but God.

The Heb. word signifies to *find*, by going out to meet a man; or so to find as to take hold of. If I knew where I might have, I would lay fast hold on and cleave to him. Did Job not know where to find God? He knew that God is everywhere, though not seen in regard of the invisibility of his nature; and he is often hid through the obscurity of his dispensations. But what Job sought, and every good man seeks, is the special enjoyment of God. It is a sad thing not to find God, but to have no desires after him is far worse. Unbelievers are without God in the world, and they make no inquiry or search after him. But Job intimates, that by his afflictions he was convinced of his inability to comfort and support himself, and therefore he earnestly desires fellowship with God, which alone can support under, and render afflictions profitable. The presence of God is precious to saints at all times, but especially when they find most bitterness in the world. Thoughts of God are never more pleasant to a gracious heart, nor more troublesome to the wicked than when they are in trouble.

Even when a good man has most respect from the world God is his best friend; but when the world hates and frowns upon him, if he do not find help in God he must be miserable. God alone is enough; all without God is nothing to a godly man. As the fullness of the creature cannot satisfy him; so the utmost want cannot disturb him while he enjoys God.

When Job said, *O that I knew where I might find him*, it was not an idle wish. Indeed many are full of woublings and wishes that are only killing desires, Prov. xxi. 25. "The desire of the slothful killeth him." A godly man's desires are active, they make him inquire how to attain the good desired.

Hence observe, That such as truly desire to find God are diligent in searching after him. The saints are said to be "the generation that seek him," Psal. xxiv. 6. They seek him, 1st, By carefully searching the word and praying for a blessing. 2d, By going forth by the footsteps of the flock. That is, follow the holy practices and examples of the saints in all formes ages, which the apostle calls "walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham," Rom. iv. 12. 3d, And, above all, seek God in Christ; for "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is given to us in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. That God is exceedingly good, merciful, just and holy, appears gloriously in Christ. Seek God in Christ and he will be found.

In the last clause Job seems to put forth the nobler and higher actings of his faith. The word translated *seat*, a prepared *place*, implying something special and peculiar unto God. So his meaning is, O that I might come as near him as possible; I would not stand at a distance, but draw near to him in a holy well-grounded confidence. Thus Job answers Eliphaz's charge, "Is not thy wickedness great?" &c. Now, saith he, you shall see what my sins and guilt are; I dare venture even to the throne of God

where no hypocrites dare appear. He seems fully assured of his own integrity, or of the goodness of his cause. Sinners are so far from coming to his seat, that they cannot endure to come into his sight. The throne of God is become a throne of grace to sinners only in Christ.

Hence observe, that a godly man is willing that God should judge both his person and cause. Job appealed to God because he knew that he is omniscient, infinitely wise, &c. But being interested in him who made the atonement, and is the Judge, he knew that he should stand in the judgment.

In the two next verses Job tells us what he would do if his appeal were granted and himself admitted to the seat of God.

*Ver. 4. I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.*

The word *order* is a military term used properly for marshalling an army. God says to the hypocrite, Psal. l. 21. "I will set thee in order before thee;" that is, those sins and confused practices of which thou hast said in thine heart I shall never hear more of them, shall be brought forth and set like a terrible array in rank and file before thee. When Job says, "I would order my cause before him," (that is, in his presence, or before his face,) I would not want matter to speak for myself. Some arguments have only a proof in them, others have also a reproof. Job would fill his mouth with arguments which should be both proofs for himself and reproofs for his opposers. He had not a word to say against God, but he had much to say against his friends.

Trouble of spirit fills the mouth with arguments two ways. 1st, Against themselves. How strongly do some dispute against their own peace? 2d, The troubles of many produce arguments for themselves, as Job, who would not want neither matter nor words to plead before the throne, and yet he would not slight what might be spoken to him.

*Ver. 5. I would know the words that he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.* Knowing and understanding may be taken two ways, 1st, For considering and weighing what God would say. His friends had spoken as if they thought him incapable to understand their answers. Well, saith Job, though I am so dull that I cannot understand, (as you think,) what you have said, yet I doubt not but I shall understand what God will say unto me. 2d, *I would know*; that is, I would study to find out the mind of God and understand what he would say unto me, and then reverently submit thereunto.

Further, the form of speaking seems to imply a vehement desire to know the mind of God concerning him. As a man that is accused longs to hear the mind of the judge; as for others, it makes little difference whether they say for or against him, as Paul said, "With me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, &c.; he that judgeth me is the Lord;" that is, to his judgment I must stand.

God not only speaks to men in his word, but by rods and chastenings; those who are wise will study to know and understand them. As Job could not assent to what his friends suggested as the cause of his afflictions, he was no doubt desirous to hear from God himself what was the true cause why he contended with him; and he would also wish to know what God expected from him under this dispensation, and he was ready to listen to his direction and counsel.

Hence, observe, that a godly man is desirous to know the mind of God, with a view to submit to and acquiesce in his judgment. As there is no avoiding the judgments of God, so a godly man desires to rejoice in it. When Hezekiah heard a sentence full of gall and wormwood, he said "Good is the word of the Lord, I and my people have drawn it upon ourselves."

He expresses a hope that God will be gracious to him if he could but obtain a hearing.

*Ver. 6. Would he plead against me with his great power? No; but he will put strength in me.* To *plead* is a law term. He that pleads against another discovers the faultiness of his person when accused, or the weakness of his title when controverted. This word is used, Isa. lvii. 16. "I will not contend (or plead) for ever."

God has a greatness of power in commanding and disposing what and how things shall be done, and also a greatness of power in executing what he has commanded. We may consider the greatness of the power of God, 1st, As he can do all things there is nothing too hard for him to do. 2d, As he has a fulness of strength, so he has a right to do all that he does. 3d, The greatness of his power appears in that none may presume to question him for what he does, and farther, in that none can stop or hinder him in what he has a mind to do.

Job confidently asserts that God will not contend with him by his power, but that he will help and carry him through all his distresses. The greatness of the power of God is a comfort to believers, because they know it is exercised to them in the greatness of his mercy. He will be so far from showing his power against me, that he will put his strength unto me, or, as Broughton reads, He will help me. A believer will trust no more to his own strength than to his own righteousness. As justification is wholly founded on the righteousness of Christ, so sanctification is carried on by the strength of Christ. A godly man knows his own strength is but weakness, and when he prevails, it is with strength from God supplied by the spirit of Jesus Christ. Adam received all his strength at once, but believers receive daily supplies from the second Adam. They find his grace sufficient for them, and so they disclaim their own strength as weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon them. They shall receive strength for all their needs.

The Lord is so far from requiring work without giving wages that he does not require work without giving strength to do it, as, 1st, A believer shall receive strength for the performance of every duty required of him, though Christ has done all for him; yet they have much to do for Christ; He puts a yoke and a burden on them which is neither easy nor light in itself, but he makes it so by communicating strength to them. 2d, He gives strength not only to do but to suffer, to bear his cross as well as his yoke, and though all men forsake as they did Paul, yet every believer will have reason to say, The Lord stood with me and strengthened me. 3d, He will give strength to resist and overcome temptations, and also to mortify corruptions.

Psal. vii. "He gives his people strength to pray to him," 1st, By the Spirit helping them with strength of argument to plead their cause; and, 2dly, The Holy Spirit works faith in them to lay hold on and cleave to God; 3d, He bestows the strength of patience to wait on God for an answer of their prayers.

As Job was confident that God would strengthen him to plead his own cause, so also give liberty and freedom to do it, as appears in

*Ver. 7. There the righteous might dispute with him.* The *righteous* is not one that is legally righteous, but righteous in a Redeemer, or righteous as opposed to an hypocrite. In one sense all discoursing or reasoning upon a doubtful point is called disputing. A righteous man may plead with God freely, but he must not plead proudly, either boasting of his own righteousness, or blaming God as if he were unrighteous in his dealings with him.

The blind man, John ix. 31, said, "We know that God heareth not sinners," that is, such as plead for and please themselves in any sin; and David, Psal. lxxvi. 18, says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me;" but, to the righteous, that is, such as repent of, and turn from sin, the Lord saith "Come, let us reason together," let us dispute the point, "though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." Not that sin will ever change colour in the sight of God. It is the sinner that is changed, and when a penitent confesses his sin, and pleads the promise, God is ready to hear both his prayers and disputes.

The righteous have access to God, and dare tell him not only, 1st, Of their own wants; or, 2d, Of their wrongs from others; or, 3d, Of the uprightness of their hearts, and that he knows it is so; but, 4th, They dare tell him of all their sins which they have committed against him, and yet plead with him for mercy, as their right, on the footing of the atonement of Christ.

In the following clause he speaks in the first person: *So should I be for ever delivered from my judge.*

The word translated *for ever* signifies both *victory* and *eternity*. The same word in the original, signifies victory and eternity, because eternity gets the victory over all. Time is a great conqueror that eats up all things here below, but eternity is the greatest conqueror, it will eat out time itself.

We may take the word *judge*, which is here indefinitely proposed, universally, as if he had said, when once God has heard my cause I shall not need to fear what any can say or do against me as a judge.

Hence, observe, that God will for ever acquit the righteous. Nor shall any have power to condemn those whom he has once acquitted. Let this comfort the righteous when reproached and persecuted for well-doing, God will at last pass a just sentence on all his people who may have suffered much and long under unjust censures.

*Ver. 8. Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot per-*

ceive him. Behold. He speaks as of some strange thing, that God who is every where should be nowhere found by him.

*I go forward.* I look on the times which were before, and now are past. The word is used for the east, Gen. ii. 8. "The Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden or forward in Eden.

*But he is not there.* The original is, *and not he*, that is, he is not to be found; he does not manifest himself to me, that I might argue my case and reason my matters with him.

*And backward but I cannot perceive him.* Or, as the word strictly bears, *understand him*. I cannot find any mark of God's special presence with me in the view of the things that are to be done or to come to pass hereafter.

He pursues the enquiry.

*Ver. 9. I go on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him.* I look after God even in the time and place where he is doing great things, and yet I cannot behold him. In some things God works so evidently that a natural man cannot but say *the finger of God is here*. But in other things he works so secretly that even a spiritual man is not able to see the finger of God unless it be in general that his finger is every where.

*He hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him.* The word *hideth* signifies to wrap up with a covering. The word for right hand signifies also strength; so it may import that God hides himself even where he puts forth his strength and power. As it is impossible to see God with an eye of sense at any time, so he cannot always be seen with the understanding, no nor even by the eye of faith. God hides himself from the house of Jacob. He sometimes purposely withdrew from the most precious of his servants.

It is a strange description that Isaiah gives of God, chap. xlv. 15. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," which he does, 1st, When he appears in the habit of an enemy. Job complains oftener than once that God hid his favour from him. 2d, God sometimes hides his works but oftener the reason of his working; he hides the end and design of his works from his people. 3d, As God hides what himself doth, so he hides from his people what he would have them do.

Hence, observe, That a gracious soul will use every mean to find out the mind of God. Job went forward and backward, &c. travelling in the multitude of his thoughts upon his bed, leaving no stone unturned that he might get his cause determined. For though it is a truth that no man will seek after God till God first look after him, yet those whom God has once found will seek him earnestly while he appears to hide himself from them. Surely God has never touched the hearts of those lazy professors that would fain be saved but will go neither forward nor backward, &c. after Christ. Job spared no pains to find out God, and yet he could not speed at that time. God does not hide himself because he will not be found, but because he will be sought, therefore, let us follow the harder after him in all means, duties, ordinances, &c. He will not always hide himself. Lam. iii. 25. "The Lord is good to them that wait for him to the soul that seeketh him."

*Ver. 10. But he knoweth the way that I take.* Though I cannot find out God's way yet he finds out my ways. To know may be taken both as an act of the understanding and of affections.

*He knoweth*, that is, he fully perceives what my way is, and also that my way is pleasing to him, that is, my conversation among men. The Hebrew is, "He knows the way that is in me," therefore, I will leave my cause with him, assured of a right judgment, for, 1st, God is not only a judge, but an eye-witness of all my thoughts, &c. 2d, Job might intend this acknowledgment as a confutation of his friends. 3d, It is a strong assertion of his own innocence, seeing he could speak thus rejoicingly that God knew all his ways.

It is in vain for a man to attempt to hide his ways from him who sees all that is hidden. To try to cover our sin by denials or to extenuate them by excuses is adding sin to sin.

Hence observe, That it is the joy of the upright that God knows them and their ways, yea, the ways that are in them.

Jeremiah seems to rejoice, chap. xii. when he says, "But thou O Lord knowest me," &c. and Paul is satisfied when he says, "But we are made manifest unto God." When a godly man's ways are mistaken by men, it is a great comfort to reflect, that



God will not mistake. For, 1st. God will reckon his ways such as they are, without putting a false construction on them, as man is very ready to do. 2d. He is thereby assured that he shall be rewarded, Heb. vi. 10. For as we are said not to forget the word of God when we obey it, so God is said not to forget our works when he rewards them. It is sweet to a gracious soul to do good. But when God testifies of his works, it is much more satisfying, which he does even in this life, by "bringing forth their righteousness as the light," &c. Psal. xxxvii. and at the great day, God will proclaim them before the world. The praise of man is very pleasing unto man, but the praise of God is unspeakably more so, and this points out the difference between a sincere Christian and a hypocrite. For, 1st. He wishes to put his ways out of the sight of God. And 2d. He hopes that God does not know his ways. 3d. It is a terror for him to think that God knows his ways. They cannot say with Job, *When God (a righteous and impartial Judge) hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

Job had long before undergone a trial by prosperity and praise, and he was then under a deep trial by afflictions; but he had not yet come to his trial of examination, which he earnestly begged of God. All men shall come to such a trial in the great day. Many appear fair in holiness, and boast highly of their privileges, who, being tried by those who are spiritual, and have senses exercised to discard both good and evil, will be found "liars," Rev. ii. 2. Job was not afraid of a trial, for he says, *I shall come forth as gold.* That is, I shall come forth pure and in much perfection; I shall be precious, honourable, durable, &c. after I have been in the furnace of my sorest trials.

Hence note. 1st. That grace renders a man excellent and precious, more so than fine gold. 2d. That a good man loses nothing by being tried, yea, he gains by it even a good loss, his dross and corruptions. A good man is careful to search and try himself and his ways, and is very solicitous that God would not only try him and his works, but that he would lead him in his way everlasting. Eliphaz having sharply rebuked Job in the former chapter, in ver. 21, 22, he gave him suitable counsel, which he professes to have followed step by step in the two following verses. As 1st. He that takes hold of the steps of God, certainly acquaints himself with God. 2d. He that keeps the way of God and declines not from it, is at peace with God. 3d. He that goes not back from the command of his lips, receives the law at his mouth. 4th. He that esteems the word of God more than his necessary food, shews that he has laid up the word of God in his heart.

Ver. 11. *My foot hath held his steps;* or, upon his steps. By the foot, we are to understand the whole man, that is, I myself have held his steps, he means a resolute cleaving fast to him, it imports a constant walking with God. But what are those steps which his foot took hold of? they are, 1st. Those steps which God has appointed man to take. Or, 2d. Those steps shewn in his own-example, as if Job had said, I have imitated him in every thing imitable by man step by step, 1 Pet. ii. 21. Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. Christ is not only a principle of holiness in us, but also a pattern, according to which we ought to live. When we are patient and long suffering one to another, as God is towards us all, then we take hold of his steps. Though we cannot follow him with equal steps, yet we may follow the equity and holiness of his steps.

*His way have I kept and not declined.* The law of God is his way, because he is the author of it, and because he has prescribed it as a rule for men to walk by; so it is as if Job had said, I have obeyed God's commands. A godly man keeps God's way. 1st. In practice, by obedience and submission, and 2d. By boldly and steadily maintaining and defending the truth of God. Though the way be difficult, dangerous, &c. yet he keeps it, and to manifest his zeal, he adds,

*And not declined.* I have neither gone out of the way of God, nor been slothful in it. This is the language of a Christian indeed. As sin is the transgression of the law, so it is declining from God's way.

Ver. 12. *Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips.* Job proceeds with his negative profession, it is the same thing in other words. Yet this negative contains more than is expressed, and seems to say, I have stood to thy commandments constantly and resolutely. The word of God is the only rule, we must neither receive the prescriptions of others, nor devise rules to ourselves. We never dishonour God more, than when we leave his rule and follow our own, or yield to and observe the commands of men. We always fail in our measure while we measure God

by ourselves. Luke xvi. 15. "That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to the Lord."

*I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.* The Hebrew word signifies, 1st. To hide or conceal. 2d. To prize, value, and esteem. That which we esteem we hide, and the more we esteem a thing, the more carefully we hide it. Job having given two negatives as proofs of his integrity and holiness, now produces an affirmative as the spring of his constant obedience. Love is the spring of action, and esteem is the height of love. They who do not receive the love of the truth, quickly turn from it to believe a lie. And as it is a sin not to love the truth, so it is often punished with another—to be given up to embrace error. Though much truth may be taken into the understanding, yet unless we take it into our affections also, we cannot hold it long. It is love that holds the heart and the word together. No man willingly obeys the law which he does not love. Whatever God has said, we should love, because he has said it. And a reverential esteem of the word of God, is the best means of securing obedience to it. Job's friends did not know how to reconcile the innocence of an afflicted man with the justice of God in afflicting him. But Job knew how to maintain and assert his own integrity, and yet acquit the justice of God in laying sufferings upon him. He confesses he hath a right to do whatever he pleases to do.

*Ver. 13. But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doth.* In these words we have an excellent defence made by Job to vindicate the Lord's sharp dealings with him from the least suspicion of injustice, and to make the assertion of his own afflicted innocence accord with a believing reverence of the righteousness of God, and so these words of his are the breathings of a very gracious spirit, teaching us far better than his friends had done how to answer for God in the saddest dispensations towards man.

The Lord can do what he will, but he will do nothing but what is good, he will wrong no man, no not the worst of men. It is impossible that he should desire to do any thing but what is right. This consideration administers much comfort to the saints. But let the wicked tremble before the Lord, and be sore afraid at the remembrance of his unchangeableness. When men in power have nothing but their will to guide them, there is reason to fear oppression and tyranny, for the will of man is selfish and revengeful. And who would not fear to be under that power which has no limits but a corrupt will? But who would fear to be under the power of God, seeing he wills nothing but what is just and good.

Hence learn from the whole, 1st. That as God is sovereign in the exercise of power, so he is unchangeable. 2d. That as God is unchangeable in himself, so none can persuade or prevent him from doing what he desires. He will do all his pleasure. 4th. It is as easy with God to do any thing as it is for him to desire to do any thing. Job having spoken of God as unchangeable, and Almighty in power, he now speaks in reference to his personal experience, and brings down the general proposition to his own particular case.

*Ver. 14. He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him.* All the works of God in time are his own appointing, especially the afflictions of his people, Micah vi. 9. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city—hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." As public and national, so personal rods are appointed, and as often as we feel their smart, we should consider their appointment. The apostle, 1 Thes. iii. 3. says, "That no man should be moved by these afflictions," that is, that we should neither be impatient under, nor murmur at them. Why? "for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." That afflictions as to the matter, the measure, the season, and continuance of them are under a divine appointment, which truth believed is enough to dispel every murmur, and lead to patient and quiet submission, and the people of God should be thankful that he orders every event.

*And many such things are with him.* Some expound this of the parallel dealings of God with other persons. Others explain it, of the things that Job had already suffered; or in reference to the power of God, He can do many such things, and in reference to Job himself, as if confessing many sins are with me, therefore more sorrows may await me. I need more humbling and refining, and so another furnace may be heating for me. In this view Job seems to justify God in all that he had laid upon him, and that he was ready to submit to farther trials, though it made him fear and tremble, as in the next verse.

Hence observe, That God has a variety of ways to exercise and chasten his people, therefore, when one affliction is over, they need not be secure, for another may be at hand; yet he does not afflict willingly. It is only if "need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

*Ver. 15. Therefore am I troubled at his presence, when I consider I am afraid of him.* I am troubled with the feeling of my present calamities, and also with the fear of future and greater sufferings.

*When I consider my own weakness and the majesty and greatness of God, then I am afraid.*

Hence observe, That the majesty and power of God duly considered, are terrible even to his own people. What is the reason that many fear not God nor tremble at his presence? It is because they do not consider; their confidence proceeds from ignorance. There are none so bold as those who are thus blind. When one said to a godly man on his death-bed, "Sir, why are you thus full of fear and trembling? seeing you have known God and been so long acquainted with him." "O," saith he, "if I knew God more, I should tremble more." If we did duly consider our distance from God as creatures, much more as sinners, and also how infinitely holy he is, we should always serve him with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Asaph says, I remembered God, that is, I set him fully before my mind, *I was troubled*, and when Isaiah saw his glory contrasted with his own vileness, he cried out, "Woe is me," &c. and even Moses was made to say at Sinai, "I exceedingly fear and quake." And if this was the situation of these holy men, what shall become of all who forget God, and live without duly considering his awful majesty? They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. The next verse is nearly of the same sense with the former, and further shews why he was afraid, and the effect of God's dealings with him.

*Ver. 16. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me.* The word rendered, *to make soft*, signifies the abating of the strength of the heart. We are not to understand by a soft heart here, a penitent patient heart, but a heart weakened and laid low through the burden of affliction. As he abhorred a hardness of heart to resist the hand of God, so now he feared that he was rendered unable to bear it with that courage and cheerfulness which he desired, and he gives this as a reason why he was afraid, or (as Broughton translates) *shrinks* at the prospect or any new or additional trial.

Wicked men labour to stand it out against God, like Pharaoh, who refused to yield under a variety of judgments, till at last God made his heart soft in one sense, though he hardened it in another. But saints do what in them lies to bear up under their afflictions in submission to the will of God. Our Lord, when under his terrible sufferings, Psal. xxii. is represented as saying, "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels," and whose heart will not melt and grow soft when God lays his hand heavy and long upon him? Therefore God, in condescension to the weakness of man, Isa. lvii. 16. says, "I will not contend for ever." Why, what is the reason? "lest the spirit should fail before me," &c. That is, as in the text, their heart would become soft, or their spirit, strength, faith, and patience, would fail.

*And the Almighty troubleth me.* That is, the remembrance of him troubles me, for my soul is so overwhelmed already, that I am not able to bear an increase of sorrows.

Job gives another reason of his being thus troubled at the presence of God.

*Ver. 17. Because I was not cut off before the darkness.* Death itself is darkness, and yet Job speaks of being cut off or dying before the darkness, or before this trouble came; thus Job gives vent to his passion again, as he had done at chap. iii. Some would rather be taken out of this world than endure the troubles of it. God promised to good Josiah that he should be cut off before the darkness. It may be desirable to get out of this world before desolating judgments commence; but it is one thing to have a promise from God that the cloud shall not break in our time, and quite another thing to be so afraid of what is to take place in the providence of God as to wish to die to get rid of it. It describes an unwillingness to suffer either from or for God, and a distrust of his presence and support under the sufferings he is pleased to send upon us.

*Neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.* I do not only live in troubles, but I am always looking troubles in the face. This still imports that Job had not that fulness of submission to the dispensations of God as was his duty, and for this Elihu

reproves him; yea God himself rebuked him, because he took upon him so often to give the rule, instead of quietly acquiescing in the divine appointment as he ought to have done.

One renders, "Because he hath not cut me off through darkness, but hid darkness from my face;" and he gives the meaning thus: The reason why I am so much troubled is, because I have not had some secret or private affliction, but my pitiful situation is known to all, they see that the hand of God is gone forth against me.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

This chapter contains the second part of Job's answer to Eliphaz, in which he states a proposition, (ver. 1.) which he confirms by enumerating many gross sins against man, and also more immediately against God, and yet the wicked man passes unpunished; and then in the last verse affirms what he had said before, and challenges all men to disprove it.

*Ver. 1. Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?* that is, that times are clearly and fully known to the Almighty. But they that know God do not know his days, therefore God keeps his days close to himself. Eliphaz, (chap. xxii. 12—14.) supposes that Job doubted the providence of God, and (ver. 15.) asks, "Hast thou marked the old way?" &c. Job replies here, I do not deny the providence of God, but I deny that all the ways of God's dealings with wicked men are obvious to the eye of godly men; and seeing God knows all times, shew me a reason if you can why the way of God's judgments are so hid from them that know him. The word *they* may refer to all good men, but especially such as maintain daily intimacy with him, such only may be said to know him. No ungodly man knows him truly and practically.

As *times* in the former part of the verse, so *days* in the latter part means the things done in those days. Broughton renders, "None that know him see his ways." Not only are times perfectly known to God, but firmly fixed and most wisely disposed of by him. Men may know that which they have no power to dispose of; but the knowledge of God and his power are parallel through all times and things. It is said, Psal. xxv. 14. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." There is a secret in the plainest truths and doctrines of the word both in law and gospel; and many know the doctrine who know not the secret, that is, the power and efficacy, the sweetness or comfort of the doctrine.

There are three things that chiefly exercise the patience of the saints, 1st, The greatness of their own troubles. 2d, God's delaying to deliver them out of their troubles. 3d, The long prosperity of wicked men and threatened punishment delayed. God gives the graces of his servants present work, and he purposely forbears to put forth his power to exercise their patience.

When Habakkuk says, "The just shall live by faith," he speaks in reference to the delaying of judgments upon the enemies of the church, as appears from chap. i. 12, 13. "O Lord thou hast ordained them (namely the Chaldean empire) for judgment;" and when proud men find that God is deferring his threatened judgments they are apt to call God a liar, and fancy that either he does not mean, or is unable to do what he has said. But the saints will not entertain uncomely thoughts of God; though "they that know him see not his days" with an eye of sense, yet they see them by faith, and by that faith they live. So the reason why the godly see not his days, his judgment days, as Eliphaz had before asserted, is not because God is not able, or bears any good will to the wicked, that he does not bring a day of vengeance upon them, but to exercise the faith and patience of his people.

Job proceeds to describe wicked men in several acts of wickedness. They do as much mischief as they can, and have as much outward prosperity as they could desire.

*Ver. 2. Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof.* Landmarks are set up for the distinction or division of lands, that every proprietor may know his own; they were sacred things that ought not to be touched. But the word here signifies both to touch and take, and so take is violently to carry away, Zech. i. 6. "Did not my word take hold of your fathers?" That is, did it not seize upon them, yea, remove them out of the land of the living. It is said, "Blessed are the peace-makers," but more blessed are the peace-preservers. It is good to heal breaches among brethren, but it is better where there are none.

Therefore learn, That to remove landmarks which are the means of preserving peace among men in the enjoyment of their rights, is very sinful, Deut. xxvii. 17. "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's land-mark, and all the people shall say, Amen." A curse contains all penalties, and Amen seals them upon the person of the offender.

Having stolen land, they proceed to take flocks of cattle violently. I will have it, saith he, and if he be strong enough, have it he will. Amos iii. 10. "They know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces." It is sad for a people when princes know not to do right, especially when it is not ignorance of the law, but a wilful perversion of the law, they have no mind to do right; and the next clause tells us what they do, "They store up robbery and violence in their palaces; that is, all their furniture and riches are obtained by robbery and violence. The Lord therefore threatens such, (Ezek. vii. 11.) that they shall be scourged with violence, "Violence rises up into a rod," &c. 1st, As a branch or root shoots forth from the stock of a tree, all oppression and violence is both branch and fruit, the produce of a wicked heart. 2d, They who have afflicted others by violence, often find violence turned into a rod to afflict themselves.

*And feed thereof.* That is, when they have taken flocks violently away, they sit down quietly and feed on them; this is mentioned not only as an additional sin, but to shew their deliberate perseverance and delight in sin. They both feed upon, and feed the flocks which they have taken from others, either by fraud or violence.

Hence learn, That God leaves some wicked men in a long and quiet possession of what they have obtained unjustly.

*Ver. 3. They take away the ass of the fatherless; they take the widow's ox for a pledge.* In the former verse there is no mention made of the persons from whom the flocks were taken. The emphasis and aggravation of the sin is here laid upon the person,—it was the ass, the only ass, of the *fatherless*, and the only means of his support. How cruel and covetous are they who will not spare the poor, not even poor orphans. As a further instance of grievous oppression, the widow's ox is taken for a pledge. But the ox being used for labour should not be taken; or if taken, should be restored before the sun goes down, Exod. xxii. 26, 27. They who are inflamed with covetousness are greedy to find out and pursue all advantages to enrich themselves though it ruin the poor. To sin even for the greatest gain is a losing concern; what, then, must it be to ruin the widow and fatherless for a trifling profit?

"The poor and him that hath no helper," is put together, Psal. lxxii. 12. Therefore it must be very sinful to injure them, because they are unable to resist, and they cannot easily procure the help of others. Besides, God who provides for all, has taken upon himself to provide for the widow and fatherless by name, and this should be a great encouragement to help the godly poor; for those who do so are the means of fulfilling the promise of God to them, whereas those who neglect to aid them when they have a call to it and ability for it, do what they can to make void the promise of God. It is no wonder then that the apostle James places all religion as to practice in the visitation of the widow and fatherless in their affliction.

The sin of these oppressors is not yet full; see more and greater abominations.

*Ver. 4. They turn the needy out of the way; the poor of the earth hide themselves together.* The word translated needy signifies to *desire*, and whosoever desires much either hath many wants, or is not satisfied with his fulness. The wicked turn the needy out of the way, either by their evil examples, or by threatenings and persecutions. The sinful practices of men in power lead their inferiors into the same sins. When rich men oppress the poor, they drive them either to beg or steal.

Or to *turn the needy out of the way*, is to deprive them of that justice or right which is due to them, which accords with what is said before, *they drive away the ass of the fatherless*. Or we may expound it as an argument of the extreme pride and oppression of these sons of violence, who made the poor keep out of their sight for fear of them, lest as they had already spoiled them of their estates, they should abuse their persons, and make them slaves. So *the poor of the earth hide themselves together*. The word for *poor* is not only one poor in purse, but poor in spirit, and so it is translated, Zeph. ii. 3. "Seek the Lord, ye meek of the earth." The word *together* may be rendered alike, that is, the godly as well as others, they have often had experience of the cruelty of these Nimrods, and have often to escape these merciless tyrants, wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, preferring the society of wild beasts to that of beastly men.

Thus we have an enumeration of violence upon lands, cattle, and persons, observed

by Job, and yet these men prospering in their wickedness. Prov. xxviii. 28. "When the wicked rise," that is, in power and authority, "men hide themselves," that is, poor and godly men, "but when they perish the righteous increase," that is, the righteous men who before hid themselves now appear. Then Psal. xii. 5. is fulfilled, "For the oppression of the poor, and for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, and set him in safety," &c.

Job now shews the progress of these men in wickedness, even to admiration, whom God yet spared.

*Ver. 5. Behold as wild asses in the desert they go forth to their work, rising betimes for a prey; the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children.* The particle of likeness *as* is not in the Hebrew, nor is the word *asses* expressed, and therefore it reads strictly, Behold the wild in the wilderness go forth to their work. The word *asses* is added because they are extremely wild. It appears to be a continued series of the practices of wicked men, for it is said they rise *betimes for a prey*, which intimates their activity and diligence in doing mischief. It seems strange to speak of food in a wilderness or desert; but those who live by rapine will live anywhere. Every man's property is theirs if they can get at it. They find a harvest in the wilderness. They either rob for their children, or the children assist in their depredations. Wicked men delight in sin, and often discover their activity, diligence, and industry, in deceiving and injuring their neighbours, and like the wild ass, are lawless, violent, and uncontrollable.

*Ver. 6. They reap every one his corn in the field, and they gather the vintage of the wicked.* The meaning is, they reap the corn which does not belong to them. The Septuagint gives the sense expressly, *They mow or reap the ground or field which is not theirs.*

Job imprecates this punishment upon himself if he were guilty of what his friends had charged him with, chap. xxxi. 8. "Then let one sow and let another eat;" and Isaiah threatens, chap. i. 17. "Your land strangers devour it in your presence." It is the misery of some that what they have sown is reaped by others, and to deprive others of what they have sown is very wicked. Wicked men spare neither good nor bad, friend nor foe, they spoil those that are as bad as themselves. *They gather the vintage of the wicked.* Or wicked men often oppress the innocent on pretence of their wickedness, as Jezebel did Naboth, to obtain his vineyard. The margin reads *the wicked gather the vintage.* They took away the wine as well as the corn; and it is no wonder they take away what is not their own; for a wicked man is ready for any sin. The vile person will speak villany, and act villainously too.

*Ver. 7. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold.* This farther discovers the cruelty of these tyrants. They care not what the poor suffer; whether they have a lodging-place, or clothes to cover them, gives them no concern. The word signifies to cover as with a veil, or with a garment. It is used Psal. xxxii. 1. for the pardon of sin, "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered." When we speak of the utmost cruelty of man to man, we say, (proverbially), He has not left him so much as a shirt to his back. In Micah iii. 3. it is said, They eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them.

The Septuagint reads, *They take away the covering of their soul*, by which we are to understand that which is to a man as his life. As a man destitute of covering is exposed to shame, so in the cold he feels pain, and is in danger of dying. But as to the covering of his soul, no tyrant can deprive him of it. But what becomes of the poor, when left so destitute and forlorn? we are informed,

*Ver. 8. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.* This is the only place where the word rendered *wet* is found in the Old Testament. It is to be soaked with the showers which they meet with on the mountains.

*They embrace the rock.* That is, they are glad of it. They had houses before, but now they seek shelter in the holes and clefts of the rock.

Hence observe, that great afflictions make the smallest comforts acceptable. Lam. iv. 5. "They who were brought up in scarlet embrace a dunghill." Heb. xxii. 36. "They wandered in deserts," &c. They were glad to live among the wild beasts, when they could not live quietly among men. In times of plenty and peace we are not duly thankful for goodly houses, full tables, &c.; but hunger will make a man glad of a little coarse fare. Christ is exhibited as a rock, to be embraced in our best

days, as the best shelter, yea, as our only shelter, in every storm and time of trouble; yea such as do not rejoice in him in preference to all the world, neither see his excellency nor suitableness to their need. What is to be expected from those whose tender mercies are cruel? We have seen much of the cruelty of oppressors as opposite to justice, and now we shall see they are void of humanity.

*Ver. 9. They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor.*

*They,* That is, the oppressors before spoken of, *pluck the fatherless from the breast.* The word notes an act of violence, they lay violent hands upon the fatherless. This proceeds from covetousness, they either cause the child to be weaned before a proper time, that the mother may give them more labour, or they sell the child for gain.

Others read the text, *They pluck from the fatherless that which was left after the prey or destruction, for the word translated breast, is derived from a root, which signifies to "destroy or lay waste;"* so the sense is given thus—*They take away from the fatherless even that poor pittance which was left after they had taken away what was their father's.*

*And take a pledge of the poor,*—others read, *They take that which is upon the poor for a pledge.* A third reads, *They take the poor for a pledge.*

Hence observe, That covetousness knows no bounds, 1 Tim. vi. 10. "The love of money is the root of all evil," that is, that every sin may grow from covetousness, and therefore the apostle adds, "That while some have coveted after they have erred from the faith." Covetousness is the root of heresy, both in regard of practice and doctrine. They have both acted and believed against the rule of faith for filthy lucre, and so have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Covetousness runs us in to all evil, it pierces the poor, the widow, and fatherless, with many sorrows, it does not spare even its own master or rather slave. But pierces him through likewise with many more and much worse sorrows.

*Ver. 10. They cause him to go naked without clothing, and take away the sheaf from the hungry.* The word *him* is not expressed in the Hebrew, and so implies, that they were ready to exercise the same inhumanity upon every one that came into their power, it may refer to those taken for slaves, whom they command to labour and yet give them no clothing; and some translate the last clause, *They take away the ears of corn, they take away the gleanings from them.* They either will not suffer the poor to glean after their reapers, or if they have gleaned a few ears of corn, they take all away from them. Again, by the *sheaf* which is taken away, we may understand that small quantity which a poor man has of his own growing; or the word translated *sheaf*, signifies an omer, which contains a quantity for a day's provision. Our Saviour teaches us to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread,* or the bread of our necessity, and when the poor man has only enough for a day, these oppressors took it away. There is yet another reading, *And those that carry their sheaves they make to go away hungry.* And this accords well with

*Ver. 11. Which make oil within their walls, and tread their wine-presses, and suffer thirst.* Those who do their work are both hungry and thirsty, or they sent them away without their wages, which is a sin that cries for vengeance,—against which Jeremiah thunders out a threatening, chap. xxii. 13. "Wo to him that builds his house by unrighteousness, that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work." As some build houses and live in splendour with the money unjustly obtained from the rich; so they defraud the labourers, and do not give them what their services deserved, James v. 4. "Behold the hire of the labourers," &c. which is as if he had said, the Lord takes notice how ye have wronged them, and he will put forth his power to avenge their quarrel. This is that special oppression which Job intends both to discover and reprove, the inconsiderateness and cruelty of the rich towards the labouring man, which is done not only by denying a reward altogether; but this sin is committed, 1st. When the labourer does not receive a suitable compensation for his work, by which he is forced to work in such a manner, or for such a number of hours in a day, as is quite improper for a human being, an immortal creature. 2d. When the labourer is defrauded of part of his agreement by unjust cavils. 3d. By delaying to pay the labourer; for suppose all is paid at last, yet to make him wait long for what is his due, is reckoned oppression, Deut. xxiv. The apostle, 2 Thes. says, "If any will not work, neither should he eat." Now, as those that do not work have no right to eat, so they who do work, should eat, otherwise they are deprived of their right. Wo be to those who eat and work not in some kind or other, and

we be to those who compel, or but call upon any to labour for them and do not punctually and sufficiently reward them, such oppression makes them groan, as,

*Ver. 12. Men groan out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out.* This is the sad effects of oppression; it is a sin that fills both city and country. To do so in the city before all men, shews that they had lost their modesty as well as their honesty, and that they were resolved to avow it; the soul is said to cry out, to shew the greatness and dolefulness of it. The word *groan* is that which is caused by the greatest hurt, and comes from the very bottom of the heart.

The word translated *wounded*, signifies profane and polluted; idol worshippers are so called, because they are polluted as wounded men with blood, and hence it is also used as a word of abomination. "The Lord forbid," said David, 1 Sam. xxiv. 6. and "far be it from me," said Joab, 2 Sam. xx. 20.; in both which places, the actions abominated had the defilement of blood in them; and when the Jews uttered this word, they usually rent their garments, shewing their abhorrence at blasphemy, &c. When we hear of the oppressor doing all these wickednesses, surely we may expect that God would immediately help and heal the wounded, and wound him that had made them cry, as Psal. xii. 5. "For the oppression of the poor," &c. "now will I arise," &c. But we hear no such thing, for Job adds,

*Yet, or notwithstanding of all their oppressions, God layeth not folly to them,* or God does not charge folly upon them; that is, 1st, He does not presently call them to an account. 2d. He does not presently punish them for their oppressions. To lay folly to a man, is not only to call him to answer for what he has done, but to punish him as having done foolishly. 3d. God does not immediately stop evil men in their work. Jeremiah inquires, chap. xii. 1. "Why doth the way of the wicked prosper?" &c. as if he had said, why dost thou not send a prohibition and stop the proceedings of wicked and treacherous men. 4th. It may be turned into the affirmative: God lets them go on as if they had done wisely, justly, and discreetly.

Hence observe, That God suffers oppressors to go on long before he punishes them, and he suffers the oppressed to cry long before he relieves them. God often appears to wink while the wicked sin, and he as often seems to be asleep while the righteous suffer. While God assures his people that he will deliver them, Luke xviii. yet he more than intimates that it may be a very long time before he do it: "Though he bear long with him;" that is, though he exercise much patience to those who oppress his elect; yea, and also much patience to his elect in regard of their doubts and despondencies about his coming to avenge and help them against these tyrants.

Job seems now to sum up the character of those oppressors, in

*Ver. 13. They are of those that rebel against the light.* This implies the presence of the light with them, and their contempt of it. The light of truth is clothed with authority; the truths of God have a sovereignty over man. We cannot be said to rebel against any thing that has no authority over us. The light of heavenly truth is invested with the power of a rule over the hearts and lives of men, and therefore not to receive it, especially to resist it, is rebellion. The word has the power of a judge. It gives both law and judgment. "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, (it is rejecting Christ himself not to receive his words, and whoever rejecteth Christ) hath one that judgeth him,"—"the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." It is now the rule by which we must live to Christ, and by the same rule we shall be judged by Christ.

As hypocrites love the light and seek the applause of men, so the profane shun the light and are afraid that men should know their wickedness. That God sees them not is their hope, that men may not see them is their care, and that they may not see themselves is their desire. They are unwilling to know their duty, lest their consciences upbraid them for not doing it as well as for doing that which is sinful. Men will have fellowship with the works of darkness, even while their eyes are dazzled with the light, while their hearts are not changed by it.

It is very sinful not to love and highly value the light of divine truth, and very dangerous to neglect to obey and submit to it; but to rebel against it is wickedness in perfection. They who rebel against the light of knowledge cannot enjoy the light of comfort, and it is no wonder that it said of them, *they know not the way thereof nor abide in the paths thereof.*

They know not the truth because they would not, and we may be said not to know



that in which we neither delight, approve, nor practise, and so it is no marvel if *we abide not in the paths thereof*; and this is a farther description of a wicked man, that though they sometimes do that which the light directs them to, yet they abide not in it, because they neither love nor approve of the truth.

The reason why the wicked abide in the paths of sin is because they love and delight in them; some carnal aim of interest or credit tempts a man to do a good action, but a wicked man does not approve what he has done. True holiness does not begin at action but with affection.

No bond but that of love to God can make us always persevere in acts of obedience, and as the want of this love is the very principle and seed of backsliding, so in 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, it is given as a reason why God gives men up to strong delusion, &c. because they received not the love of the truth. What does not begin in our affections will not abide long in our actions. It is the proper line of a godly man to move in the ways of godliness, and he never moves out of it wholly. When through the power of corruption and temptation he goes astray, he repents and returns into the way again; he cannot abide long, much less always in the paths of darkness. But it is a proof of the naughtiness of a man's heart and state, that though he now and then hits upon doing a good thing, yet he abides not in the paths of light.

*Ver. 14. The murderer rising with the light, killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief.* This sin is commonly committed either in malice against the person, or to obtain something that belongs to him. But why does he kill the *poor and needy*? It may be either because they admonish or reprove him, or they give information or witness against him; and whatever interposes between him and his lust he will remove it though it should be to murder his fellow-creature.

*In the night is as a thief*, that is, as a thief in the night is close and secret in stealing, so is the murderer in killing. Let none be slothful in doing good but redeem time by a diligent improvement of every moment as it passes, seeing the murderer, and, indeed, every sort of wicked doers are so watchful, diligent, and persevering in doing mischief.

*Ver. 15. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight.* The word also refers to the murderer, which implies that both murderer and adulterer are equally desirous of privacy.

The *eye* is said to wait because the eye has so great a share in this sin. 2 Pet. ii. 14. "Having their eyes full of adultery, or full of an adulteress." They are as impudent as they are unclean, discovering the adultery of their hearts at their eyes. Even a good man's eye may meet with a vain object, but his eye doth not go out to seek or wait for it. His eye waits to receive good, but the waiting eye of the adulterer intimates that he is very intent upon his object, that he does not sin by a sudden glance of his eye, he sins deliberately, watching, and studious about his wickedness. He is very careful to hit the proper season for accomplishing his evil purpose. But why is he so anxious for the twilight? It as he says, *no eye shall see me*. That may be, 1st, That none of my neighbours shall be able to notice me. 2d, That he may escape the eye or knowledge of the magistrate who is appointed to oversee the manners of the people over whom he is placed, and to be a terror, yea, a minister of vengeance to them that do evil; and if the eye of the magistrate or officers do not see me, I shall escape punishment. 3d, As he hopes to escape the eye of those that are called gods on earth, so he presumptuously supposes he shall be hid from the eye of the God of heaven.

Hence, observe, That it is not the act of sin, but the discovery of it, that a wicked man fears.

But in order that none may know though he should be seen, it is added, *he disguiseth his face*. Heb. "He setteth his face into a secret," he muffles himself, he changes his habit, &c. which teaches us, that when a man does evil he never thinks he is safe or secret enough, he fears the twilight is too light for him, and therefore he puts his face into artificial darkness.

*Ver. 16. In the dark they dig through houses which they have marked for themselves in the day time; they knew not the light.* Some break into houses for want, others for covetousness to steal, and some to kill and destroy; *they dig through houses*, they mark them in the day, they carefully notice those which they may with the most ease and with the prospect of most advantage, break into in the night, they *mark it for themselves* as if it were their own, or to prevent their mistaking it in the dark. It is

added, *they know not the light*, that is, they neither desire nor love the approach of light, it does not suit their purpose, in which sense to *know* is often used in Scripture, Nah. i. 7. "The Lord knoweth the soul that trusteth in him." He also knows those who do not trust in him, but not in the way of loving and approving of them as he does the soul that loves and confides in him.

*Ver. 17. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death; if one know them they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.* This is an exposition of the former verse. The Hebraism, *shadow of death*, imports, that these wicked men did fear the morning as much as death itself, lest it should prevent their finishing their wicked work, or being discerned, they would be exposed to punishment.

Hence observe, That sin not only makes the natural light a terror, but the light of divine truth troublesome and offensive. The most valuable and pleasant things are occasions of pain and sorrow to transgressors. Nothing is good to us till we are made good; nor can any thing please us except sin, or that which we use sinfully, till we are made to find pleasure in God, by being brought out of darkness into light.

*If one, that is, if any one know them*, take notice of them, or take notice of their wickedness, *they are in the terror of the shadow of death*, that is, they are troubled like them who are both unwilling and afraid to die when death overshadows them. Their delight in darkness, both outward and inward, plainly shows that they know their deeds are evil. John iii. 20. "Every one that doth evil hateth the light," &c. "He that doth truth," (who acts according to the truth), "cometh to the light," he cares not who sees him. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart." This is a proof that there is a God to condemn, because the heart condemns. In 2 Thess. iii. 2. "Unreasonable and wicked men" are very properly joined together, "for all men have not faith." Faith is above but not opposite to reason; but wickedness is at once quite opposite to reason as well as below it. It is most unreasonable to disregard the rule that God has given us to obey.

*Ver. 18. He is swift as the waters.* The word rendered *swift* signifies also light; so the best that can be said of a transgressor of the divine law, however great his wealth or fame, is, that he is a light thing upon the face of the water.

David speaking of them who trust in oppression and become vain in robbery, says, "They are lighter than vanity."

This similitude intimates that evil men are moved by temptations to sin, as easily as water, or the lightest froth upon the water, is moved by the wind. It also implies activity and even the fierceness of a wicked man's spirit in attaining his object. Others understand the words as a description of the instability of a wicked man in his temper and conduct, he that is a slave to his lusts, is driven before the wind of every temptation, and while they run on in sin they are procuring a curse to themselves.

For it is added, *their portion is cursed in the earth*. Job changes to the plural number, intimating that however many are swift to sin, not one of them shall be able to outrun the curse.

The word *portion* signifies any thing that falls to a man of right, or is bestowed on him for his lot or share.

*Is cursed in the earth*, that is, in all their worldly concerns, and as they have nothing beyond the earth, therefore, all that they have is cursed.

Hence, observe, "That sin brings a curse with it." But it may be objected, all men sin, and yet many have not the appearance of a curse upon them? I answer, 1st, This assertion is to be limited to unbelievers. 2d, Though the curse do not appear visible, yet all ungodly men are under a curse. The cross of a godly man is like the prosperity of a wicked man; the former has an outward cross but a blessing at the bottom, the latter has outward prosperity yet it is under a curse, and though not actually infected, it will be bitterness in the end.

As "light is sown for the righteous," Psal. xcvi. 11. that is, they shall have a crop of good things, though, like the seed sown, it may lay long under the clods, so darkness may be said to be sown for the wicked, and the less they perceive it it will spring up the more to their confusion. To say peace and safety, often precedes sudden destruction.

Job gives a proof that their portion is cursed in the earth, for *He beholdeth not the way of the vineyards*, that is, he shall not taste of or enjoy any good thing, he shall dwell no more in a fruitful and pleasant land. It is farther confirmed,

*Ver. 19. Drought and heat consume the snow waters; so doth the grave those which*

*have sinned.* Some read, "In the drought and heat they rob, and in the snow water," that is, they rob and spoil in all the seasons of the year, they never gave over, "they sin to the grave."

Hence observe, That a wicked man will break through difficulties and dangers to obtain his booty. We may say of every bold and presumptuous sinner, that he sins in heat and cold. The threatenings have wrath and death in them, yet he sins in the face of them, and upon the matter dares them to do their worst. Corruption will be working even where grace is, but where there is no fear of God nothing works but corruption.

*Drought* notes the dryness of the earth, and is often put for dry earth.

*And heat*,—the original signifies both to be hot and to be black.

*Consume*,—that is, the dry earth and heat drink in the snow when melted into water.

*So doth the grave those that have sinned.* The word for grave signifies also Hell, which is an everlasting death, consumes those that have sinned. Some sin in such a manner and to such a degree that they are spoken of as if they only had sinned. Luke vii. 37. "And behold a woman in the city who was a sinner." So, Luke xix. 7. As "they who are born of God do not commit sin," 1 John iii. 9. That is, their sinning is no sinning in comparison of others. Those who sin as if none did sin but them, are so subject to death as if none were subject to it but them.

The Psalmist, Psal. xlix. says of wicked worldly men, "Their beauty shall consume in the grave," intimating that all their beauty and blessedness ends in the grave.

Some read, As the earth and heat consume the snow waters, so hell consumes those that have sinned. All that sin and turn not shall be turned into hell.

*Ver. 20. The womb shall forget him*, that is, those who loved him most tenderly and affectionately *shall forget him*, he shall be as if he had never been born; he shall be spoken of with contempt and scorn.

*The worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.* As he took the pleasure in sinning, so the worms shall have a sweet morsel of him, and he shall never be mentioned with honour.

It was a custom of the Jews that when any one acted wickedly his name was razed out of the records as unworthy to be remembered among the people of God, to which there seems to be an allusion, Isa. iv. 3. and Ezek. xiii. 9.; and it is probable that Moses, Exod. xxxii. 32. and Paul, Rom. ix. 3. referred to the same thing, that is, to be as a person separated or excommunicated from the society or communion of the faithful, and so have their name blotted out of the church records.

That man who obstinately perseveres in sin is not only wicked but wickedness itself, which shall be broken, 1st, As a barren tree, Luke xiii. 7. "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground." 2d, As a tree that bears bitter poisonous fruit. 3d, As a tree rent and shivered, and so rendered not only useless, but unsightly, and so wicked men shall be destroyed.

*Ver. 21. He evil-entreateth the barren that beareth not, and doth not good to the widow.* The word *barren* here may refer to any one in a sad afflicted condition, as widow and fatherless often refers to any that are in a low helpless state. Not to assist and comfort the afflicted is sinful; what must it then be to upbraid them with their infirmities and defects? And not to do good to the widow carries an affirmative in it, he vexes or injures the widow. For as negative commandments always contain the affirmative, so negative practices usually imply the affirmative; and while we neglect to do good we may be said to be active in doing evil. The threatening, Exod. xx. 7. "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless," is, he will hold him very guilty and punish him accordingly; and when it is said, Psal. li. 17, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise;" that is, thou wilt accept and delight in a broken heart. Not to do what we are enjoined, is as bad as to do what we are forbidden.

*Ver. 22. He draweth the mighty by his power.* That is, he allures them to his side by the power of persuasion; or by force and violence he overcomes them, even the *mighty* who are both powerful and courageous.

When magistrates are suffered to oppress the weak and helpless, they will soon tyrannize over all sorts of men either by force or stratagem; and when by fair promises which are made only to ensnare and delude, they rise to great power and authority, no good man has any security for his life; yea, all men are in danger when wicked men are in power.

*He riseth up and no man is sure of life.* When he advances in power in order to

perpetuate his greatness, he rises up as an enemy against all who oppose or stand in his way, and then "no man is sure of his lives;" (the Heb. is plural,) if he had an hundred lives he could be sure of none of them when such a man rises up.

Others expound according to a marginal reading, *He trusteth not his own life*; that is, he does not think himself safe, he fears his nearest friends are his enemies, and suspects they are plotting against him. How uneasy is the life of that man whose conscience tells him that his conduct is such that every man must hate and wish to be rid of him.

The great design and end of all power is for *edification*, not for *destruction*; the great business of the magistrate is to defend and build up. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn," Prov. xxix. 2. And how can they but mourn who have neither property, liberty, life, nor any thing sure to them but oppression and sorrow?

Job farther describes the situation of wicked men in their prosperity.

*Ver. 23. Though it be given him to be in safety wherein he trusteth, yet his eyes are upon their ways.* Though he rise up and put down all that oppose him and trust in his safety, and neither sees nor suspects danger, he rests securely on his outward prosperity, and so makes his safety his god. Yet it is God only that gives him safety; he trusts in the safety that God gives, not in God who giveth it. Carnal men lose God in the creature; whatever we place our trust in, that we put in the place of God.

It is given as a description of worldly men, Psal. xlix. "They that rest in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches." Who they are is not expressed, because every one must know what sort of men they are who trust in their wealth; that is, who say all shall be well with them because of their riches. He rests in his safety not only as being out of danger, but above it.

*Yet his eyes are upon their ways.* Do not think that God takes no notice of their sinful courses, because he gives them to be in safety, and in such safety that they trust upon it, for I tell you the eyes of God are upon their ways, 1st, To observe what they do. 2d, To prosper and bless them in what they do well. 3d, To punish and chastise them for what they do amiss.

Hab. i. 12, 13, is as if the prophet had said, I know thou beholdest all the evil that is in the world, and that thou canst not look upon it with approbation; why then dost thou look upon it patiently? Others read, If any man giveth him to be in safety; that is, if through fear of him any should give a bribe to obtain his favour, and so should trust upon him, that having received their money he would certainly allow them to live in safety; yet this man is so wicked, that his eyes are upon their ways; that is, he observes them in order to find a pretext to bring them into trouble.

Some say that Job's aim in the next verse is to shew that wicked men fare like other men both in life and death. But the various expressions are rather intended to set forth the miserable conclusion of wicked men as deprived of their riches, honours, &c.

*Ver. 24. They are exalted.* The word is sometimes applied to an inward exaltation by pride, but it means here an outward exaltation, they are set uppermost among men, but it is only for a little while. They can flourish in pomp and power for a short space only, Psal. xxxvii. 10. "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be." The worldly enjoyments of all men are short and uncertain, and the wicked often hasten their own overthrow by the abuse of their power and wealth. Besides, they are always exposed to the curse of God, which withers and wastes them in the very moment of their greatest glory.

The apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 18, speaks of the things of this world as not worth the looking after, they are temporal; and of those who are exalted by them, it is added, *but are gone*; that is, they are not, which signifies a total or utter perishing. A wicked man shall soon be as if he had never been exalted. However high they rise, and however secure they pass away, and are brought low, or degraded from their high places; in whatever they were exalted they are now made low.

Every godly man of the lowest degree may be said to be exalted, as he is made a member of Christ and so a brother to the saints, or by being a sufferer and afflicted for Christ. And a rich man has great cause to rejoice when he is spiritually humbled and made low in his own eyes when highest in the eyes of the world. To be made low in our own eyes under a sense of our own sinfulness, when rich and outwardly exalted, is a great blessing from God.

*They are taken out of the way as all other.* Broughton reads, *They are made to*

skip away ; they leap out of their places as if forced or frightened, and it is much the same whether a man be shut up in prison or made to run and hide himself. As God often takes his own people out of harm's way, so he takes the wicked quite away that they may do no more harm. They would know no bounds if left to their own will, therefore God bounds them, as 2 Tim. iii. 9. "They shall proceed no farther," as all others may refer either to persons or things.

*And are cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.* To cut off here, is applied either to the common way of cutting off by death, or to cutting off by judgment, both of which is included in the similitude, "as the tops of the ears of corn," which seems to imply a violent death, as it shews, 1st, How easily wicked men may be cut off by death or judgment ; how quickly may ears of corn be cut off ! Wicked men who seem as strong as oaks, shall be cut off like straws. 2d, It would seem to hint that such men are cut off by a violent death. The ears of corn are not suffered to fall off, but are cut down by the reapers ; and even natural death has violence in it to every man who is unwilling to resign his soul into the hand of God. 3d, To be cut down as the corn, intimates that they shall be cut off in their fullness, in their height and glory. 4th, It may also signify that there is a special time or season for it ; for as corn is not always ripe for the sickle, so they are not always ripe for judgment in God's account. Lastly, God does not cut off wicked oppressors when they are weak and low, but when they are as the tops of the ears of corn, when they are at their best. The chief of the people are called the heads of the people, Numb. xxv. 4. He cuts off men in the greatness of their power in love to justice, &c.

Job having described the conduct and state of wicked men, concludes with a challenge.

*Ver. 25. And if it be not so, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth ?* In this we have Job, or rather truth triumphing. He having asserted concerning the dealings of God with wicked men, that they not only flourish but continue flourishing a long time. If it be not so, let any man disprove me and make me a liar, and convince me that I am in an error if he can. As if he had said, I do not impose my opinion upon you, but submit it to the consideration and discussion of all men.

Man ought not to question the verity of what God has said, but we must consider what men say, and not take upon trust what we have not tried. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," 1 Thess. v. 21. Now, as it is the duty of hearers and learners to receive nothing till they have proved it ; so it is the duty of teachers to prove all that they assert by the unerring oracles of God, which alone can bind the conscience. Truth is not afraid to be tried ; it is only false doctrine that will be found to be a lie. To prove a man a liar is the worst thing that can be said of him, for it assimilates him to the father of lies. All the faith-devouring and conscience-wasting errors that ever the man of sin vented, are wrapt up in this one word, *a lie*. 2 Thes. ii. 11. "Therefore God gave them up to strong delusion that they should believe a lie."

*And make my speech nothing worth.* The Heb. is, "And bring my speech to nothing," as if he had said, I challenge all men to disprove my reasons. Let any man confute what I have said if he can, and then let all I have said go for nothing. Upon this issue he shuts up his discourse in answer to Eliphaz, who makes no reply.

## CHAPTER XXV.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Bildad, the Shuhite, and said.* In this third speech of Bildad he entirely avoids the point in question, concerning the present troubles of the righteous and the felicity of the wicked. He gives, 1st, A description of the glory, power, and majesty of God ; and, 2dly, By way of comparison, he sets forth the misery and impurity of man, with a view to shew Job the folly of his confident appeal to God himself.

*Ver. 2. Dominion and fear are with him.* That is, with God, for these are proper and peculiar to him. Dominion is that supreme power that God exercises over all persons and things, and includes his ability to subdue all things, and his right to do and effectually to accomplish whatever he pleases.

Hence observe, That the best way to humble man, and deliver him from the vain conceit he has of himself, is to set the power, sovereignty, and holiness of God before him. Supreme power belongs to God, and subjection is the duty of man. Therefore

let us obey his laws, be content with what he orders for us, and submit to the afflictions he appoints us, and acquiesce in the whole compass of his government of the world.

*And fear are with him*, 1st, As all the godly are men fearing God. 2d, Because every man ought to fear God and stand in awe of him. 3d, Because all shall fear and dread him at last, whether they will or not.

Though Adam had not the fear of God to keep him from sin, yet the fear of God fell upon him as soon as he had sinned. Fear is with him in reference to the greatness of his power. We fear those who can do great things against us. When Christ saw his disciples in danger from fear of what man could do against them, he exhorts them to fear God, Luke xii. 4, 5. "Fear him, who after he hath killed, hath power," &c. God is to be feared for his goodness, Hosea iii. 5. "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness." Psal. cxxx. "There is forgiveness that thou mayest be feared."

*He maketh peace in his high places.* It is difficult to say what is meant by "his high places;" but wherever peace is enjoyed it is the work of God. Peace-making is the work of God, as peace is opposed to trouble, to war, to persecution, to dissension, and disorder. Christ admonished his disciples, Mark ix. 50. "Have salt in yourselves, and peace one with another." Since God makes peace in his high places, and can easily bestow and continue peace among men, let all who love the God of peace pray that he would enable them to maintain his truths, to live in peace, and have fellowship one with another in the fear of God.

*Ver. 3. Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise?* This is as if Bildad had said to Job, it is in vain for thee to think of contending with God, who has such numberless armies to bring against every opposer. This likewise implies the dominion, power, and majesty of God, in that he who makes peace can make war. When the Lord is said to have armies, it signifies, that he has all things at his command; or that although he can do all things by himself, yet he makes use of creatures to effect his purposes; and as he has a right to command, so the innumerable hosts of his creatures are ready to obey and execute his pleasure. This is matter of terror to all who oppose and rebel against him; and how secure and comfortable are all who can unite in saying, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Some read the second clause, *Upon whom doth not his light abide?* Light of every kind in its commencement and continuance is from God. The light of life is his, and so is all that light of comfort which shines upon us while we live. James i. 17. "God is the Father of lights," &c.

*Ver. 4. How then can man be justified with God?* Bildad speaks here of justification as to some particular act. As for instance, if any man will contend with God, (and that he charges Job with) as if God had done him some wrong, or had afflicted him more than was necessary, is he able to make the plea good, and give proof before God? His question seems to affirm that it is impossible. But a man may have much to justify himself by before God as to a controversy between him and man; but he has nothing to justify himself as to his state towards God. So when Job said, chap. xiii. "I know that I shall be justified," his meaning was, I shall be justified in this case in this business; I shall not be cast as an hypocrite. However grievous the ways of God may be, (as they were towards Job), yet they can never be unrighteous. His usual dealings with us are full of mercy, and the most severe of his dispensations have no want of justice.

*Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?* This question is of the same import, and is a repetition of what Eliphaz had said before. Job's friends suspected that he thought too highly of himself, whereas he confessed again and again that he neither was nor could be clean before God. But he would not admit their plea against him that he suffered for his uncleanness, or that his sufferings proved his impurity. Man born of a woman comes from an unclean fountain, from an impure original, and how can he be pure? Having lost original purity, there followed a proneness to all evil, and an aversion to and enmity against all that is good, which shews that we are shapen in iniquity; and who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

*Ver. 5. Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not, and the stars are not pure in his sight.* Bildad proceeds to reprove Job's presumption, by calling him to consider those things which are far below God, and yet were far above him. Wilt thou contend with God, when thou canst not contend with the moon and stars? The moon is a very

beautiful creature. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon?" Why does he say it shineth not? The moon shines for the use of man; but God is light, and needs no light from his creatures. Whenever the glory of the Lord appears, both sun and moon disappear. In chap. xxxi. 26. Job seems to say, "I reckoned sun and moon, and all their glory, but darkness and obscurity in comparison of God."

When Bildad says the stars are not pure before God, he shews the excellency of God above the most excellent of his creatures; how much more above man, who through the corruption of his nature is left far behind many of the creatures! The beauty of all the creatures is but a ray from his infinite light, and their glory is wholly derived from him.

*Ver. 6. How much less man that is a worm, and the son of man which is a worm?* Bildad lays man as low as he can, shewing that he is so far below the stars that he is as low as a worm; and if the stars be impure in the sight of God, how much more is man, who is a worm, one of the meanest creatures; and to assure us of its truth and certainty, he doubles it.

*The son of man.* That is, any man, high or low, who may be at the greatest distance in themselves, meet all in this, they are worms. To be called son of man imports his meanness, and reminds him of his weakness and frailty. Now as it shews the excellency of God, that there is nothing worthy to be compared to him, so it shews the insignificance of man, that there is nothing so mean or worthless but he may be compared to it. He is called dust, he is compared to grass, to a shadow, to vanity, and he is called this at his best estate. O how low did Christ esteem and lay himself when he stood in the place of sinners. He not only confessed that he was a worm, because a man, but that he was a worm, and no man. Man is a worm in regard to,—1st, His original constitution; he is from the earth as a worm is. 2d, He liveth upon earth and earthly things as worms do. 3d, Like the worm, man is exposed to danger, and unable to defend himself. 4th, It may be said of man, a worm thou art, and to worms thou shalt return. Since man is such a poor helpless creature, let none be proud, or have high thoughts of himself, and beware of envying others, or of giving flattering titles unto fellow worms; and on the other hand, take care not to vex, disturb, and oppress their own species, however much beneath them in station in this world. Man was once superior to all visible creatures, but by sin he is become inferior to the meanest of them; for he is not only polluted, but he loves it, and it is not so much his disease as his pleasure.

In this short discourse Bildad speaks excellently as to the general truth, in exalting God and humbling man. But in applying it to Job, as a self-justifier, he is still greatly mistaken.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

*Ver. 1. But Job answered and said.* This chapter contains Job's answer to Bildad, in which he complains of and derides his manner of dealing with him, as if what he had said was not only little to the purpose, but very wide from it.

*Ver. 2. How hast thou helped him that is without power? &c.* These words seem to represent Job's case as overburdened with afflictions and sore temptations, and therefore fitly represented as a *man without power*, &c. and is as if he had said, O Bildad, thou lookest upon me as a man without power, strength, and wisdom; and be it so. What hast thou done, either to comfort or counsel me? So the words are a close ironical rebuke of what Bildad had said in the former chapter. Thou hast quite mistaken the matter. Thou hast amplified the power and majesty of God, when thou shouldest rather have opened the doctrine of free grace and the fatherly affection of God to his children while under his sharpest corrections. Though what thou hast spoken be in itself true, yet it is both unsuitable and unseasonable to me. This context seems parallel to 1 Cor. iv. 8. "Now ye are full, now ye are rich; ye have reigned like kings without us, and I would to God that ye did reign, that we might reign with you." As if he had said, I wish it were as well with you as you think, that we also might have a part with you in these glories of the gospel; but I fear ye are only puffed up with notions, and have a great deal too much conceit, and but a small portion of true spiritual knowledge. And in allusion to ver. 10. "We are fools for Christ's sake," &c. Job says, Ye look upon me as weak, but ye are wise and learn-

ed, and think ye have a wonderful faculty in teaching the unlearned, and counselling the foolish. But your oration can do me no good, for it does not reach my case.

*How savest thou the arm that hath no strength?* That is the man that hath no strength. The arm is an eminent member of the body, and in scripture it often signifies strength. Job had indeed lost the strength of his body, and his friends thought he had lost the strength both of his parts and graces, which is still more evident in the next interrogation.

*Ver. 3. How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom?* To give counsel is the work of the wise, and the unwise have most need of counsel, though they seldom think so. It is difficult to say whether he that gives good counsel, or he that readily receives and makes a good use of it, is the wisest man. The words of the wise convey strength to the weak, comfort to the sorrowful, and counsel to those who know not what to do. That large indictment against the shepherds, Ezek. xxxiv. may be summed up in Job's language to Bildad, "They did not help those who had no power; they did not save the arm without strength, nor counsel those who had no wisdom."

Hence observe, that the afflicted, especially those in perplexity, should be dealt with in the most tender and affectionate manner.

Job seems to put this question to Bildad with a mixture of admiration and indignation, *How hast thou helped him?* &c. He increased Job's grief instead of alleviating it; and Job seems to allege that all that he said was not calculated to make him any wiser.

*And how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?* It is our duty to speak of things as they are, not to colour them so as to make them appear otherwise than they really are. Truth is plain and should be told plainly. Paul says, Acts xx. 20. "That he had kept nothing back," and ver. 27. "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Bildad spake enough to humble Job at the sight of his own uncleanness. He spake great things of the power and holiness of God, but he should have spoken of that fountain that is opened to wash in, as a means of raising up and comforting Job. We may soon entangle and distress a person by speaking truth, unless all that truth which belongs to his condition is exhibited in its connection. In 2 Tim. iii. 16. the scripture is spoken of as profitable for "doctrine," to establish the truth of "reproof," for removing error of "correction," for beating down ill manners, and of "instruction" for building up in a holy conversation; "That so the man of God may be perfect," &c. That is, in Job's language, that he may be able plentifully to declare (the solid truth) the thing as it is. General truths should be applied particularly to the state of every person which is hinted at in the following words,

*Ver. 4. To whom hast thou uttered words, and whose spirit came from thee?* Job seems to assert that Bildad had not duly considered his case and condition, and that his discourse was not suited to his situation. Jesus Christ considered to whom he was uttering words, and therefore says, I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. He would not put new wine into old bottles, but suited his speech to the strength and capacity of his hearers. Some must hear what they cannot bear, when their aversion arises from a love of sin and a determination to continue in it. Amos must not forbear to speak though Amaziah cry out, "The land is not able to bear all his words."

The apostle has left us an excellent rule by his own practice, 1 Cor. ix. 19, 23. In this we see what was the apostle's chief aim, the saving of souls; and that he might attain this end, he carefully observed the temper and state of his hearers, striving to frame his speech accordingly, yet he did not symbolize with nor connive at any in their sin. Some are all things to all men, that they may gain by all. But Paul complied with all men, that he might gain them to Christ. I do not put myself into all forms for my own preferment in the world, but that Christ may be preferred in the hearts and affections of all men. 1 Cor. x. "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." In order to speak to edification and profit, it is necessary to weigh the matter, to consider the case of the person addressed, to embrace the fittest season, and duly to attend to the manner and measure of what is spoken.

There are various meanings given to the last clause. Some consider Job reproving Bildad's presumption, as if he imagined that he spake by the dictates of the Holy Spirit. Like the disciples who said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down



from heaven and consume them as Elias did?" But he turned and rebuked them. As if he had said, in the language of Job, "Ye know not whose spirit comes from you, ye would speak the words of Elias, but ye have not the spirit of Elias, you have a zeal, but not according to knowledge." We may indeed speak the same words and do the same things that others have spoken and done, and yet from quite another spirit.

Others take the spirit for his to whom he spoke, as if he had said, Whose soul has been recovered from trouble and sorrow by what thou hast spoken—I am sure I have not, though I have heard thee attentively. What the moralist said of idleness, may be said of grief and sorrow of spirit. "It is the burial of a man while he liveth," and therefore, he who comforts and recovers a man from a depressed spirit, may be said to give him a new life.

Hence learn, That the truths of God properly exhibited and rightly applied, have a relieving and reviving power in them. Christ foretold the resurrection of the soul by the publication of the gospel. John v. 25. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, (in the ministry of the word) and they shall live." And then, ver. 28. he speaks distinctly of the resurrection of the body. As if he had said, Nothing less than that powerful voice that was able to raise dead bodies, is able to raise a dead soul from a state of sin, or revive a godly man from a death of sorrow. How glorious is the word by the working of the Spirit. Job speaks as disappointed by all his friends had said, It has proved fruitless, I have got no refreshing comfort by all you have said. And having shewn the unprofitableness of Bildad's discourse as applied to him, resumes the subject of the power, sovereignty, &c. of God, both in creation and providence.

*Ver. 5. Dead things are formed under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof.* Minerals, and every thing without life, are formed by the power of God as well as living creatures. The inhabitants of the waters are the fishes, which, in their number, variety, and size, shew the power of God in making and maintaining them; and Job, beginning with these invisible things, is as if he had said, O Bildad, why dost thou speak of the power and providence of God in the high places? &c. when the same power and providence of God extends to those things which are wrought at the bottom of the sea, and so quite out of our view.

*Ver. 6. Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.* As to be naked and have no covering are the same, so is hell and destruction, and these two are often put together, Prov. xv. 11. "Hell and destruction are before the Lord, how much more the hearts of the children of men." The reason why hell is called destruction, is because they that are cast into it are undone for ever. Though there are mourning enough there, yet there is not the least godly sorrow, which only worketh repentance to salvation.

Hence learn, That as there is nothing hid from the knowledge of God, so his power and providence reaches to and rules over all things, even over those that are most remote and unknown to man.

*Ver. 7. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.* It is the infinite and invisible power of God that made the earth, and in the same manner it is upheld and maintained, God can do the greatest things without any visible means. God triumphs over human improbabilities, yea impossibilities, and therefore we should not despair because of the smallness of means, or glory in his sight, because of the greatness of them. Abraham glorified God by believing that he was able to make good the promise, and viewing God not only as quickening the dead, but as he who calleth those things which be not as though they were, that is, who makes something of nothing, it was no wonder that he staggered not at the promise through unbelief. We honour God most when we are sensible that the greatest means are nothing without him, and that he can work without, as well as by the use of means, as 1 Cor. i. 26. Some wise and mighty men are called, lest any thing in man should seem too hard for the grace of God, and not many wise and mighty men are called, lest any thing in man should seem to contribute to or help out the call of God, but God hath chosen foolish things to confound the wise, &c.

"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom," &c. yet the Lord fails not, either in power or compassion, and therefore believers can at all times rejoice in the Lord, who hangeth the earth upon nothing as well as stretcheth out the north, or whole heavens, over the empty places, which God takes notice of as well as those that are inhabited.

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The clouds are compared to bottles, which God stops or usually unstops as our need requires, and sometimes as our sins deserve, Amos iv. 7; Isa. v. 6. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon you. When the rain is withheld, let us ask it of Him who alone can unloose the garment wherein he hath bound the waters, Prov. xxx. 4. and when he gives it in measure and in season, let us bless him who gives us rain and fruitful seasons.

*Ver. 9. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it.* This implies God's hiding and concealing of himself, and his works from us. So that we can see no more of his glory than we can see of a king's throne when covered with a curtain. The Lord is light, and ever dwells in light, and has no clouds nor darkness at all about him; and therefore when it is said that he spreads a cloud upon his throne, and makes his secret place dark, we are to understand it in reference to ourselves; for when God hides himself, or the reasons of his dispensations from us, then the cloud is spread upon his throne.

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*Ver. 11. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof.* That is, whatever is strongest in heaven. The heavens themselves tremble at the reproofs of

God. Not that the heavens have any material pillars, but because in those mighty concussions which God causes in the world, it is as if the pillars or powers of heaven itself were shaken and did tremble, &c. which is an allusion to men, who being severely reprov'd and threatened, tremble and are astonished.

*They tremble*, which signifies the shattering of the heavens to pieces; and the word *astonished* imports that which draws the mind to a deep consideration of the matter presented, and thereby to wonder and admiration. Isa. xxix. 9. "Stay yourselves and wonder," that is, sit down and consider this thing, and be filled with wonder. As lifeless creatures are said to rejoice and praise God when men do it, so likewise they are said to tremble when men tremble. When God does any thing that astonishes men, then heaven and earth also are said to be astonished. By the reproof of God, which causes the pillars of heaven to shake, &c. is meant a sore, chiding, severe reprehension, with authority and command, as a father or master reproveth a child or servant. This reproof is expounded by that which is indeed the voice of God, the thunder, which makes the pillars of heaven, proper, and the pillars of heaven, in a figure, to tremble and be astonished at these loud reproofs, which, though it has a natural cause, yet it does not at all hinder but that God does in a special manner dispose of it (as he does of all other natural things) when he pleases, to serve his providence, in the demonstrations of his wrath among the children of men. The history, Josh. x. and the description, Psal. xviii. shews how thunder, and lightning, and hailstones, have visibly effected the destruction of the enemies of the people of God, and for the deliverance of his children. When God spake to a people, Ezek. xxii. who had much outward force and power in their hands, and great courage in their hearts, he puts the cutting question, "Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with you?" Those who strengthen their hearts and hands most to commit sin, shall be least able to bear the punishment of sin. But God will enable his own people to bear the afflictions he appoints them with courage and composure of mind, if not with joy and triumph. If the pillars of heaven tremble before God, how shall weak man stand at his rebuke? What shall be said of those who not only hear of, but see and feel the rebukes of God, and yet do not tremble; yea, who sin yet more against God in the time of their affliction, instead of turning to him.

*Ver. 12. He divideth the sea by his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud.* The general scope and sense of this verse is an illustration of the power and wisdom of God in disturbing the sea with boisterous winds, and appeasing them again when they are in the highest rage and proudest fury. It is said, when Jesus rebuked the wind and sea "there was a great calm."

Some say, that though the sea be but one body of waters yet it is divided into many members, which receive different names, and others expound this division of the sea of its violent motion. He makes the sea rage, and waters rise up against waters, as persons or nations do when they are divided among themselves.

God is said to bring the wind out of his treasure, and to gather the wind in his fist. The wind is gathered and disbursed by God's own appointment to serve the designs of his providence both in mercy and in judgment to men.

As God subdues the sea when in its greatest rage and pride, so when men and nations are divided and fiercely opposing one another, He can quiet them by striking through their pride.

It is matter of strong consolation to all the faithful, that they serve a God who is able to reconcile the divided spirits of his own people to one another, and also to make their greatest adversaries at peace with them. He can either slay their enmity or slay them as enemies, and God will slay the proudest rather than his people shall not have peace. He will also smite through the proud waves of Satan's temptations and deliver from his snares all who flee for help to Jesus Christ.

O wearied and weather-beaten soul, who feels proud lusts and corruptions not only stirring but raging within thee, be of good cheer, He who smites through the proud in judgment will also smite through thy pride in mercy. The more God smites our sins the more he manifests his love to and care of our souls. The remains of pride in the saints shall be smitten through, but sinners who continue in their pride shall themselves suffer. All the sufferings of Christ are wrapt up under that one word, His humiliation, implying that he was smitten for all our sins, so most of all for pride. That man whose pride is not smitten to death, or mortified by the death of Christ, shall

surely be smitten to eternal death for his pride. As God understands thoroughly who are proud, so by his understanding he will smite through the proud.

*Ver. 13. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens.* God the Spirit is mentioned by Moses distinctly as the agent in the original constitution of all things. The word rendered *moved*, Gen. i. imports the effectual working of the Spirit, whereby that confused mass or heap was formed into those several creatures specified by Moses in the history of the creation, among which we find the garnishing of the heavens on the fourth day. Garnishing refers to their beauty and ornaments. God has not only created but polished and embroidered the heavens.

Hence learn, That if the heavens which we see are so glorious, what are the heavens which no eye hath seen? and if God has prepared such heavens as we see even for the use of those who hate him, then surely eye hath not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to understand what these heavens are which God has prepared for them, and for them alone *who love him*; and as this should excite to prayer, that he who hath garnished the heavens would also purify our hearts by his Spirit for a habitation for his own use, so it should provoke us to garnish our lives that God may be honoured by us; for we should not only obey but adorn the doctrine of God in all things, not only doing that which is good for the matter, but we should ornament what we do by doing every duty in its proper season, with cheerfulness, and with that plain simplicity that is opposite to hypocrisy.

*And his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.* There are many conjectures about this crooked serpent, but the same word is translated piercing serpent, Isa. xxvii. 1. and the Leviathan, which is the greatest living creature, and may well be brought forward to demonstrate the mighty power of God whether in forming or wounding him. The least as well as the greatest of creatures preach the power of God, and teach especially that God is the former of them all; and seeing he has formed these creatures that are most dangerous and dreadful to man, they must be under his control, and he does restrain and manage them for the purpose of his own glory; and so all those enemies of his people who appear as invincible as Leviathans, and as subtle and dangerous as the most piercing and stinging serpent, He will overrule and destroy at last.

*Ver. 14. Lo these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him?* I have indeed spoken of very great and wonderful things, yet it is but a little part of what might be said. Job seems to distinguish these works of God about which he had discoursed from some greater works which he was not able to make any discovery of, we cannot well apprehend much less comprehend, what he has wrought under the heavens, much less those that are above the heavens, which are so great and numerous that it is well said that it is only a small part that appear to us.

The ways of God are spoken of in Scripture, 1st, As the ways in which God would have us walk, Psal. cxix. 33. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes." 2d, The ways in which he comes and reveals himself to us. It is said creation was the beginning of God's way, for then He did as it were go out from himself into his works, and thereby shewed himself openly, and of this way, the way of creation, as also by those of providence, Job speaks, when he says, "Lo these are part of his ways."

It is said, Psal. cxi. 10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and which is as if the Lord had said, While ye labour to find out my works, be not discouraged, as if true knowledge and wisdom could not be attained, for the fear of my name is wisdom enough for you, and obedience to my commands is the best understanding, let this satisfy you while ye know but a small part of my ways and works.

Some render the second clause, "How little a whisper have we heard of him." The works of God are as it were a whisper concerning him. All that we see or can say makes but a kind of silent report of God in comparison to what he is, and so the word whisper is opposed to thunder in the close of the verse. The creatures speak loud enough to stop man's mouth and leave him without excuse, but all that they can speak, yea, all that can be spoken of God by the wisest of men, is only as a whisper to thunder, or a drop to the ocean. There are many impressions of God upon the things which he hath made, but we never see them aright till in them we see God.

*But the thunder of his power who can understand?* The thunder of his power is any extraordinary work of God, especially his dreadful and terrible works of judgment, or it may be expressive of the highest and clearest publication of his power, as if Job had said, I have whispered a little to you, but if God should thunder out himself, the minds of men would be so amazed that they would not be able either to consider or under-

stand. Heb. xii. 19, Exod. xxvi. 18—19. Man is not able to receive and bear those highest discoveries of God. Who can, as he ought, consider either the depth and mysteriousness of it, or according to the dignity and worth of it?

This concludes the dispute; but though Job's friends have given up, yet he argues for himself in the five following chapters, which he calls the continuance of his parable.

That great pattern of patient suffering, holy Job, having been many ways afflicted by God, and no way comforted by man, no not by his friends that came with a design to comfort him, found that now they had left off to trouble him, which might be a pre-sage that God would comfort him at last. Being thus free from their pressures and provocations, he took freedom and full scope, both to defend his former integrity and to deplore his present misery, which he does in ch. xxvii. to xxxi. inclusive.

June 11, 1657.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*Ver. 1. Moreover, Job continued his parable, and said.* Why does Job call what he had to say a parable? The original word signifies to *rule*, to *govern* as a prince, whose righteous precepts and commands his people ought to obey. Sentences that are full of wisdom and truth are called parables, 1st, Because wise sentences rule over the spirits of men as princes and magistrates do over their bodies. 2d, Because, whether men will submit to such speeches and truth or not, yet their judgments, actions, &c. must be tried by them. Parables are touchstones of truth, they are rules, and therefore ought to rule.

Others render the word to liken, or to make like. Similitudes is making comparisons, Matt. xiii. "At that time Jesus spake unto them many things in parable." A parable is taken in Scripture, 1st, For any divine maxim or principle which generally obtains among all sorts of men, Prov. xxvi. "As the feet of the lame are not equal, so is a parable in the mouth of a fool, that is, a holy, grave, and wise sentence is an uncomely thing in the mouth of a fool. 2d, A parable is a dark and a hard saying, it is often a kind of riddle, yet sometimes a speech or discourse is a parable, or dark, not so much by its obscurity as by the hearers' incapacity, Matt. xiii. 13—15. 3d, Every man's opinion, whether true or false, is a parable to him, and he would have it so to others, that is, he would have it a ruling sentence,

Hence observe, That truth wisely worded and delivered has a commanding power in it. It is a parable. Truth carried forth by the power and Spirit of Jesus Christ will do terrible things, it will be more than a conqueror. So Job seems to gain a triumph over his friends, they are silenced, and he proceeds,

*Ver. 2. As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul.* He begins somewhat strangely with an oath to vindicate himself by calling God to witness.

That which implies the Being, Omniscience, Justice, and Power of God, and that which is an evidence of faith in, fear of, and love to God is surely a noble act of divine worship, and, therefore, swearing by the living God, which includes all these things, must be an eminent act of worship, and, therefore, ought never to be done but in the most solemn manner, and only in case of the most urgent necessity; and to use the name of the great and dreadful Jehovah, in a common, formal, and profane manner, must be a great crime, and expose to awful punishment.

Judgment may be considered for any evil inflicted and feared. Some read, He hath taken away the rule or measure of my judgment. Job was still poor and oppressed, weak and reproached. The church complains, "My judgment is passed over from my God." The Lord regards me not to do me right. So Job, "He hath taken away my judgment," that is, he neglects me and my cause, he regards not my petition.

We find Elihu, ch. xxxiv. expounding these words of Job, as if he complained that God would not do him justice, whereas Job seems only to declare the matter of fact, that God to that day had not declared for him, but still left him under the censure of his friends.

These sufferings of the saints serve the holy ends and purposes of God, therefore saints are detained under reproach, &c. until these holy ends are served, and no longer.

The (tongue) rod either of wicked men or of mistaken brethren, shall not always rest upon the lot of the righteous; in due time he will vindicate them.

The title Almighty, denotes strength and goodness; but though he is the spring and fountain of goodness and mercy to his people, yet Job saith, He hath vexed or made my soul bitter. His affliction went deep, he felt the sad effects of his bodily pains, and of his friend's censures in the grief of his soul. But he views the hand of God in all his afflictions, and looks beyond and above instruments. He seems also to overlook the ruin of his estate and distress of body and fix on the affliction of his soul.

Hence observe, That though God is at all times both able and willing to deliver us from our sorrows, yet until we receive the pardon of our sins, and exercise that godly sorrow for them which needs not to be repented of, a relief from any particular affliction would do us little service. Let us therefore be more concerned to have the presence and blessing of God with our afflictions than their removal.

Job seems next to consider himself as under the obligation of this oath during life.

*Ver. 3. All the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils.* That is, as long as I live I fully purpose to continue in the same opinion and defence of myself. The life of man is but breath in his nostrils ready to take leave; how foolish, then, to trust in man or put confidence in princes, Psal. cxlvi. "His breath goeth," &c. Let us remember that we are daily dying; and as it cannot be many days till we must die, so we may die any day. Let us therefore live constantly in the lively exercise of faith and every grace, ready and willing to depart at the commandment of the Lord.

Job expresses his noble resolution,

*Ver. 4. My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.* As if he had said, Though I should have my afflictions increased and continue all my life, yet I will not, as Satan said I would do, blaspheme God; and neither will I allow either directly, or by consequence, that I am wicked, by which I should wrong myself as ye do. It is sinful to speak falsely of another, and it is little less to let others speak falsely of us without endeavouring to vindicate and defend ourselves. As our first concern should be to be innocent and upright, so our next care should be to appear so. Uprightness is such a jewel that we cannot let go the cabinet of it—*reputation*, without sin, if by any sinless endeavours of ours we may preserve it. The truth of grace consists in opposing every sin; the strength of grace is discovered in mortifying every sin, but complete deliverance from sin will not be attained till the soul retires from the body.

The word here rendered *to utter*, signifies also to meditate, or speak within. Meditation is ascribed to the tongue, because we should speak that which we have meditated, Prov. xvi. 23. "The heart of the wise teacheth (or maketh wise) his mouth;" that is, a wise man never speaks any thing till he has digested it by meditation. As they who speak do often speak falsely; so it were well if they who speak falsely did always speak rashly, and could say that their tongue hath not uttered a meditated deceit. O how hard is it to keep the tongue, which cannot be kept unless both heart and ways are kept, James i. 26 "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, (without which all religion comes to nothing,) but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." The tongue unbridled is too hard for us to govern.

As Job would not condemn himself, so he would not justify them who had condemned him.

*Ver. 5. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.* As the word *God* is not in the original, it should have been, Far be it from me that I should justify you; he turns from it with indignation. As corrupt nature is not only backward to do good, but has an enmity against it; so true grace has an holy enmity against every sin, and abominates every thing sinful whether in himself or others. *I hate and abhor lying*, which is more than to abstain from it, *but thy law do I love.* A good man not only does what is good, but delights in it. A carnal man may forbear to do what is evil, and do what is in itself good; but he never abhors what is evil, nor delights in what is good.

As it is very sinful for any man to justify or defend any evil that he has done; so it is as sinful to justify others in any evil deed. We cannot do better for our best friends than faithfully to reprove them for what they do amiss.

The last clause gives the reason why he could not justify them, for he was determined not to part with his own integrity while he lived.



The word signifies to yield, or give back; so Job says, I will not yield up my integrity. The word rendered *integrity*, signifies also perfection and simplicity; that is, a religious, plain, honest disposition without guile. A godly man has his Urim and Thummim as well as the high priest had; he has his light of truth, or his fire of zeal, and his perfection or integrity. These are seated as heavenly principles in his heart, and are held forth in the course and practices of his life as a light shining from heaven. Integrity is our perfection under the covenant of grace, and simplicity is our greatest excellency. Our integrity is *our all* next to Christ, and Christ is nothing to those who have no integrity. To protect and preserve our good name is a great and necessary duty. Job thought it so necessary, that he repeats the affirmation though in other words.

*Ver. 6. My righteousness I hold fast, I will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* This verse is of the same import as the former. He here also shews the steadfastness of his purpose to insist upon his innocence against all assaults of enemies or surmises of friends. Though they pull, yet he will hold fast, and will not let it go.

Hence observe, That as a good man resolves to hold on in the practice of righteousness against every temptation, so to maintain his righteousness against all opposition.

*My heart, that is, my conscience, shall not reproach me.* I will not give it cause to reproach me, which I should do if I assent to your reproaches. He that accuses another reproaches him if it be false; it is a reproach till it is removed, and if true, it is a reproach that cannot be removed.

A blind conscience will let a man sin without reproving him; but if a Job, a man of an enlightened conscience sin, his conscience will be upon him presently; and it is better to have the reproaches of all the men in the world fall upon us, than the reproaches of conscience. When conscience bears testimony with and for us, how full of joy is the soul even in the midst of many sorrows. A good conscience is the poor man's riches, and the rich man's jewel. Prov. xv. 15. "A good conscience, (which is the Geneva translation,) is a continual feast." They shall be always feasted by conscience that are careful that it shall not reproach them.

*Ver. 7. Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me be as the unrighteous.* Some render and expound the words not as a wish, but as foretelling what would become of his enemy. "Mine enemy shall be as the wicked," &c.

To rise up, and to lift up the heel against one, are the same; so in the text, the enemy, and he that riseth up are the same; so the wicked and unrighteous are the same. Yet properly, a man is said to be wicked in reference to his impieties against God; and when he is unjust in his dealings with man, he is said to be unrighteous. Justice gives every man his due, and therefore he who deprives another of what is his, either by open violence or secret fraud is unrighteous. Yet these words are often used promiscuously.

But what *enemy* does Job mean? Not an enemy to his person, but to his cause; he speaks of their desert, not of his own desire, as if he had said, Mine enemy, or he that opposes me in this cause deserves to be as the wicked, he does not positively affirm that they were wicked, but "let them be as the wicked." While they take part with the wicked and unrighteous in their censures upon me, they make themselves such. Job had such confidence in the goodness of his cause, that he feared not to affirm that his opponents would be found as the wicked and unrighteous.

It is no breach of charity to tell all who oppose the truth that they do wickedly, though otherwise they may be good men. Truth is a friend to be preferred before all friends. To maintain love and unity is good, but to maintain purity is better. We must rather be against all men than do any thing against the truth.

Job did not wish evil to his friends, yet he did not spare them, but faithfully reproved their severe censures of him.

*Ver. 8. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?* This seems brought in as an argument, by which Job proves that he was not a hypocrite. As if he had said, Ye have expressed your opinion that I am an hypocrite, and if I were, my condition would be most miserable; but I am fully persuaded my hope shall not die when my body dies, therefore I am no hypocrite. Job speaks of his afflictions as coming from God as a father, and could trust God slaying him or taking away his soul, and thereby proved his hope in death.

What is the hope of the hypocrite? He has no hope at all. He has no hope in

God, nor in the good things which God has promised in the world to come; he may pretend to hope in God himself, and that blessedness which flows from him, but it is only presumption, and therefore will perish. His great object is gain, but as the particular gain is not expressed, we may affix any thing to it that is gain in the esteem of worldly men, such as knowledge, reputation, honour, wealth, &c. But what is either the hope or enjoyment of a hypocrite when God *taketh away* his soul. The word translated *taketh away*, implies violent death, because the soul of a wicked hypocrite is, as it were, forced out of his body, being loath to depart.

Hence learn, 1st. That a hypocrite may be full of hope which may continue with him while he lives. Possibly he is rich and great, &c. and thence concludes, surely God loves me. He may have many spiritual gifts, such as knowledge, utterance, and something that looks like faith, repentance, and godly sorrow, &c. He may be planted into church privileges and reckoned among the saints, and eat bread at the table of the Lord, and reckon himself among the darlings of heaven, and say, as Micah iii. 11. "None evil can come upon us." Hence learn, 2d. That death cuts off and disappoints the hypocrite's hopes. A believer may be tossed with troubles and temptations like a ship driven by fierce winds, but his hope, as an anchor within the veil, holds fast. But the hypocrite's hope being cast upon false and loose ground, his heart and hope will fail together when God takes away his soul. The hopes of some perish because they hope only for perishing things; others who hope for future and eternal bliss will be disappointed, because their expectation is builded upon the sand.

Again observe, That covetousness, or a love of gain, and hypocrisy, usually dwell together. They have a great desire of worldly gain, and God gives them their request, Psal. cvi. 15. "But sends leanness into their soul." This world is a narrow bound; unless we get beyond the creature and set our hope above this world, we cannot be happy. Phil. i. 21. "To me to die is gain." They are happy who gain when they die, but all the gains of this life cannot make us die happy. What shall it profit those who have laid up treasure for themselves in the day of their greatest need, "and are not rich toward God;" that is, rich in the graces which they have received from God, and rich in the duties which they have returned unto God.

*Ver. 9. Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him?* He that hath hope, delights in God, and seeks unto God, without ceasing, in the lowest ebb and darkest night of outward trouble. But the hypocrite has no delight in God, nor will he continue praying; and God will not hear his cry; therefore he has no hope. God will not shew him favour, by granting that which he cries for.

Crying is vehement prayer. *Will God hear his cry?* That is, will he hear when he is most urgent and importunate in prayer? No, he will not. An hypocrite does not much care either about praying or being heard in time of prosperity; but it pinches him not to be heard *when trouble comes upon him*. The motion of a living creature is here ascribed to trouble, in allusion to an enemy or armed man that comes violently and irresistibly. When the troubles of the hypocrite prevail upon him, he cries aloud to the Lord for help; but his prayers do not prevail with God, which is the greatest of all troubles. As the visitations of God cause a godly man to pray much, and with an enlarged heart, so trouble will compel them to pray who seldom pray at all, and never delight to pray. When nature suffers, mere natural men will cry to God. Want of outward good, and fear of evil, will make the worst of men bestir themselves. The true character of a hypocrite is described, Hosea vii. 14. He seeks God for the loaves. He seeks the favour of God, but rebels against the will of God. Thus he runs the round of praying and seeking, of sinning and rebelling. He will pray earnestly in times of trouble, or, like Simon Magus, to prevent trouble threatened, or for deliverance from trouble inflicted. Like Pharaoh, they are very solicitous that others should pray for them. God will not hear the hypocrite, though they cry to him in trouble. But how does this accord with Psal. l. 15. and Isa. lxxv. 24? "Call upon me in the day of trouble," &c. If the Lord has promised to hear before we call, will he not hear when we call? God will be true to his promise; but he has not promised to hear the cry of the hypocrite. He has promised to hear prayer. But it is, 1st, The prayer of the upright, Prov. xv. 8. 2d, Of the believing, Matt. xxi. 22. 3d, Of the broken-hearted and contrite, Psal. li. 17. The hypocrite's prayer is none of these, and therefore is not under a promise to be heard. If God do not hear sinners, as the blind man (John ix.) asserts, then whom does he hear? for all are sinners. God hears not sinners, that is, such as delight in and live in sin, espe-

cially such as have high pretences to holiness and the ways of God, as many hypocrites do.

This verse contains Job's first argument and proof, that a hypocrite has no hope ; for God will not hear his cry in trouble. His second follows :

*Ver. 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?* The hypocrite fails and falls short ; for though he cry unto God, he does not delight in him. He may be violent in prayer, but he is not constant. The hypocrite has no pure desire to have or enjoy God, but his desire is to obtain something from God, and when he finds that it is not given him, he has no delight in God at all. Desire is love in motion, and delight is love at rest. The hypocrite's will does not rest in God, but runs out after creatures. He cannot find comfort in God when the world affords him none, as a godly man can do, for he can rejoice in the power, all-sufficiency, and goodness of God, when all creatures rise up against him. In Psal. lxxviii. the prayers of hypocrites are called flatteries. They told God in prayer that he was their rock, &c. Nevertheless, they did but flatter him with their mouth, &c. ; that is, they had no true love to nor delight in God, only they wished to obtain help from him, and to be delivered from their troubles. A flatterer does not delight in the person he flatters, but in that which he hopes to obtain by flattery. None pray purely to God but they who can rest satisfied with God, even when God does not see meet to grant what they pray for. But he who seeks mercies from God, but cares not for the God of his mercies, shall have neither. It is our duty to call upon God always, and unless we are in a frame to pray always, God will not hear us at all. We may be said to do that always which we are always ready and willing to do, and which we really do as often as we have a call to it. A good man loves God, and prays to him, in prosperity as well as in adversity. He that prays only when trouble is upon him, makes God his refuge only, not his choice, and are as they who would make use of a friend, but have no desire to enjoy him. Those only who delight in God will persevere in praying to the end. In prosperity they will pray that they may not forget God in the enjoyment of creature comforts ; for he is sweeter to them than all that he bestows on them. It is a great sin not to call upon God, and none are so miserable as they are who do not call on him. From all which Job infers, that he was no hypocrite ; for though God did not presently hear him, so as to deliver him, yet he delighted in the Almighty, and would continue praying to him, though he should slay him.

*Ver. 11. I will teach you by the hand of God ; that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal.* The word translated to *teach*, signifies to *cast*, or throw a dart out of the hand, also to *rain* ; and in allusion to these, to *teach*. Right teaching is a casting or darting of lessons of wholesome truths into the mind. It is also a raining or dropping of instructions into the understanding, which influences the will and affections, and those who receive them are thereby made fruitful in practice. Moses in his last sermon uses this metaphor, " My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech shall distil as the dew," &c. God only can teach effectually ; yet it is the duty of one man to say to another as Job here, *I will teach you*, &c. Or as David, Psal. li. " Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." That is, I will do my utmost, and take all opportunities to instruct others. It is the duty of all who are able and called to instruct others, but none are so fit for it as they who have experienced the grace of God to themselves in the pardon of their sins. Christ said to Peter, Luke xxii. " When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Strengthen them with instruction, and by telling them what God hath done for thee in converting thee from the sin of denying me.

The hand of God is the power of God, strengthening a man in any duty. The Spirit of God is the hand, by which virtue is conveyed into the soul by the word spoken by man ; therefore Luke xi. 20. devils are said to be cast out by the finger of God ; and Matt. xii. 28. it is said to be done by the Spirit of God ; and whenever lusts, which are the seed of the devil in us, are cast out, or any gracious principles planted in us, we must say, the hand, the finger of God hath done it.

When Job saith, *That which is with the Almighty I will not conceal.* That is, I will not only shew you the outside of the works of God, but I hope, by the hand of God working with me, to shew you what the Lord means and intends when he afflicts the godly and lets the wicked prosper.

Hence observe, that what we know of the mind of God we should not conceal from others. It is a talent, and it is sinful to hide our talents ; and we should labour to

know more and more of the mind and will of God, either as revealed in his word, or by the dispensations of his providence, either to ourselves or others.

*Ver. 12. Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it ; why then are ye thus altogether vain ?* That is, your consciences bear witness to the truths that I am about to report. You cannot but understand these things as well as I do. The heart seeth as well as the eye. The eye sees what is open to sense ; the heart sees what we understand.

Hence observe, that it is a strong conviction to appeal to the experience or conviction of those we speak to.

Again observe, that the truth of the word of God is visible in his works. The works of God are nothing else but the making good of his word ; therefore saith Job, *All ye have seen it.* The works of men should be a fulfilling of the word of God. We should see a command or rule for all that we do. The works of God are fulfilling his prophecies ; and so the truths of God are visible in all that falls out, both to friends and foes. We may see the word of God bud and blossom and bring forth, in all that he does among the children of men.

There is nothing more vain in itself than a false opinion concerning God or his ways. An error is very vanity, for it is a doctrine of lies ; and therefore they are very vain who maintain an error. *Why are ye then thus altogether vain ?*

Job seems to charge his friends, not with resisting that light which they did see, but with resisting that which, had they been diligent observers and students in God's school of providence, they might have seen. Those will be judged at last, as having been altogether vain against what they have seen, who have been vain, either in opinion or practice, about that which they have had light to see, but have neglected it.

They are indeed vain, who either depend on that which is not, or oppose that which is.

*Ver. 13. This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty.* Job having spoken by way of caution, as a preface in these two verses, comes now to the point itself.

There are two general opinions concerning the scope of this verse, and of the latter part of this chapter. 1st, It is understood as a repetition of what his friends had said before. 2d, It may be taken as a concession. I grant what you say, that God doth afflict and vex the wicked of the world, but he also afflicts the godly ; and how to reconcile these two is the matter of controversy between us.

But some may say, Job spake largely concerning the prosperity of the wicked, chap. xxi. and here he speaks of their misery, as if he were agreed with his adversaries. I answer, that Job does not contradict what he asserted before. He acknowledges that wicked men are afflicted ; yet that no man can conclude that any one is wicked, because afflicted, which he had often denied, and still did concerning himself, notwithstanding all his afflictions, forasmuch as he depended entirely upon God, in the midst and worst of them, which the wicked cannot do. *This is the portion of a wicked man with God.* Though he seem to receive a comfortable portion from God at present, yet there is a portion of wrath which he has a purpose to give out to him.

Oppressors are high, and keep all under them, yet there is one infinitely above them. As they have enlarged their inheritance by oppressing others, so they shall receive the heritage due to them from the Almighty. God gives the wicked many a command to do his will, which they refuse to obey ; but at last he will come with an irresistible word of his wrath upon all who resist the word of his grace.

Hence observe, that though wicked men may escape punishment from men, yet they cannot escape a reckoning with the Almighty God.

In the following part of the chapter he tells us what this heritage is which the oppressor shall receive.

*Ver. 14. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword.* The word rendered *multiplied*, signifies also to magnify, which is an aggravation of that misery which descends upon the offspring of wicked men. Though their riches and honour increase, as well as their number, yet they shall soon be cut off by the sharp justice and vengeance of God ; for any destroying evil is God's sword. " Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword," Psal. xvii. 13. Though a wicked man have children and riches, yet a curse hangs over his head ; whereas, when a godly man is in want of all outward blessings, yet he enjoys the favour and presence of God, and that is a blessing. It is a sore affliction to have those things made a curse to us which in themselves are blessings. If our blessings make us miserable, what shall make us happy ?

How miserable are wicked men when they seem to be most happy, seeing there is a curse in their blessings; for such as the sword shall spare, famine shall devour!

*And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.* In scripture, bread signifies, 1st, Any kind of good thing belonging to this life. 2d, More particularly for any kind of food, even the best. And, 3d, Bread is taken properly and in kind, for the meanest sort of food: and so it is; they shall not have so much as the meanest food, they shall want even bread itself to satisfy their hunger. We often say nature is satisfied with little, and grace with less, for it will be satisfied though nature perish; but not to have food to satisfy nature is in itself a great curse, but to have much and not to be satisfied, is still worse.

Hence observe, That the greatest wealth provided for the children of the wicked cannot prevent their coming to poverty and want. "A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked," Psal. xxxvii. 16. The righteous man's pittance hath a blessing in it to him and his, which the wicked man's hath not.

*Ver. 15. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death; and his widows shall not weep.* Because most of the wicked man's children shall be cut off by sword and famine, the former verse speaks as if all had fallen. But if any be left, they shall be buried in death. That is, he shall not be remembered with credit when he is dead; or it may be, to die of the pestilence, which is so deadly, that it is called death by the Chaldeans, and it is so expressed, Rev. vi. 8. "And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was death," that is, the pestilence, and so we have the three great judgments of God, sword, famine, and pestilence, met together in desolating the prosperity of the wicked man. But let not the wicked man please himself with hopes of impunity, because he and his family may have escaped all these and a thousand other deaths, for the second death will seize upon him except he repent and turn to God by believing on and embracing his Son Jesus Christ.

*His widows.* This speaks in the plural, though but of one husband. It may mean, that this shall be the temper of every one of their widows, one shall not be more tender-hearted than another, *they shall not weep.* To die unlamented is a lamentable death. It is one of the judgments mentioned, Psal. lxxviii. which came upon Israel for their sins, especially their great sin of unbelief: "That their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation." The Lord sometimes interdicted the living from mourning for the dead, to shew his displeasure against both the dead and the living. They deserve to be most lamented who need it least, and they have most need to be lamented who deserve it least; good men dying may adopt the words of our Lord, "Weep not for me," &c.

*Ver. 16. Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay.* That is, though he obtain so much wealth, that it is as common and plentiful as the dust with him and his, yet he will never leave off getting and gripping, vexing and oppressing, but is still for adding heap to heap. By *raiment* he means all that furniture which serves either for necessity or ornament, with which he fills his house and wardrobe as heaps of clay.

Hence observe, That the work and business of a worldly man is to gather riches. Such is their nature, and such is their motions and designs, 1 John iv. 5. "They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world;" and as their language is of the world, so their labour is for the world. 2d. Observe, That a little of this world will not satisfy a worldling, he must have heap upon heap, a competency is scarcity, he is insatiable, he would have all to himself, he is filled with envy against others. To have abundance, and grace to lay it out for proper uses, is a blessing, but to covet and project schemes for obtaining abundance must be sinful. How sad is it that any man should live in the pursuit of that in which his life (or happiness) doth not consist?

*Ver. 17. He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver.* The sinful cares and endeavours of a worldly man may have much success, as Hos. xii. "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand, he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance." The success seems to please, though it could not give content, and in the end disappointed him; for those shall possess his treasure for whom he never intended it, Prov. xxviii. 8. "He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him, that shall pity the poor;" and Prov. xiii. 22. "And the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." He does not lay up his wealth with a purpose that the just shall have it, but the providence of God overrules his purposes, and in

the issue, the sinner's wealth becomes the portion of the just. The covetous man in gathering the riches of this world works for others, like the camel that carries a great burden of rich commodities, yet never shares of them; so the fruits of the toils, anxieties, and labours of worldly men are often enjoyed by such as they never suspected, much less wished to possess them.

This is the portion of a wicked man, that which he has prepared, neither him nor his shall inherit. "The just shall put on his raiment, and the innocent shall divide his silver."

*Ver. 16. He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh.* The moth is a little creature, but very hurtful, and hath its name suitable to its nature and work, from biting or fretting. This similitude is applied two ways, 1st. To shew the sinful and injurious ways by which the wicked man builds his house. The moth defaces and spoils the fairest garments to make itself a lodging; so the wicked covetous man cares not who he wrongs, he builds his own house with the ruin of others, Mal. ii. 2. "They covet fields and take them by violence," &c. They eat their brethren, (as we say) out of house and home, out of trade and estate, that they may increase their own. 2d. The similitude of a moth sets forth the uncertainty and short continuance of the wicked man's house. As the moth, by eating and fretting the garment, makes his dwelling, so he consumes it and spoils his own habitation, or, when the garment is aired and brushed, the moth is presently crushed to pieces; and so, if wicked men do not quickly waste their own houses, yet they are in danger to be quickly thrust out of them. They have no more assurance of holding their houses than a moth for continuing in a garment.

The same word signifies both a moth and *Arcturus*, chap. ix. 9. which is one of the constellations of stars in the heavens, and then the meaning is, though he build a goodly house as it were out of the reach of danger from man, yet this strong safe house and state of his shall decay as a cottage, or as follows:

*As the booth that the keeper maketh*, which is another lively image of the short and fading felicity of a wicked man. Thus Job derides the most magnificent and stately structures, the strongest towers of the wicked man's worldly greatness and pomp, calling them and comparing them to booths and tents. This transitory and fashion-changing state of the wicked man is prosecuted,

*Ver. 19. The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not.* Some expound this, of lying down to sleep, and, as if, when he awaked, he found all his riches gone, and himself left friendless and helpless; others, *He shall lie down*, that is, he shall come down from his greatness, and become so poor as to lie in the streets, no man having so much respect or pity as to gather him up, that is, to give him lodging; and *he openeth his eyes*, looks about him for help, but there is none to relieve him. But most understand it of lying down in death, and *he shall not be gathered*, of his want of burial. He that has the greatest portion of worldly riches, can have no assurance that when he dies his body shall be gathered to the grave. The last clause is interpreted by some, as a description of the rich man's sudden death, as if he died in the twinkling of an eye.

Others read, *One openeth his eyes and he is gone*, as if he had said, when any friend or neighbour looks for him and would converse with him, he is dead and gone. Though these readings vary from each other, yet they centre in the general truth, (which is Job's scope,) that wicked men, however rich, are as subject to death and the consequences of it as any other, and that their riches are so far from being of use to them after this life, that they cannot help them to a grave or a funeral when they die. When a man dies, nothing goes with him to abide with him for ever, but what he has got either by his faith or by his unbelief, by his holiness or by his wickedness; except in this sense, it is certain that as we brought nothing with us into the world, so we shall carry nothing away.

*Ver. 20. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night.* Terrible judgments without, and as terrible fears within, take hold of him.

*As waters.* Afflictions and troubles are very fitly compared to waters. They come suddenly and with such violence and abundance, that it is difficult, and at times impossible, to escape from them, and thus, *Terrors take hold as waters.* Abundance of riches cannot secure against poverty, much less prevent the fear of it. The most settled state of health cannot preserve from sickness and death, much less from the dread

of either, and least of all, can any or all of these combined, alleviate the tortures which an awakened conscience will inflict upon a man for his evil deeds.

Hence learn, 1st. That such as will not yield to the word of God, shall be laid fast hold of by the terrors of God. 2d. That all the outward favours we receive, cannot secure our inward peace. As a deluge of waters, so a tempest signifies those troubles and evils which proceed from the angry dispensations of God. All great swelling waters move violently, but storms and tempests are nothing else but violence.

*Stealeth him away.* Those judgments which in their irresistible force are like tempests, are also like thieves in their silent and unexpected approach.

*Night*, taken properly, may import, that the tempest came when the wicked man was asleep and secure, when he could not see a way to escape, and none of his friends could come to his aid. Again, *night*, taken for any time of distress in which a man knows not what to do, nor where to turn for help, it becomes a greater affliction than the former. The fire, storms, and tempests, &c. which carry all before them, are but glasses in which we see what God will do with and upon the wicked in the fierceness of his anger. The judgments of God never come till they are sent for, (by the sin of man) nor till they are sent for by the justice of God, and though often-repeated threatenings are given, yet they come unexpectedly upon carnal men, who, in the midst of perplexing fears, indulge a hope, or rather a presumption, that the tempest will not come, or that it will soon blow over. Thus the long-suffering of God is abused till there is no remedy. Is it not equal that the judgments of God should steal away as in the night those who neglect and despise the will and ways of God revealed in his word. But let all who make light of the message of salvation, either by avowed contempt or by frivolous excuses, know and consider, that in a little they will find their delusive hopes swept away with the tempest of divine wrath, and a terror seize them from which there will be no escaping.

*Ver. 21. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth.* The east wind denotes any evil or affliction, which as a vehement fierce wind beats upon and disturbs us. The word used here signifies, to lift or take up any thing into the air. The man of whom Job speaks, seems rooted like a tree, but this wind pulls him up and carries him away. The east wind of trouble, like an impetuous storm, drives him from every place of pleasure, profit, or honour, from all his comforts and enjoyments.

*And he departeth,* That is, from all the good things of this life, and so his life shall be a kind of death to him, he shall be as a dead man while he lives. How miserable are they who outlive all that they account their happiness.

*And as a storm, hurleth him out of his place,* That is, though he would willingly have remained, yet the calamities of this life carries him away as with a flood. Men who are like great mountains in their own opinion, and in the estimation of others, are but like a tennis-ball in the hand of God. When the Lord sends out a storm, there is no place so strongly fortified as to secure sinners against it; they are driven away from all that their hearts are set upon.

*Ver. 22. For God shall cast upon him and not spare.* The word *cast* has a special reference to throwing darts from an high place upon those who are below, the word is used, Lam. ii. 1. "The Lord hath cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Zion." This he does at times; but he will for ever cast down the beauty and supporters of Babylon to the ground, 2 Thes. i. 9. "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," &c. destruction shall come forth immediately from the hand of God upon them, and without any measure or mitigation; as it follows, *and not spare.* Sparing may be considered as to the degree or continuance of any affliction, and it imports, that wicked men shall have judgment without mercy and without intermission. It is not only an act of righteousness to others, but of respect to ourselves, to do to others as we would have done to us; for sooner or later God will do to all men who continue to do evil to others as they have done, *He will cast upon them and not spare.*

*He would fain flee out of his hand.* Out of the hand of God, no doubt, or from his sore and destroying judgments. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God." Saints, in times of danger, and at the hour of death, commend themselves into the hand of God; but how dreadful is it for any to continue lifting up the heel against God, and to remain so wilfully blind, that they will not see the hand of God when it is lifted up. For all who will not observe the operations of God in the dispensations

of his providence, so as to give him the glory of all his doings, shall feel the hand of God upon them by the greatness of their own sufferings. They may give all diligence to avoid the evil of punishment, though they give no diligence to avoid the evil of sin. While judgments are only threatened, they will not stir, but when once they see and feel those miseries brought on them by the hand of God, then they bestir themselves to purpose, or rather to little purpose. For it is in vain to labour to escape the hand of God ; there is nothing for it but submission and turning unto the hand that smiteth. Some render, He fleeth clean away from, or out of his place ; so the word is translated, Deut. xxiii. 12 ; Isa. lvi. 5. So he runneth clean away, there is a storm upon him, therefore he runs for it, and becomes against his will a willing exile.

*Ver. 23. Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.* Clapping of hands is joined with joy and rejoicing at the ruin of others, and conveys an approbation of what is done, as if they said, It is well done, it is only what they deserve, when they see or hear of tyrants cut down. Such applause has often been given at the most tragical downfall of wicked men, especially of those whose power has been abused to oppress others. Great judgments upon the church astonish all beholders ; but only malignant enemies hiss with scorn, 2 Chron. xxix. 8. Lam. ii. 15.

*They shall hiss him out of his place.* That is, out of his dwelling, his office, or authority, and even out of the world. When he dies, instead of mourners, they shall have hissers, who shall say, *Let him go, who cares for him :* he never did good while he lived, and he has not a good report when he dies.

Hence observe, that the downfall of wicked oppressors is cause of joy to all men. But is it lawful to rejoice at the ruin even of wicked men ? The text speaks only of what is usually done, not of what ought to be done. When the downfall of Babylon is foretold, Rev. xviii. there is a call given. *Ver. 20. "Rejoice over her thou heaven," &c.* But we may not rejoice at the fall of any Babylonish spirit, in the pride of our hearts, nor with cruel revengeful affections, as being glad at the destruction of any man ; and unless their fall be improved as a mean of making us more holy, humble, and circumspect, our rejoicing cannot be good.

When the wicked are hurled and hissed out of their places, it is a confirmation both of the promises and threatenings of God ; and as it often proves a mercy to the church in general, as well as to individuals, it is a real cause of joy. Good men meet with many troubles in this life ; but as when they fall they have an assurance to rise again, so they find many that mourn with them, and none rejoicing at their troubles but those whose sympathy is not worth having. But the misery of the wicked when they fall, is double ; for they shall rise up to prosperity no more, and the rejoicing at their adversity is so universal.

Instead of *men*, which is not in the original, some supply *God*, and read, *God shall clap his hands at him, &c.* The scripture speaks of God after the manner of men. In Ezek. v. 15. God is spoken of, not only as threatening destruction to his own people, but as rejoicing in it, "And I will be comforted ;" and Prov. i. 15. "I also will laugh at your calamity," &c. Those who set the Lord's counsel at nought, shall be despised and laughed at. If their misery is great whom God does not pity, how much more when God seems to rejoice at it. When God laughs at the calamity of a person or people, the measure of their calamity is full, as well as the measure of their iniquity. What cause of mourning have they at whom God is said to mock ! This is the portion of evil men from the Lord, he will hiss them out of their place.

Job having concluded the first part of his answer concerning the dealing of God with wicked men, whom he sometimes openly afflicts, proceeds to speak of his hidden and secret ways of dealing with them.

The general scope which Job drives at in this chapter, is to convince his friends that they had spoken rashly, and that their opinion about the dealings of God with him was ill-founded, the proof of which is contained in this chapter.

It is impossible to find out the wisdom of God in his works to perfection, though we may find it out sufficiently for our instruction ; from which Job seems to infer, that since the wisdom in his providence toward man is such a secret, therefore no man ought to conclude concerning the spiritual or eternal state of any man, as being either holy or profane, from the outward dispensations of God towards him. We must judge of men according to their manner of life, but not by the awards of God to them in this life ; from which may be gathered the following conclusion : That the



wisdom of God, in dispensing prosperity or adversity, is a greater secret than the most secret veins of silver or the most hidden places of gold.

In this chapter Job speaks of the knowledge of a threefold wisdom. 1st, Of a common wisdom, bestowed on all mankind for finding out the hidden things of nature. 2d, Of that wisdom which consists in the secret administrations of divine providence, which is laid up with God, and made known by him alone, according to his own good pleasure. The Psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. 16. seems to intimate, that he could not find it out by his own researches, "until I went into the sanctuary," ver. 17. that is, the word and spirit. In waiting upon God I was taught, that the wicked in their present prosperity are rather to be pitied than envied. 3d, In ver. 28. Job concludes with a discovery of saving wisdom, which is peculiar to saints, and is common to them all, which consists in the true knowledge and holy fear of God, or in departing from and avoiding all sin, which is the spirit and life of holiness peculiar to believers.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*Ver. 1. Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for the gold where they fine it.* Some render and give the sense thus: Because silver hath its veins, and gold a certain known place where it may be found, therefore many inquire after and find these things. But because the place of wisdom is uncertain, or rather because its value is not known, and there is no desire to obtain it, few or none search for it as for hid treasures. The Spirit of God hath put a name upon silver, which points out its excellency and usefulness, and the aptness of man to be ensnared by it. It is expressed by a word which signifies to desire, or to have the heart and affections vehemently carried out to or upon any subject. The desires of man commonly lead him into snares. Therefore we have need to check and moderate our desires after that which is so great and so dangerous an incentive of desire, especially when we consider, that though it excites desires, yet it is altogether unable to satisfy them. Eccl. v. 10. "He that loveth silver (and what is desire but love in motion) shall not be satisfied with it." Covetous men are compared to a lion attending upon the poor to oppress them, Psal. xvii. 11, 12. Gold hath a proper and distinct place from silver. The word here used for gold, implies its shining beauty and flavour. Gold has little beauty as it is taken from the earth. But God has given man not only wisdom and skill to find gold, but also to purify it. And so some read, *There is a place for the gold which they fine.*

*Ver. 2. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone.* God hath laid up these baser metals in the same great storehouse, and in regard of their usefulness, are not inferior to gold and silver. We may notice the kind providence of God, that metals that are most necessary for the service of man are most easily attained. The ore of brass is a stone, which being melted becomes brass. It is incorporated with the stone, and is therefore said to be molten out of a stone. As every spiritual, so every artificial and civil good gift comes from above. They who were fitted to work in gold, &c. for the tabernacle, received their wisdom from God.

Job's design in mentioning these minerals is to shew, that though God has given man ability to find out minerals, and bring them forth to his use, yet he has given no man wisdom to reach the depths of his administrations. And as the providences and dispensations of God in civil things are full of parables, which the natural man hath neither eyes to see nor a heart to understand, and as to spiritual and divine things, as the mysteries of faith, the working of the Spirit, &c. he neither doth nor can discern them while he remains a natural man, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," &c.; and so it often happens the most eagle-eyed in the things of nature are dim-sighted in the things of God. He that is much employed in searching the veins of silver and place of gold, has neither leisure nor inclination to inquire into divine truth. He has no place left for God and the things of God. The full soul loatheth the honeycomb. They who are full of, and pursuing temporal riches, are usually insensible of any spiritual emptiness, and so neglect those means by which they might attain a knowledge of their spiritual needs.

We may notice, that these metals are made use of by the Spirit of God, Dan. ii. to signify the four great monarchies of the world, by which God points out the beginning,

progress, and end of all worldly governments, till he shall set up a kingdom that shall never end.

To desire gold is sinful, though to have it is not; but unless we desire spiritual good things, the having of them will do us no good, and worldly things are good only to those who have them without desiring them.

*Ver. 3. He setteth an end to darkness.* Through the wisdom and power which God has given unto man, these minerals are brought to light. And God will at last set an end to all darkness, to the troubles and sorrows of his own people, and also to the darkness of the wicked counsels and ways of the most cunning politicians. Isa. xxix. 15. "And their work is in the dark, and they say, who seeth us, and who knoweth us?" That is, surely none does. "But God will make manifest the counsels of the heart," 1 Cor. iv. 5.

*And searcheth out all perfection;* or he searches out the use of all things. The best of every thing, according to its kind, is the perfection of it. Man may attain to and comprehend the perfection of the creature. Psal. cxix. 96. "I have seen an end of all perfection." That is, I have known both by faith and experience the best of the creature, and have gone to the outside of it. As a gracious person in the enjoyment of temporal things may find out what it can do and amount to, and so discover their utmost perfection, so an artist may find out the virtue and value of natural things. It is far more difficult to find out the perfection of civil things in a spiritual way, than of natural things in an artificial way. Reason and study may reach the latter, but the former can only be discerned by a gracious principle of divine light. Now if natural things cannot be found out in their perfections without much pains, how much more must we search carefully for spiritual things? With what study and pains, with what prayers and tears, should we search the mines of scripture to find out Christ there, together with the precious things of divine wisdom and knowledge laid up in them, or rather in him. And the promise of the Spirit to lead us into all truth, instead of abating, should excite and increase our exertions to find them out.

*The stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.* These expressions shew what difficult and dangerous work must be undergone to come at these treasures that are laid up in the bowels of the earth. Men have not only ventured, but lost their lives to obtain them.

Job still goes on with his description of the unwearied pains and bold adventures of men to obtain what is esteemed the precious fruits of the earth.

*Ver. 4. The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men.* The Heb. is, the flood breaketh out from the inhabitant forgotten of the foot. Subterranean waters are such as the foot never passed through, and therefore are as far from the knowledge of man as those things which are utterly forgotten. So that this is a description of underground water, breaking forth and driving away the miners. Some translate the last clause, 'They are gone away by men, or, 'They are drawn out by the labour of man; they are gone.

Hence observe, that great works often meet with difficulties and impediments. When the woman had brought forth her man child, Rev. xii. and fled for safety, then, ver. xv. "The serpent cast out of his mouth waters as a flood," &c. That is, he stirred up people and nations to afflict the church in her wilderness condition. When the apostle said, 1 Pet. iii. 13. "Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? But as if he had forgot that the world would oppose and persecute, and even professed friends to truth will cry out, why should you be singular? why set yourself up as a mark for envy to shoot at? he adds, ver. 14. "But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye." Which seems to intimate, that those who do good are thereby exposed to scorn and persecution, and that their happiness arises from the cause in which they suffer, not in being exempted from suffering. A good work for Christ must not be yielded on account of opposition, either from avowed enemies or professed friends. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Christ's truths are worth contending for; they shall overcome at last.

*Ver. 5. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread.* A man has skill to work in the bowels of the earth; so he knows how to cultivate the earth, that it may yield him corn, and he is instructed how to make it into bread. As the earth is the common parent of mankind, so he is supplied with every thing necessary for his present existence and comfort from it.

*And under it is turned up as it were fire.* That which is commonly used as fuel for fire, and is so apt to take fire, may be called fire.

*Ver. 6. The stones of it are the place of sapphires, and it hath dust of gold.* The sapphire being one of the choicest stones, is here named for the rest, and is congenial to the gold, and found along with it among the mould of the earth. The excellency of this stone appears from the description of the vision, Exod. xxiv. "And there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone." The sapphire is a stone so full of heaven-like beauty, that it not only pleases, but delights and recreates the beholder; and it is employed, Cant. v. 14. to set forth the gracious, pure, and tender affections of Christ to his church. While we admire the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, in forming the earth with such a variety of metals, herbs, &c. yet the ingenuity and industry of man is necessary to bring them forward to his use.

*Ver. 7. There is a path which no fowl knoweth.* That is, a path by which men seek for gold, &c. but no fowl ever was there.

*And which the vulture's eye hath not seen.* The eye of the vulture is proverbially put for sharp sight; and the vulture hath a sharp stomach as well as a sharp eye, and therefore will search into the most secret paths for prey, yet the vulture never saw this path.

*Ver. 8. The lion's whelps have not trodden it; nor the fierce lion passed by it.* The Heb. is, Sons of pride. The lion is proud and stately as a king among beasts. Job here intimates, that the desire of man after the precious minerals carries him farther in pursuit of food for his covetousness, than the pinching hunger of the most fierce and greedy animal has ever gone. But even when a covetous man has got more than he needs, though his belly and house are full, yet his heart is empty, his hunger is not satisfied but increased. He is still restless in labouring for that which never will nor can give him any rest.

See what work he makes to get gold and silver.

*Ver. 9. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots.* This proverbially implies that men are willing to undertake the hardest work for gold though it be as difficult as digging through the hardest rock. And when a rock comes in the way of those who search for gold they put their hand to it; that is, they cut a road through it, and they also "turn up the roots of the mountains." A mountain is spoken of in scripture to denote the greatest difficulties and oppositions of men. To cross any design, and the overturning or levelling of these mountains, expresses the highest actings of the power of God in subduing all difficulties and oppositions for the good of his people, Zech. iv. 7. And when Christ would shew the greatest that a faith of miracles can do, he says, "I will remove a mountain." And therefore to overturn mountains properly so called is a stupendous undertaking, yet the gold and silver searchers are not discouraged at it.

*Ver. 10. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing.* When miners meet with water they make channels through rocks or mountains to convey it out of their way.

The word rendered *precious* signifies that which is light, or hath a shining light in it. The word rendered *see*, implies to see exactly; he seeth like an artist who not only knows what he is in search of when he sees it, but is glad to see it.

Divine knowledge is precious, and it is light, and they who have it may indeed be said to see every precious thing; every soul remains in darkness till that light shines into it. Grace is a precious thing, and though it mingle with corruption as the ore with dross, yet the spiritually wise can distinguish between them. Phil. i. 9, 10. The apostle prays, that "their love abounding in knowledge and in all judgment, they might approve (or try) things that are excellent," or things that differ; that is, that differ in excellency. A godly man not only discovers what is good from what is bad, but among good things he discerns what is best. But the carnal man "loves darkness rather than light;" he is so far from delighting in precious things that he chooses the vilest things. But the laborious miner takes no other notice of worthless stones, &c. but only to put them out of his way that he may come at what is precious.

Hence observe, That precious saints are often mingled with vile hypocrites even in the same church fellowship, and no due pains taken "to take away the precious from the vile," but the same portions and privileges given promiscuously, which must be hurtful to both, for a little leaven leavens the whole lump, and saints must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

*Ver. 11. He bindeth the floods from overflowing.* That is, he secures them with banks and bounds to prevent the waters from hindering or injuring his labours.

*And the thing that is hid bringeth he to light.* The sum of this is, that these treasures which lay concealed from former generations he brings to the view of the world.

From this description of the way and means of getting treasure out of the earth,

Observe, 1st, That strong and constant labour accomplishes great things; and the hope of obtaining what he desires induces a man to impose the hardest tasks upon himself. As nothing can satisfy desire but enjoyment, exertion is necessary to attain it; but he that has nothing but desires shall have nothing that he desires, Prov. xiii. 4. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." 2d, That worldly men are not deterred by the greatest difficulties to pursue their schemes of worldly gain; and it is no wonder that those whose God is their belly mind earthly things, for they appear of such use and beauty that the possession of them is that on account of which a man is esteemed in this world; so that we have no cause to wonder, though we have much cause to lament, when we see men busied about and in love with earthly things.

It is mournful to see men overcoming all difficulties, and exposing themselves to all dangers, to obtain the perishing commodities of this world, when the veriest trifle stops their search after heavenly treasures, even durable substance.

The sum of all is, that vain man troubles himself very much to get himself more trouble; for there is still less trouble in seeking earthly treasures than there is in possessing and using them; while the very labour in seeking heavenly treasures is sweet, but the enjoyment is infinitely sweeter. Let us, therefore, give up with our desire after, and affection to the creature, and take God for our only portion; and that is not only the best way to divert our thoughts from this world, but to mortify and slay them. Earthly desires cannot live in the air of heaven. As God alone will be all in all to saints in heaven; so they, who in the exercise of faith and love draw near to God, will find that it is good for them to do so.

Job having described the labour of man in seeking worldly treasure, now shews that there is a vein of wisdom which a few only have a desire to seek, and which none of the men of the world have ability to find.

*Ver. 12. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?* This question intimates, that as there is no place where, nor price whereby, so no power in the creature to attain this wisdom; and that God only has this wisdom, for he alone has a full prospect of all things at once. Some read, Where shall that wisdom; meaning that wisdom which ye have been pretending to, by which you have been enabled to assign the reason why God is thus so severely exercising me. This is that wisdom whereby God orders and disposes of all his proceedings both with the righteous and the wicked in this world, and in comparison of which all the wisdom that man has discovered in searching for metals is but folly.

Wherever a right understanding is, there is wisdom; and as they are inseparable companions, so they are often put the one for the other. An understanding for government is a choice mercy, 1 Kings iii. 9. To know how to govern ourselves or others aright is a rare attainment. So it is a great mercy to understand how ourselves or others, whether persons or nations, are governed by God, so as to acquiesce in them from proper motives, and properly to improve them. Now, as no man can teach God this knowledge, (chap. xxi. 22.) so God teaches but few men any of this knowledge, and teaches no man all of it.

*Ver. 13. Man knoweth not the price thereof.* That is, no man, even the most learned and holy, can understand this wisdom. They who know all the counsel of God, (Acts xx. 27.) as to what God would have man do, may know little or nothing of his mind or counsel as to what himself hath done or is doing. Some, instead of price render order, "Man knoweth not the order thereof." That is, God varies so in his dealings, that none can know the order of his procedure with the children of men.

*Neither is it found in the land of the living.* This wisdom is not to be found among any sort of men in this world. Though God reveals to them that fear him all the necessary secrets of spiritual wisdom, (Psal. xxv. 9—14.) yet he does not reveal all the secrets of his providential wisdom to any.

*Ver. 14. The deep saith, It is not in me, and the sea saith, It is not in me.* Here is a double disclaimer; the negation is repeated to shew the certainty of it. It is usual in scripture to ascribe speech to things that cannot speak.

The word *depth* may signify any great gulf either of earth or water whose bottom cannot at all or scarcely be found. The sea is that body of waters distinct from rivers, of which Moses speaks, Gen. i. 10. Some interpret the text of seamen, as if Job had said, Inquire of seamen who have experience of God's wonders in the deep; others expound it of the fishes. Thus the creatures are brought in, as it were, answering the searchers for wisdom; You will lose your labour if you think to find this wisdom in us, which God hath seen meet to keep secret. The apostle, speaking not only of the counsels of God from eternity, but of his dealings with Jews and Gentiles, is forced to cry out as a man amazed, Rom. xi. 32, 33. "O the depths of the riches," &c. How was he astonished to see those who were not a people, that is, who were of no account or reckoning, become the people of God, and thus raised up children to Abraham.

God hath given us the knowledge of all things that is necessary and good for us to know. All believers have received an unction whereby they know all things, 1 John ii. 20. that is, all those things which either not to know were their sin, or the not knowing of which would leave them in their sin. Let us beware of prying into these secrets of God which cannot be found, or neglecting to seek and search for those things which it is our duty and privilege to find. The way of life, and how we ought to walk and please God, is revealed to us. Let us study to know them with a view to practise them.

As there is no place among men where this wisdom is to be found, Job proceeds to shew that there is no price in the hand of man by which it can be purchased.

*Ver. 15. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.* It is said proverbially, we may buy gold too dear; yet there is nothing among men which gold will not purchase, but it can do nothing in buying this wisdom. Those who are covetous of it will part with any thing for it.

The word rendered *gold* signifies, shut up or inclosed. It is shut up in the bowels of the earth among stones and rocks, and when men by much labour and pains obtain it, they retain it in safe custody. That which we highly esteem we lay up carefully.

*Ver. 16. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx and the sapphire.* That is, though some gold is more precious and valuable than other, yet the best of it is no price for this wisdom. The Heb. is, "It cannot be laid on the ground with the gold of Ophir," which is an allusion to trading by exchange, when one lays an heap of his commodity, and another an heap of his upon the ground, till each is satisfied to part with his own for the other's. But God will not lay the least ray of this wisdom with the greatest mount of gold; there is no getting this wisdom by such exchange.

The onyx is a whitish stone, and, along with other precious stones, appointed by God to be set in the breastplate of judgment to be worn by the high priest. But however valuable they are, they cannot be compared with wisdom.

*Ver. 17. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it.* The word which we render *crystal*, is said by some not to be a distinct kind of stone, but as noting the quality of the best stone of any kind, the root importing purity and clearness. Some translate it the diamond. To be clear as crystal is a proverbial speech, and is used in scripture to set forth the most beautiful things, Ezek. i. 22; Rev. xxii. 1.

*And the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold.* Some read vessels of fine gold. And though gold be very valuable, yet the skill of the artist may be much more so. Therefore Job's discourse is still ascending, exalting wisdom not only above gold as taken from the earth, but even when the artificer hath wrought with the greatest skill and fashioned it with the most ingenious curiosity.

*Ver. 18. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls, for the price of wisdom is above rubies.* Job speaks of the coral and pearl as not worth being remembered in this business. There is a great variety respecting the translation of these words, but most agree in ours. Coral is a plant of nature's setting in the sea, which is green and soft, but when taken out and abiding in the air, quickly changes into a beautiful red, and becomes as hard as a stone. Every several gate of the New Jerusalem was one pearl. That the greatest glory of our spiritual state is pointed out by them, is proof enough of their beauty and glory, and yet no mention shall be made of them in comparison of, or in competition with this holy and heavenly wisdom, and the reason is, *For the price of wisdom is above rubies.*

The word that we render *price* comes from a root which signifies to draw out, for he

that lays down a due price for a commodity, draws it out of a man's hand, house or shop, where it is laid up.

Some read, *A little wisdom is above rubies*, which still heightens the value and excellency of wisdom. The ruby or carbuncle hath a glory in it which resembles a flame of fire, it is the colour of vermilion or crimson. It is a stone esteemed of such value that it bears the same price with the most excellent diamond of its own weight.

*Ver. 19. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.* This stone is supposed to be the same with the emerald; it had the honour to have the second place of the breastplate of judgment, and is one of the twelve foundations of the glorious city, described, Rev. xxi. and as this stone pleaseth the eye so it sharpens and clears the dulness of it. The topaz was found in many countries, yet the most esteemed was the topaz of Ethiopia or Cush. The scope of the verse is, that the best sort of them, nor the most pure and fine gold, cannot equal wisdom.

Seeing most men overvalue those earthly treasures and seek after them, as if they were really precious, the Holy Ghost speaks of them as lighter than vanity, in comparison of wisdom, and thereby makes use of their natural worth as a foil to set off the beauty and excellence of spiritual and divine things. Now as we see our need of Christ more clearly by comparing him with those things that we need most, and that we highly prize, so we come to a better understanding of the transcendent excellence of that wisdom by which God administers the affairs of this world by preferring it before the best things which we behold and enjoy in this world.

Hence observe, that the best and most precious things in this world are not comparable to divine wisdom, neither can they purchase a knowledge of the depths of divine wisdom in providential dispensations.

Let us learn the folly of seeking wisdom or happiness where it is not to be found; seek it not in worldly attainments or enjoyments, they all say it is not in me, we should therefore seek to possess the pearl of great price where alone it is to be found. 2d, Learn to beware of valuing what God despises, or of despising what he so earnestly recommends, let not earthly things draw us off from the pursuit of heavenly things. 3d, Learn that the great aim of our lives should be to gain spiritual wisdom, which is infinitely better than the knowledge of all secrets, for riches is a hindrance to spiritual enjoyments.

It is awfully dangerous and very pernicious to read Job's text backward, as if gold were to be preferred to wisdom, and the price of rubies were above it, as if it were no match for the topaz of Ethiopia, or less valuable than the onyx or the sapphire, which we do practically, when we labour more for things that perish than for durable riches.

*Ver. 20. Whence then cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding?* Here is a repetition, yet no vain repetition, but an excellency of speech; when in Scripture the same things are often said, they are such as cannot be too often said, Phil. iii. 1. "To write the same things to you to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." And the apostle did this not for any scarcity of words or matter, but that it might take the deeper impression upon others.

Job having formerly inquired, ver. 12. for the place of wisdom, and not finding it, he renews his inquiry in this verse, and at last finds it, and resolves the question, first, negatively, ver. 21, 22, and then affirmatively, ver. 23, the reason of which is given, ver. 24, and illustrates it, ver. 25, 26, 27. Thus we have the parts and method of Job's discourse upon this great point.

*Ver. 21. Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.* There are some things that are so mysterious in their nature that they cannot be known by us; other things are not known because they are concealed. God has hid the treasures of spiritual wisdom that they might be sought and found; but he has hid his providential dispensations of wisdom that they may not be found. Now as God is hid in the invisibility of his nature, so in the secrecy of his works. He hides his works, though not in the matter of them, yet in the causes and reasons, in the designs and purposes, for which he produces them, so that his intentions in what he has done or is doing are past finding out. Therefore, as the vain curiosity of man appears in prying into what God has not been pleased to reveal, so his rashness and folly is manifest in censuring of, or murmuring at, those works and ways of God which he is neither qualified nor has any right to judge of.

There is a wisdom which God has not only given us leave to search after but earnestly intreats us to embrace, Prov. i. 20, and so the folly and vanity of man appears

in a criminal neglect of what he ought to know, as well as intruding into those things which cannot be seen. Even good men have sometimes a stronger desire to know the times than to redeem time. Those who are most inquisitive into those things which God hath kept secret are sometimes chargeable with neglecting what is revealed.

But some may ask, Why does God hide so many things from the sons of men? It may be 1st, To keep us humble, for our pride is apt to increase with our knowledge. *Knowledge* without a due balance of grace and holiness in the heart *puffeth up*. Many are exalted above measure by what they know, but few keep to the measure of what they know. Happy they who are edified and governed by what they know. The Lord will hide none of that knowledge from us which tends to make us more holy and humble. 2d, It may be to prevent an idle curiosity, and to make us thankful for, and duly to improve, what he has revealed, believing that he is holy and just in all he does, even when we cannot discern a reason for what he does. Though we know not the time when Jehovah will come to do the great things he has foretold respecting the church in our world, let us wait in due preparation for every event, praying that his kingdom may come.

*Ver. 22. Destruction and death say we have heard the fame thereof with our ears.* As if he had said, As this wisdom is not known in the present age neither was it known heretofore, and the utmost report that any could make of it was, *We have heard the fame thereof, or We have heard the hearing of it.* The act of hearing is by a figure put for the word or matter heard, as Rom. x. "Faith comes by hearing," that is, the grace of faith is wrought by the Spirit in the act of hearing, "and hearing by the word of God," that is, the matter heard both by which and in which this faith is wrought, is the word of God.

*Fame* may be taken for an honourable report, but it often implies no more than a dubious or uncertain report.

Go to the dead or destroyed, and all they can say is, that they have heard a rumour of a strange power in God, turning things upside down, and of as strange a wisdom, dispersing the things of this world as he pleaseth, but to the reason of man it is past finding out. For when the works of God are considered in their several circumstances, and in the reasons why they are done, and why done in such a manner, in such a time, and by such means, and why upon or against such persons as here in Job's case, and lay all these things together, and it will appear that it is but little that we know of the wisdom of God in his works, we only hear a fame thereof, but we have not a full comprehension of it. All that is known certainly is, that there is in God such an all-disposing and overruling wisdom.

In the next verse he speaks in the affirmative.

*Ver. 23. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.* God's understanding of the way of wisdom is his nature, that is exclusively God alone understandeth it, for Job's purpose is not to instruct his friends how to find out this mystery, but blames them for assuming the knowledge of that which God hath kept to himself, the secrets of his providence, whether towards him or any other. This wisdom fills all things, yet is not comprehended of any; it is with God, it is in God; it is God. Men may have some guesses and glimmerings about it, but God only understands it perfectly. We are not to conceive that there is any place properly speaking where wisdom is laid up. The place of this wisdom is no where else but in, and nothing else but himself; he is the fountain of wisdom.

*Ver. 24. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven.* By thus asserting the glory of God, Job vindicates himself from that charge brought against him by Eliphaz, ch. xxii. 14, "Thou sayest, How doth God know?" This declaration of his belief of God's universal knowledge of and power over all the world, is a flat denial of the atheistical charge of Eliphaz against him.

*Looking*, which is an act of sense when applied to God, is nothing else but his understanding. The word signifies a looking with consideration and care, as if he had but one thing to look to in the whole earth. This word is used, Isa. lxvi. 2, "To this man will I look," &c. that is, though heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool, yet I will take care of and regard a poor humble hearted sinner.

The providential sight of God is punctual, and to a hair he seeth the whole universe as precisely as any individual, and his seeing is the providing for and the right disposing of all things in his sight, and he will be seen in bringing them succour and supply in their greatest straits, as he did Abraham, Gen. xxii. 14. Did we but keep this common principle warm upon our spirits, "the Lord seeth under the whole heaven,"

how heavenly would our lives be ! And how should it deter us from heart sins and the closest hypocrisy, that God sees the hearts of all men ! As his hand set up all in order at first, so his eye hath kept all in order ever since and will do for ever. Psal. xxxii. 8. "I will guide thee with mine eye," or "I will counsel thee ; mine eye shall be upon thee," that is, to guide thee in all thy undertakings.

Hence learn, 1st, For the instruction and consolation of all that fear God, that they have no reason either to be afraid or discontented at what is doing, or at what yet may be done ; for he "that looks to the end of the earth" is their Father and friend ; and when nothing appears but confusion, they may rest assured that all shall end well for them ; for he who says, "Be still," (Psal. xlvi. 10.) adds, "and know that I am God." 2d, This truth may cause the wicked and unjust to tremble ; the Lord sees what they are doing, and that their end is coming. Men may condemn the Lord as if he did not see what they do, or would not reckon with them for their evil deeds, Psal. x. 13, 14. "He hath said in his heart thou wilt not require it ;" but God will require their mischief, &c. As the Lord sees what they do, so he takes notice of them for the very purpose to require them according to their deeds.

The principle, "That the Lord looketh to the ends of the earth," should remove wickedness from the earth ; and it also assures us that he will rebuke all the wicked of the earth, for he beholdeth mischief and spite that he may require it with his hand, whatever heart or hand is filled and defiled with it.

Job proceeds to prove, That wisdom is with God, and he gives some eminent instances of the works and workings of God in nature, all jointly and loudly sounding the praises of his unsearchable wisdom.

*Ver. 25. To make the weight for the winds.* That is, he orders the wind as exactly as if he weighed them, and this may be called the weight of the wind, which turns them from this or that point of the heavens. He made the weight for the winds in creation, and he hangs on the weight for the winds in providence every day. The Lord is described as "flying upon the wings of the wind." The winds are said to have wings, because of their swiftness, and the Lord is said to fly or walk upon them, to shew, that as he declares his power by them, so they are continually governed by his power. He appoints where, to what degree, and for what time, and at his rebuke, there is a calm. Now, as the winds acknowledge the sovereignty of God, how much more ought man to be obedient and submissive to the divine will in all things ? When Christ said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth," He intimates, that it is not under the control of man. Christ indeed intends the Holy Spirit, who is fitly compared to wind, both as to the fierceness and force of his motion, Acts ii. 2. This wind blows with irresistible force.

*And he weigheth the waters by measure.* Job ascribes both weight and measure to the waters, which implies an exact observation, and a very distinct and perfect knowledge of them, as if he weighed them to a grain and measured them to a drop.

Hence observe, That though winds and waters are very unruly creatures, yet the Lord orders and commands them both, Prov. xxx. 4. and Isa. xl. 12. The question is an affirmative, that God alone has or can measure the waters. He is also said "to sit upon the floods." His power and sovereignty is over and upon all seas and waters, over all the world ; He sits also upon figurative floods, upon nations and people, to rule and govern them, and this is a comfortable consideration to all good men, but it is matter of terror to the wicked, for there is no security against winds or waters to any that are not friends to God. And as the storms that arise in the minds of the multitude are often more terrible, and have more dreadful effects than any storm at sea, it is pleasant to reflect, that both these are put together, or rather the one is expounded by the other, Psal. lxxv. 7. "Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people." That is, the Lord stills the people when they are like the waves of the sea, roaring and making a noise in a mighty tempest.

*Ver. 26. When he made a decree for the rain.* The word which we render *decree*, signifies in the root, to write or engrave, and thence to make statutes, because they use to be written or engraven, and so to remain upon record for future ages ; so that it imports, 1st, The authority of a law. 2d, The permanency of a record. Such an authoritative and permanent decree hath God made for the rain. The apostle mentions the rain, Acts xiv. as one of God's witnesses. He gives it as a token of his care for his great family, he sendeth "rain on the just and the unjust." Jeremiah



speaks of the rain, not only as a gift of God for which we ought to be thankful, but by which we are laid under obligations to fear God, and complains that they do not, "Neither have they said in their hearts, let us fear the Lord that giveth rain." The same word signifies, to rain and to instruct; Moses puts both together, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain," &c. He who sends the rain to make the earth fruitful, gives orders when and where to send the word, that fruit may be brought forth meet for his own use. It is truly distressing that so many large portions of the world have not yet been visited with the river of God, the water of life; but it is still more grievous that so few who enjoy the word of life bring forth good fruit, and that so many bring forth only that which is hurtful, "briars and thorns," Heb. vi.

*And a way for the lightning of the thunder.* The Lord is said to make a way for every flash of lightning, because, though it strikes through the whole air in a moment, yet it moves not this or that way without his order and direction. The Psalmist, Psal. xxix. invites us to adore and worship God. When we hear the God of glory thundering, we ought to give him glory and worship him in the holiest manner, "in the beauty of holiness." We should acknowledge the power and presence of God in the lightning and thunder. They are brutish indeed who do not perceive that these things are above human wisdom; yet some cannot get out of the circle of nature, and because they can give some account why and how the winds blow, the showers fall, the thunder and lightning are generated and brought forth, therefore they cease to wonder, and take no notice of God in them. But though these things have an order in nature, yet who but God could put nature in such an order? Who could make such a weight for the winds, such a measure for the waters, such a way for the lightning of the thunder, but God himself?

Learn that the most violent and furious, as well as the most useful are in the power and at the disposal of God. To show how much God is concerned for his people, and for the regularity and uniformity of his worship, he is said to "measure the holy city, the temple and the altar, and them that worship therein." In every time of trouble, let every believer say, "It is the Lord, let him do whatever is good in his own eyes," and that is always the best for all those that can say so in truth.

*Ver. 27. Then did he see it, and declare it; and prepared it, yea, and searched it out.* All these expressions are to one and the same purpose; to shew, that though the dispensations of God are secrets to us, yet they are as clearly, fully, and certainly known to him, as those things that are most familiar to us, even the things which we see and converse about every day, or as things which we have had under long and strict examination, and carefully and keenly investigated to the very bottom. Some expound this wisdom, not of the object seen, but of the medium by which God saw all things. *Then did he see (all things) by it, &c.* That is, whatever God did, he did by his infinite, hidden, unsearchable wisdom.

Hence observe, That God saw all things, all the works of wisdom, and all the wisdom of his works, from eternity in himself.

*And declare it.* That is, to manifest any thing unto others. This word signifies also, to number, from which we may be assured, that God took the number of all things that he would make, and of all that he would do, as exactly as if he kept a book of accounts. The wisdom of God is stamped upon visible things in creation, and he gives as it were a new and fresh edition of that infinite wisdom every day, all the secrets of providence are committed to Christ, and he raises up and sends forth instruments to execute all the Father's appointments, and not one of those numbered by the Father and given to him as Mediator, shall be missing or fail.

*And prepared it.* That is, he establishes, or disposes, and directs. The signification of his pleasure is sufficient to put these things into action, which to us, and all second causes, have not the least appearance of the remotest possibility.

Hence learn, That God has settled all his ways and issues of his divine wisdom from the beginning to the end of the world.

*And hath searched it out.* God does not search as men do for that which they have not or know not, God searches wisdom, but he does not search for it, he always has it. From the combination of all these acts of God, Learn 1st, That nothing can come by mere chance or fortune. 2d, That all things shall work for good to the lovers of God, therefore they must not murmur. But 3d, Pray much that their desires and the will of God may meet together in prayer. His will must be done, and his wisdom will see it done.

Job having spoken of a wisdom common to all men, and of a wisdom proper unto God, proceeds to a third sort peculiar to the saints.

*Ver. 28. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.* This is a catholic doctrine, not only in regard of the truth of it, but of the usefulness and extent of it, and though it is said to all men in every situation and relation, yet it is emphatically applied to great men, (called, *Exod. xviii. 21. able men, &c.*) To magistrates, who should be the best of men, and chiefs in wisdom as well as in authority; to them God saith, *It is your wisdom to fear me and stand in awe of my dreadful majesty.* But what is this fear of the Lord? It is that wherewith he is to be feared, and is so called, 1st, Because he is the object of it or the person to be feared. 2d, Because he is the giver of it, he alone works this fear in the hearts of his people. Slavish fear makes us run from God, holy fear keeps us close to God. He has put a crown of honour upon the head of holy fear, by saying it is wisdom; but fear is not to be taken here as if it were alone, for every other grace is conferred in a less or greater degree along with the fear of the Lord.

There is a natural fear, and an immoderate and distrustful fear of danger, and a superstitious fear, and a slavish fear, which are all very different from the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; which may be taken, 1st, For the pure worship of God, and perhaps one chief reason why the worship of God is called fear, because we should continually fear, lest we depart from that rule of worship which God has appointed. No man is wise enough to know what will please God, further than God has revealed it, and therefore to worship God only in obedience to his authority, is true wisdom. And more generally, 2d, *The fear of the Lord, which is our wisdom,* is that holy awe which dwells upon our spirits and regulates them under all the dispensations of God towards us, and also in all our actings, both towards God and one another. To worship God aright, and to walk before God in uprightness, are the two poles upon which the whole body of a heavenly life is turned. This fear of the Lord, which is our wisdom, regards the word of God, the threatenings of which are so terrible, the commands so holy, and the promises so sweet, that each of them alone, much more all of them together, is well-fitted to draw out this divine fear into exercise. 1st, To awaken from security. 2d. To excite to inquiry how to escape. 3d. To use the appointed means for avoiding the evils threatened. Holy fear is a spur to prayer and activity. When Noah believed the Lord respecting the deluge, it is said, "being moved with fear, prepared an ark."

This fear not only regards the word, but the works of God, even his common ordinary works, such as bounding the sea and giving rain; in reference to which the Lord saith, *Jer. v. "Fear ye not me? will ye not tremble at my presence?"* God is the more to be adored in doing that often or always, which to do but once, calls both for our fear and admiration; and therefore, the commonness of them should not at all (though it often does) abate our estimation of them, or our thankfulness to God for them. Every good thing is the better by how much the more common it is. And it is wisdom to fear God upon the display of his judgments, *Isa. xxvi. 9. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness;"* that is, they ought to do so, and if ever they will do it, then.

And as works of judgment, so of mercy, should excite this holy fear. We have seen much of the goodness of God, but O how little of this holy fear hath as yet been seen among us. While some slight and make little reckoning of the goodness of God, others sport with his acts of kindness as well as with the doctrine of his goodness; and not a few harden themselves in doing evil, because God is good. Let such persons consider, That it is very sinful not to fear the Lord and his judgments, much more not to fear the Lord and his goodness. If it is very sinful not to improve by the goodness of God, what must it be to grow worse by it? Holy fear examines every work, word, and thought; it is the soul's keeper, and it hath a jealous eye upon all our ways; it inquires what we have done, are doing, and what we purpose to do.

It is a purifying grace, *2 Cor. vii. 1. "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil."* *Prov. xvi. 6. It is an antidote against the power and poison of all other evils, either of suffering or against fear of doing good; it keeps the heart tender and humble: a proud man, and a man fearing God are a contradiction. He that fears God is daily bemoaning and mortifying the pride of his own heart, and therefore he cannot be a proud man. By these we may discover, whether we possess this precious fear of the Lord. Some cast off the fear of the Lord, imagining, that though they commit sin,*

they shall not be punished. Thus the presumptuous is described, even while hearing the word of the curse, Deut. xxix. 19. "Blessing himself in his heart," &c. they do not see the danger of sin, and so conclude there is none. But to fear the Lord is a proof that we know the Lord, that we know our duty, and what is best for us, "For there is no want to them that fear him," Psal. xxxiv. and who can desire to be in a better condition than to be above the fear of want. There is nothing to be feared more than this, that we should fear any thing more than God, and there is nothing to be desired more, than that we should fear God above all things.

*And to depart from evil is understanding.* Evil includes the evil of sin and the evil of suffering; but here we are to understand the evil of sin, and implying a departure from sin universally; as, 1st, A departure from all kinds of evil, not this or that, but every sinful evil, the omission of duty, as well as doing what is forbidden. 2d, We must depart not only from gross sins, but from the least sinful evil, and the least is too big and too bad for our company. Indeed he makes conscience of no sin who makes not conscience of all; and he is in danger of the greatest who departs not from the least. 3d, We must depart not only from the course and custom of evil, but a single act must be avoided and opposed. The best of men cannot choose but sin often; but no man should choose to sin, no not one. It is awful to say, I will not do it often, I intend not to live in it, I will do it but this once. 4th, We must depart from, or as 1 Thess. v. 22. "Abstain from all appearance of evil." As for the real appearances of evil, we must always abstain or depart from them. As for those things which through our ignorance are evils, though in themselves they are not, yet we must abstain from them while they appear so: "Whatsoever is not faith is sin" to us. Besides, it is not always a sufficient reason for us to do a thing because it is lawful; we should consider whether it is expedient, and rather forbear our own liberty than cause a brother to offend. 5th, As we are to depart from the appearances, so from the occasion of evil, Prov. iv. 14.

What is it to depart from evil? The Heb. word implies not only a departing with abhorrence, but with a purpose of revenge, that is, to kill and destroy it to the utmost of our power. They know not what it is to depart from evil, who retain the least affection for any sin, though they may have left off the practice of it. Again, he that has a spiritual understanding labours to bring forth much good fruit; and he only proves that he possesses it, who in the honesty and integrity of his soul departeth from evil. Sin is the worst of evils; it not only procures all penal evils, but to be given up to sin is the greatest punishment that can be inflicted. It at once dishonours God and slights his counsel, and grieves, quenches, and does despite to the Spirit of grace. Sin abounds in evil as it breaks the law, but as it opposes and rejects the light and love of the gospel it becomes excessively evil. It pollutes, debases, breaks our peace, and exposes us to endless evils as it separates between God and us, and yet it deceives and befools us, and retains many in slavery to its gains and pleasures even after they are convinced it is their duty to depart from it.

Since to sin is to do foolishly, therefore to avoid and depart from it discovers true wisdom. Sin made fools of our first parents, and also deceived Solomon the wisest of men. They are wise who depart from sin by repentance, but they are wiser who depart from sin by refusing to commit it.

It is our wisdom to keep ourselves in the love of God, both in the love of God to us and in our love to God; but this cannot be done unless we depart from evil, Psal. xcvi. 10. "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." This seems to intimate that the least complacency with evil is inconsistent with the love of God.

It is our duty, and discovers true wisdom, to submit to the will of God in bearing every cross he appoints us; but this we cannot do unless we depart from evil, for as no cross is heavy to him who thinks no sin light, so they who make light of sin think every cross heavy. The love of any sin either shuts our heart so that we cannot pray, or it stops the ear of God that he will not hear our prayer, Psal. lxxvi. 18.

To conclude this verse and chapter as the cvii. Psalm is concluded, "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." They who are so wise as to observe these two things, "To fear the Lord and to depart from evil," they certainly shall at last understand, by their own enjoyment and experience, the loving kindness of the Lord, or how kind the Lord is to them that fear him, and then they will abundantly bear their testimony to this truth, "That the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

*Ver. 1. Moreover, Job continued his parable, and said.* We may suppose Job made a second pause, to try if his friends had any thing further to say; but seeing they remained silent, he proceeds to vindicate himself from the charges they had brought against him.

*Ver. 2. O that I were as in months past.* That is, in the former part of my life. Because months are measured by the course of the moon, they are called moons. Job's moon was changed, it was full moon with him once, but now his light was almost gone. All things in this world, like the moon, appear daily in a new shape and are continually varying.

It is very common to desire relief from pain, and deliverance from whatever distresses and vexes us; and if our motives are, that God might be glorified in his goodness to us, and that we may praise and magnify the Lord for his kindness and compassion, it is very warrantable to pray for the return of our comforts.

And it may be that Job desired a restoration to his former state, that his friends might be convinced of their mistakes as to the cause of his affliction. It is not inconsistent with the duty of submission to the will of God, and patient enduring of afflictions, to intreat the Lord for relief from proper motives. If it is lawful to pray for the restoration of health, &c. how much more for the revival of our souls, to enable us to walk in the ways of God, and bring forth the fruits of holiness. It is good to be sensible of the want of mercies, but it is better to make a good use of present mercies. Happy they who improve and are thankful for present enjoyments. The best of men may soon have cause to say, as Job, about all those things, "O that it were with me as in months past."

*As in the days when God preserved me.* As man did not make, so he cannot preserve himself; all our safety is from the Lord. God having afflicted Job, and thereby appeared to withdraw his wonted preservation from him, made him complain; but God never ceases to preserve his people, nor to convey support to them under their greatest afflictions, though in an invisible manner. Heb. xiii. 5, 6 When they are in the most helpless condition they can say, "The Lord is my helper."

As we need a helper, so he is a sure one, for his care over his people is without intermission, Psal. cxxi. 4. He never slumbers nor sleeps. And we read of another keeper which the godly carry about them; they have a guard within as well as without, Prov. ii. 11, 12. The discretion and understanding in the text are the gift and grace of God implanted in man for his preservation. It is good to have a rule of holiness without to keep us, but it is far better to have a principle of holiness within to protect and preserve us.

Though Job seems scarcely to think that God was still preserving him under his sore afflictions, yet he ascribes all that he had formerly enjoyed, as well as what he still expected, entirely to God.

*Ver. 3. When his candle shined upon mine head, and when by his light I walked through darkness.* In scripture, the head notes the whole man, and a candle shining upon the head implies the clearest as well as the most useful light. Job once had a candle shining upon his head both in personal prosperity and in a hopeful posterity, but he lived to see both extinct, and now he speaks of them as departed joys.

Hence learn, That a godly man owns God as the author, and his favour as the spring of his prosperity and good success. He only gets riches by God's candle who gets them in ways of righteousness; and if he become poor, as Job, he may pray with confidence for a restoration.

The light of God is opposed to our own light, and to the light of any creature comfort. We may understand the light which Job calls his light, 1st, For the light of counsel and direction given either immediately or mediately from God. The word of God is the light of God; like light it discovers and lays open the hidden things of God and of man. 2d, By his light may be meant the favour, grace, and good will of God. The light of the counsel of God, *his word*, and the light of the countenance of God, *his favour*, and the light of the joy of God, *his consolations*, are enough to carry us through all the darkness of this world. The Lord shall guide his own people continually, even in their darkest ways. Hannah said, "He will keep the feet of his saints;" that is, from going out of their way.

And that you may have the light of God to walk by through all darkness, take heed, 1st, Of walking in, or leaning to the light of your own understanding, for you cannot expect that he should direct your paths when you neglect to own him in all your ways. 2d, Take heed that ye be not found walking in the light of your own comforts or in the light of your own counsels.

*Ver. 4. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle.* Youth signifies a distinct state or age of man, the spring of man's life, the prime and glory of it; but it may mean, When I was enjoying riches, power, and honour.

Hence observe, That youth, with all its advantages, is but a passing scene. Days of youth are usually days of sin and vanity. There are but few who can reflect upon and review that part of their life without much cause of blushing, yea, of loathing. Childhood and youth are vanity, and it is well when old age is not so too. It is comely to see youth grave and sober, not only taking an example from those that are good, but being an example unto others. Happy they who have lived so holy and usefully in their youth, that when they are discomposed with infirmities and distresses in old age, can say with Job, "O that it were with me as in the days of my youth."

*The secret of God* may be, 1st, The secret of his word. We may have the word which contains the will of God, yet not know the secret of God in it. God made known to him what he would do for him in mercy, and also what Job and all other partakers of this mercy are to do for God in a way of duty. Or it may mean, 2d, The secret of divine providence in his works, 1. To prevent evil from annoying him; 2. To preserve the good which he enjoyed; 3. To bless his labours. "Thus it was with me," saith Job, "and O that it might be so again." This intimacy and sweet fellowship with God he recounts with gratitude, and begs the renewal of it.

The wise men of the world cannot understand the secrets of the Spirit, but spiritual babes do, Matth. xi. 25. In the new birth "God puts his law into the mind;" that is, he gives his people a right understanding of it, and "he writes it in their heart;" that is, he renews their wills to choose it, and their affections to love and embrace it. The Holy Spirit, by the word, teaches him the mind of God, and also teaches him to make his requests known to God. And those who retire from the world, from its delights and cares, &c. to meditate in private like Isaac, are most likely to enjoy that secret intercourse with God by which they are at once sweetly refreshed and highly honoured, Hosea ii. 14. "I will allure her," &c. God brings many gracious souls into the wilderness of a troublesome condition, and he loves to allure all into a solitary condition, that he may then and there speak comfortably to them.

Thus we have a description of the prosperity of Job in the increase of outward things through the secret of God upon his tabernacle, and of his piety and increase in spiritual things through that sweet intimacy and secret converse which he had with God in his tabernacle. It is a great blessing to have the secret of God upon our tabernacle; but it is a far greater to keep close to God by secret communion in our tabernacle. Job cannot get his thoughts off from the ancient kindnesses of God to him, and therefore proceeds;

*Ver. 5. When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me.* The Almighty, or God all-sufficient, the bountiful distributor and giver out of all good things. When God acts graciously towards us, then he is said to be with us; but when we smart under any trouble, then he is said to be far off from us, Psal. x. 1. "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord?" &c.

The Lord is with all men, to provide for them, to observe what they do, &c.; but it is his favourable and special presence of which Job speaks. God is with his people in a peculiar distinguishing way. As there is a special salvation, so there is a special presence of God which is the sole privilege of the saints.

The Lord is with his people to assist them in doing good, and to enable them to resist evil either in themselves or others, and also to bear the afflictions which his fatherly hand, or the malice of the world, lays upon them; yea, he is with them not only to strengthen them in bearing, Isa. xlii. 10. but to bear a part with them, Isa. lxiii. 9. and in due season to deliver them, 2 Tim. iv. 16.

The Lord is with his people to direct, lead, and prosper them in their lawful undertakings, and he has promised especially to be with them in trouble; yet he has nowhere promised that troubles shall not assault them; therefore they have no reason to question his presence with them, for his power and grace is as visible in supporting his

people under trials, and enabling them to live by faith when sense has nothing to live upon, as in preventing or delivering them out of them.

The word rendered *children* signifies also young men or servants, which implies that children ought to be serviceable and obedient to their parents, and that faithful servants should be dear and acceptable to their masters, even as so many children. When children obey their parents like servants, and servants love their masters like children, then it is a comfortable family.

These words, *about me*, may mean, 1st, Their presence with him. 2d, Their readiness to attend and serve him. Children and servants are not about parents or masters for company, as friends are, much less for compliment, as flatterers are, but for use and help. Psal. cxxvii. 5. is as if the Psalmist had said, Their children will be ready both to plead and act for them; they will not see their parents wronged. Parents are as the centre, children as a circumference drawn about them.

Hence observe, That it is one of the greatest outward blessings to have a family full of dutiful godly children. It is the peculiar happiness of saints, that the Lord is ever with them in this life, and in the world to come they shall be ever with the Lord.

*Ver. 6. When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil.* This verse is an hyperbolical description of the abundance and affluence of Job's former estate, and intimates that he had great plenty of butter, and the olives that grew among the rocks yielded streams of oil.

Job had enough and to spare. A good man may have abundance, but he neither desires nor sets his heart upon it. He does not abuse it and grow proud with it. It is a great piece of spiritual wisdom to know how to want, but still greater to know how to abound, and yet to be temperate, sober, meek, and ready to forgive injuries. To abound and yet to be humble, to use the things of this world and not to abuse them, discovers the strength of grace; and when we abuse them, the more we have of them, so much the worse. Fulness gives an opportunity to pride, intemperance, and luxury, to discover themselves.

Job was not only a wealthy man, but a highly honoured and much respected magistrate, as appears in the following verses:

*Ver. 7. When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street. When I went out;* that is, out of mine own house. This form of speech is expressive of diligence. It is well when we can say, we go out, not to satisfy our lusts, or to take our pleasure, but to perform the works God has given us to do.

*Gates* were the appointed place for the administration of justice. So that his going to the gate was his going to the exercise of his civil power. Sitting is the posture of judges, and Job is said to have a seat or bench prepared for him in the *street*. The word translated *street* signifies a broad place. The sum of the verse seems to be, O that it were with me as in former times, when I went to the place of judgment.

Hence observe, That courts of justice and places of judicature should be open and public. Justice must not be administered in a corner, or in private. The gate of a city is an open public place, and that is the reason why the laws were administered in or near the gate, because it was of easy access, and most convenient for the people.

As magistracy is the subject matter of the remainder of this chapter, I shall make some observations on it as to its necessity and usefulness.

It is affirmed that magistracy is an ordinance of God, yet it is also an ordinance of man, as it is intended and ought to be employed for the good of man, and as every nation has a right to choose what form of government they find most suitable and commodious for them, 1 Pet. ii. 13. One ordinance of God does not oppose or contradict another. The order of Christ in the church does not thrust out the orders of men in commonwealths, much less does it bring in confusion. These are so far from violating one another, that they maintain and support one another. Magistracy consists, 1st, In superiority, by which the obedience of those who are subject are tried, as well as the temper of those who rule. 2d, In authority. 1. In commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil. Laws are the security of the people, in their persons, liberties, and estates. 2. As magistracy consists in an authority to make laws, so they are to apply and execute them in particular cases. They are to determine controversies, as well as distribute rewards and punishments, according to the good or evil of men's actions.

The necessity and usefulness of magistracy appears, when we consider, 1st, It is the cement and pillar of human society. 2d, It is the defence of the innocent, and the

terror of evil doers. 3d, It is the fence of liberty, and the preserver of public peace, by which millions of men subsist comfortably in one body politic.

It is said by some that Christians need no magistrates. They are "not to resist evil," and they ought not "to avenge themselves." But though a Christian ought not to return evil for evil, but take two blows rather than give one, and endure a double injury rather than do one; though he may not offend others, yet he may and ought to defend himself, which he cannot do without the magistrate's help; though he may not wrong others, yet he may right himself in meekness and righteousness; though he may not avenge himself, yet he may quietly put his cause into his hand who is the minister of God, "a revenger, (by office), to execute wrath upon them that do evil;" and who is that but the magistrate? and where there is no magistrate, who shall do it? The people often complain, and sometimes they have cause, that the magistrate oppresseth them. But a thousand oppressors for one speedily rise up, where there is none to hear rule.

As Job hath said enough in this verse to shew that he was a magistrate, so in the next and several following verses he speaks of the respect shewed him in that station.

*Ver. 8. The young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up.* The young men hid themselves, either as being struck with a reverence of Job's person, that they durst not appear openly before him, or fearing they should fail in their behaviour before him, or from supposing that he might have heard of their youthful vanities, and fearing he would reprove them.

Hence observe, that modesty and bashfulness is very becoming in young persons in the presence of their superiors. The word which the Hebrews use for a young man, signifies *hiding*. Young men and maidens should rather hide than put themselves forward at all times, especially when great and grave men appear, or when they have done amiss. As it is a great sin to hide or extenuate our faults by excuses, so it is no less sinful to shew our sins with impudence. Hypocritically to hide our sins, and audaciously to declare them, are high aggravations of our sins.

From the young men hiding themselves at the appearance of Job, may we not observe, what hiding will there be when Christ comes to the gate through the city, and prepares his seat in the street. Then how will young men full of vanity and voluptuousness—how will old men full of earthliness and covetousness—how will those mighty men, who are full of ambition and oppression, hide themselves? &c. It will prove a vain attempt. We say justly, that honour is in the person honouring. Therefore the more honourable the person is that gives the respect, the more honour is given by it. How honourable is Jesus Christ in that prophecy, Psal. lxxii. whom not only the cottagers of the wilderness, but he kings of the earth are to adore and worship! We may thus see the height of Job's honour, who was not only revered by young men, but by the aged, who, when Job came into the court, arose and stood, as if ready to hear his instructions. It is the duty of all to honour magistrates, not only because they are set up for the common good of mankind, but because they are appointed by God, and he hath put his own name upon them. Psal. lxxxii. 6. that being called gods, they should judge and rule as God does, with a love to and delight in impartial judgment and righteousness. And also, that all men might submit to and duly honour them, seeing to dishonour them reflects upon God, whose name they bear. Good magistrates aim to honour God, therefore we should honour them. And good magistrates are honoured by God, therefore we should honour them. Honour always goes with power, as the shadow with the body. Evil men in power receive honour with a mixture either of fear or flattery; but such as are good, and do good, have it conferred on them in love and in sincerity. When power and piety, dominion and desert, meet together in the person of the prince, then the young, struck with awe, modestly hide themselves, and the aged, filled with love to him, and thankfulness to God for him, arise and stand up. Happy are the people that be in such a case.

*Ver. 9. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand upon their mouth.* The word notes men in eminent authority. We may suppose them great men by birth or office, who were very able to speak on any business; but they willingly refrained talking, or as the word imports, they imposed silence upon themselves. They were so desirous to hear him speak, that they would not speak a word.

Hence observe, that it is sometimes both our duty and wisdom to forbear speaking. Amos v. 13. "Therefore the prudent shall keep silence," &c. It is much better to refrain talking than to speak to little purpose, or to prevent those who can talk to bet-

ter purpose. David intimates, that he had as much to do to keep his tongue as to rule a headstrong horse, Psal. xxxix. 1. Grace, like a spur, provokes us to speak for God, and for the good of others; and, like a bridle, it prevents us from speaking what would grieve the Spirit of God, or what may be either infectious or offensive to others. When the tongue hath got loose it is not easy to stay it, and we are thereby led into sin. Happy they who have learned to comply with the injunction, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." To refrain speaking is often as hard and as beneficial, as to restrain a fire from burning, or to lock up the clouds from unseasonable rain.

The last clause is of the same import. From which observe, That wise and discreet men are willing to be hearers, especially when what is spoken is so forcible that it cannot be contradicted, and so full that nothing needs to be added. It is said our Lord Christ spake with such authority, and often put all to silence.

*Ver. 10. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.* That is, they, as it were, put their words in their pockets; they spake no more than as if they had not a tongue to speak.

These nobles may be taken for the inferior sort of magistrates or city officers. Some render "the most eloquent leaders hid themselves," as if Job had struck the very orators dumb, and made eloquence itself speechless. Again, the original verb signifies to declare, publish, and teach, by word, by gesture, and by example. Jesus Christ is set forth under this title, Isa. lv. He is called a noble or leader. He goes before his people to show them the way, and to fight all the enemies that stand in their way. He is also a commander to the people; his commands are to be received and obeyed without dispute and at our utmost peril. It is the happiness of a people when their nobles are not only commanders but witnesses of and leaders to that which is good in itself and best for them.

Thus we have seen the attention paid to Job by the princes and nobles; the respect showed him by the whole body of the people is mentioned,

*Ver. 11. When the ear heard me then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me.* As if he had said, every one that "heard me blessed me," and every one that saw me "gave witness to me." The words, *heard me*, may be taken for those that heard me speak, and may include, those which heard me spoken of. "They blessed me," that is, they esteemed or reputed me blessed, or they wished and prayed for a blessing on my person and undertakings, they judged and called me happy; I was by the public consent and general vote of all, reputed one that had decreed and acted righteously towards all men. "When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice," that is, they have cause to rejoice and commonly they do so.

When those who have justice in their power manifest it in their decisions, then the common voice of the people shall be "the Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice," &c. It is true some are always complaining—nothing will please them; but it is a sad evidence that there is a failure of justice in the magistrate, when instead of blessing we hear of much complaining among the people, especially, when instead of blessing they are cursing and wishing evil to them. These are sad symptoms of many present evils, and presages of worse. In Job's commonwealth there was nothing heard but blessing, and thus it shall be at the fulfilling of that promise, Isa. i. 26. "I will restore thy judges as at the first," &c.

Some magistrates are blessed only for fear, and others for hope. Of the latter, Solomon speaks, Prov. xxvii. 14, "He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him." The undue honour which we give to others is our own shame and disgrace, so it turns out to those to whom it is given, not only because it hardens them in sin, but because others know it is false and see their shame and deformity through all the painted coverings which flatterers put on them. They can never receive honour from others who have not the root of it in themselves.

It is a poor thing for a prince to command the bodies of his subjects, while he has no room in their affections nor any share in their prayers. The love of a people is the best treasure and security of princes.

It is our duty to give our testimony for magistrates who are good and do good. We should vindicate them when wronged, and incite them when discouraged; but as hath been often observed, the safest and most friendly way is to tell men of their faults and failings to their faces, and to report their virtues and good deeds behind their backs.



In the following verses Job gives the reason why all sorts of men gave him such reverence, and had him in such high esteem. It was not merely because he was a great and wealthy man. It was not because he flattered them, or suffered every man to do what was right in his own eyes, forbearing to use his sword against offenders, that all were so well pleased with him. But the true reason was his impartial administration of justice to all, in his readiness to help the poor and oppressed, as is fully expressed from ver. 12 to 17, and his undaunted courage in opposing and suppressing proud oppressors, ver. 17. *I brake the jaws of the wicked, &c.*

It does not appear that Job set forth his own works that he might get the applause of men; but he spake what he had done, because his friends accused him for doing otherwise, and for the sake of truth, and that God might be glorified; he spake of his righteous acts, to shew that his faith had more in it than a verbal profession, but not as resting in his own righteousness.

*Ver. 12. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.* The word signifies the cry of one extremely afflicted, earnestly imploring aid, help, or assistance. There are three degrees of danger from the cry of the poor, 1st, To those who do not relieve them. 2d, To those who oppress them. 3d, To those who do not deliver them when they cry by reason of oppression. It is a sad thing, though very common, to hear the poor cry, and it is a blessed sight, though too seldom seen, to see the magistrate delivering them. The poor man's case cries always, and he sometimes cries out for help.

In Psal. lxxxii. a charge is given to magistrates, "How long will ye judge unjustly," &c. After this reproof a direction is given, "Defend the poor," &c. as if the Lord had said, this is your main business, when you have a rich man's cause before you ye are to do him right; but ye must take care to defend the poor, they are low in their condition, and they are often laid lower by oppression,—the magistrate is set up on purpose to protect and defend them.

Jesus Christ, who hath all power committed to him in heaven and in earth, lays out his power most of all for their help, who have neither power nor helper. It is fully described, Psal. lxxii. 12. that as the highest must stoop to him and obey him, so the lowest are raised up and saved by him. When rulers do so, they follow Christ's example as well as obey his laws. To help those that are able to help themselves, or have many helpers, is to act like men, but to help those that have none to help is to act like God.

What Solomon observed, Eccl. iv. 1. is experienced at all times; not a magistrate would take their part; oppressors were strong, and they were strengthened; the oppressed were weak, and they were deserted and left to shift for themselves.

*Ver. 13. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came on me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy;* that is, he who was in present danger of losing his life, or to be utterly ruined in his estate and cause, had reason to bless me.

Hence observe, that it is the duty of those who are relieved from a perishing condition, either by magistrates or others, to bless their deliverers, which implies thankfulness to and prayer for them; but if to neglect this discovers great ingratitude, what must it be to be ungrateful to God for Jesus Christ, whom we ought to praise and magnify for the deliverance he has wrought, and for the blessing he has procured, at the expense of laying down his life for rebellious sinners?

Job had, 1st, The good word of the people—they spake well of him and his government. 2d, He had the good wishes of the people—they all prayed for him; and he was sensible of the benefit of both, a blessing came upon him. *As the curse causeless shall not come,* so where there is cause for a blessing it shall come. Deut. iv. 13; is, as if it had been said, the blessing of the poor man may prove a greater gain to thee than his pledge could; if thou wilt give him cause to bless thee, thou shalt find the effect of his blessing.

The more miserable any man's condition is, he is laid under the greater obligation to him who relieves him, and by so much the more sinful it is not to give him assistance. Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. is at once a reproof and a threatening against all who slightly pass over the sad condition of others, who say they *knew it not*. All who are drawn to death wrongfully, and are ready to be slain unjustly, and those who are ready to perish under oppressing burdens, we should endeavour to deliver as far as we have opportunity and ability.

The Septuagint says, "I caused the widow's tongue to sing for joy." But all true joy

spring from the heart, for there may be a song in the mouth when sorrow and sighs are at the heart ; but when the heart sings there is cause of joy without, though there be no outward rejoicing. When widows are delivered from their oppressors, or relieved in their necessities, then they have cause of gratitude and joy.

Lest any should say that Job, in helping the poor, &c. was biassed with pity, and sought popularity, he confidently affirms that he was guided by his judgment not by his affections ; he did no injustice to others to serve the poor.

*Ver. 14. I put on righteousness and it clothed me, my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.* We are to understand righteousness here as nothing else but the giving of every man his right, and protecting every man in his right.

*And it clothed me.* That is, as if Job had said, righteousness covered all my proceedings, no man could see any defect of justice in what I did. Some say that righteousness is that by which the innocent are delivered, and judgment is that by which transgressors are punished, which comprehends the whole work of a magistrate.

The chief robe and diadem of a magistrate is justice and righteousness. If a magistrate, being robed and crowned, thinks that enough, he is no wiser than a child that plays with a rattle. We be to those who satisfy themselves with wearing the robe and diadem, or any emblem of office, and neglect or pervert the duties of it, which is the case when justice is not done speedily. Tedious delays in doing justice are within a step of doing injustice, or when it is not done impartially.

*To accept persons in judgment is not good*, that is, it is extremely bad. Laws are made without respect of persons, and then magistrates render a people happy and themselves honourable only when they are executed with impartiality and without delay.

Hence learn, that as righteousness and judgment are the crown and clothing of the magistrate, so of every man in his rank and place. It is truly noble and worthy of imitation to see a man afraid to do the smallest injury to a poor man, who has no man to fear though he do it. All the graces are the clothing of the saints ; all who have put on Christ should evidence it by putting on bowels of mercies, kindness, &c. Col. iii. 12. These sparkling in your lives is far preferable to gold and silver adorning your garments.

Job still proceeds to show why he had so much respect from the people.

*Ver. 15. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame.* The blind and lame may be taken generally for all such as are destitute of help ; as a blind man wants one to guide him, and a lame man one to support him, so they signify any that are in a helpless condition. So it may refer to any particular case brought before a magistrate. They are blind who know not how to order their business, and they are lame who are not able to carry it through. Many a man has a just and good cause who knows not how to proceed ; to such Job says, I gave direction and support.

Hence observe, that it is the duty of a magistrate to appear openly for the oppressed and for all who are poor and oppressed.

Those in supreme power should not leave the business of supplying the defects of those that apply to him for help, to officers and ministers, to indulge himself in pleasure. One of the ancients said, that "under a good governor there is no subject lame nor blind." The magistrate is a universal eye and foot ; he makes up natural, and provides a remedy for civil imperfections ; his prudence, power, and authority, mingled with pity and compassion, will easily do all these good things. This is not only the duty but the dignity and honour of the magistrate.

Every man may be said to be that which he does to and procures for another. He that feeds the hungry is their bread, and he that speaks for the dumb is their tongue, &c. Christ was eminently all this literally, Matt. xi. 5. and far more than all this mystically ; he opened the eye of the understanding, and the heart of Lydia, to receive the word of life.

When the wonderful cures were prophesied of, Isa. xxxv. it is added, "For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." That is, the Spirit shall be poured out abundantly, and all these soul infirmities and deficiencies shall be removed ; Christ is life and salvation.

*Ver. 16. I was a father to the poor : and the cause that I knew not I searched out.* When we would most emphatically express, and most thankfully acknowledge the good which we have received from any man, we say, He hath been to me as a very father.

Job was a father to the poor, not only as to affection, but as to the care which he had of them, and the provision which he made for them.

In a well governed commonwealth there is no want of fathers ; where there are good magistrates there are no orphans ; as God himself is, so are they in their place, fathers to the fatherless. But what shall we say of those who look upon their subjects rather as their slaves than their children, who are rather devourers than fathers of their country ; such magistrates are the mountains and the hills, &c. with whom the Lord will contend when he arises to shake terribly the earth, Isa. ii. 19. What will become of those rulers who oppress and fleece rather than help and protect the poor ?

The last clause seems to intimate that Job took pains to examine every cause that came before him, or that he searched out grievances even when no complaint was made.

Some read, *and the cause of him that I knew not, I searched out.* Judges should be blind as to persons, but eagle-eyed as to causes ; he should beware of passion and precipitancy, and do nothing by partiality.

*Ver. 17. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and pulled the spoil out of his teeth.* Here Job shews himself “a terror to evil doers,” as he had formerly been a “praise to them that do well.” He took order, that those who had a mind to do hurt, and whose hearts were set upon mischief, should have no power in their hand to do it. Broken jaws cannot bite, and at other times he has to pluck the spoil out of their teeth.

Hence observe, 1st, That wicked men are like wild beasts ravening for their prey, which they will not restore to those they have wronged until they are forced to do it. The church prays to God for aid against the wicked, under the notion of wild beasts, Psal. iii. 7. and lviii. 6. which is as if it had been said, Take away, O Lord, all their destroying strength, whose strength is to destroy. The Lord awakens the drunkards with the sad alarm, Joel i. 6. “For a nation is come up upon my land, strong and without number,” &c. ; that is, the enemies are fierce and cruel in their nature, and they have dreadful means and ways of exercising their cruelty. 2d, That it is the magistrate’s duty to break and punish the wicked, as well as to protect and relieve the good. Justice is impartial in punishing as well as in relieving. As death knocks at the door of princes as well as at the cottages of the poor, so justice makes no distinction of rich from poor. The sons of Belial who cannot abide to be governed either by God or man, are to their governors and fellow-citizens like grievous thorns, and were they not “fenced with iron and the staff of a spear,” that is, had they not outward strength and force, as well as authority, they could not handle them as they deserve, and as in justice they ought. There is a great temptation in worldly greatness ; but though Job was lifted up in wealth and power, yet his heart was not lifted up. It is a very hard thing to manage power well, to have power and not be overpowered with it. But was it comely in Job thus to commend himself ? He was under the necessity of vindicating himself from the accusations of his friends ; and it is a duty for a man to state facts and assert the correctness of his conduct. When he is charged falsely, he is bound to the utmost link of truth to acquit himself from every slander.

Job being vested with so much power and authority, &c. as stated from the 7th to the 17th verse, began to persuade himself that this mountain of his outward prosperity should not be removed :

*Ver. 18. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand.* Then I said, that is, I believed, and I had reason to believe, that my estate should never have suffered such a change as it has done, and so I said, *I shall die in my nest.* The word translated to *die*, notes a sweet, easy death. I shall go out as a lamp when oil is spent, I shall not die of any disease, but old age ; and there is no cure for it but death. I shall die quietly at home in my bed. He hoped to die in a high and safe condition, in allusion to birds that die in their nests.

Hence observe, That a godly man thinks of dying even in time of his greatest prosperity. It is a kind of death to a worldly man at rest in his possessions, to think of dying. But every godly man can cheerfully think and speak of death, and even in the midst of the fullest of the enjoyments of this life, can obediently submit to the call of God to depart. To die in peace, and pleasantly, is a great mercy. As Job had no desire to live always in the comforts of this world, so he did believe that his worldly comforts would outlive him, and that he should die in a warm nest.

Though Job’s expectations of dying in his nest may have something of carnal confi-

dence in it, yet the words he spake at the beginning of his troubles, chap. iii. 26. "I was not in safety," &c. seem to intimate, that in the height of his prosperity, he did not think himself so safe that trouble could not come at him. He was not in the rest of security, though he was in the rest of peace, nor did he judge himself so settled, that he should never be removed. Job having spoken of the glory and honour of the present state, he adds, as the glory of it all, that he *should multiply his days as the sand*, or that he should have a long time for the enjoyment of it. It is not sinful to think that we may live long, but we may quickly think and speak too much of long life. There are two very profitable meditations for us at all times:—the eternal duration of the life to come, and the shortness and uncertainty of this life. Our age should be but little in our own eyes, for it is as nothing before God. Though long life be a blessing, and we may look for long life according to the promise, yet we should rather think how soon the sand of our glass may be run out, than of multiplying our days as the sand.

*Ver. 19. My root was spread out by the water, and the dew lay all night upon my branch.* Job had as good ground to think that his estate would not only abide, but flourish, as we have to expect that a tree planted by a river, and whose branch is filled with dew every night, will do so. The water and the dew were the favour and good will of God to him. As he had grace in his heart, so a blessing upon all he took in hand. Job was in a prosperous condition, and he had reason to hope it would continue. He who has the blessing of God, has a river by his root and the dew upon his branch. Neither temporal nor spiritual comforts can continue without a constant supply from the Lord, any more than a tree can live and flourish that has neither moisture at the root nor dew upon the branches. As God is to his people "a place of broad rivers and streams" to keep them safe, Isa. xxxiii. 21. so he is a river and a stream to make them fruitful. It is an awful distinction between the godly and the wicked, Psal. i. when it is said, "But the ungodly are not so." Though he may flourish in outward things, yet not being from the water and dew of divine love, it is not abiding, it is only by common providence by which God blesses all the trees of the forest, not by that special providence with which the Lord blesses the trees of his inclosed garden. Now, as the whole state of the wicked, root and branch, shall be utterly consumed, both being under the curse of God, so the blessing and favour of God will keep a godly man always flourishing both in soul and body, as Job speaks in the next verse.

*Ver. 20. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.* This verse shews the effect of the former, and is as if he had said, the Lord by his constant kindness to me, hath maintained me in such honour, power, and prosperity, that I had no cause to fear any decay. Glory is that which renders either things or persons great and illustrious in the eyes of others. As the light of the power and greatness of God shines through and irradiates the whole work of creation, so the light of the goodness and mercy of God shines chiefly in the face of Jesus Christ, and that is his glory. When Moses desired to see the glory of God, Exod. xxxiii. 19. "He said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee." Now, as that which makes God glorious is his glory, so whatever makes man glorious, giving him a name and lifting him up in the estimation of others, that is his glory too; in which sense we are to understand Job's affirmation in this text.

*And my bow was renewed in my hand.* As if he had said, The Lord increased mine honour daily, and supplied me with seasonable assistance upon every occasion. Job's bow was his strength or executive power, as 1 Sam. ii. 4. "The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girt with strength," which seems to mean, that while men mighty in power aim at great matters, and endeavour to bring them to pass, or to hit the mark they aim at, presently their bow breaks; the means by which they hoped to effect it utterly fails them; whereas godly men, who were so weak and feeble that they were ready to stumble at every straw laid in their way, have their strength so renewed, that they can remove the greatest difficulties out of the way. It is a high favour from the Lord, when the estimation, power, and authority of magistrates are renewed and daily confirmed to them.

These three verses are expounded with reference to the resurrection of the body and of eternal life by some of the ancients. As if Job had said, I shall die in my nest comfortably, and after a while I shall rise again gloriously, and then "I shall multiply my days as the sand."

*Ver. 21. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel.* This intimates, that men of all ages and degrees heard him with great attention and diligence, with reverence and esteem, giving credit to what he spake, so as to obey it. For indeed, they that only hear and do not obey, cannot properly be said to hear; we never rightly hear the word, till we resign ourselves to the obedience of the word. Many hear the word and yet perish in their sins. It is only those who believe and embrace a God in Christ, as revealed in the word which they hear, that are saved.

The Lord intreated Israel for an audience, Psal. lxxxi. but it is said, ver. 11. "they would not hearken to my voice, Israel would none of me." And not to give ear to, or obey the word of God, is to reject it.

*And waited, and, &c.* Seems to imply, that he spake much, yet they were not tired, but waited patiently. Silence is a sign of submission both to the word and works of another, Hab. ii. 20. "The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him;" that is, let all submit to what the Lord is doing, and to what he will do. Thus to keep silence is a gracious and habitual resignation of ourselves, either to the counsels and commands of the Lord, or to his providential dispensations.

When any thing is spoken in truth and faithfulness, whether it be by way of direction, exhortation, or consolation, we may call it counsel in a large sense. But strictly taken, it is direction what to do in difficult cases. Counsel is the issue and result of a man's most serious meditations. Good counsel is precious. They are wise who can give good counsel, and so are they who are willing to receive it; and they who are willing to take it will soon rise above their imperfections.

*Ver. 22. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. They spake not again,* as if enough had now been spoken to the point, not as if they had not been pleased with what was spoken, much less did they speak again by way of contradiction. They acquiesced in what Job had spoken. But this is no way inconsistent with examining and comparing all that we hear, by the Scriptures, as the noble Bereans did. No assertion of man is to be received implicitly. This honour belongs to God alone, that no man must speak after him.

Job's speech dropping, may imply that he spake gently and sweetly to them, and that he accommodated himself to his hearers with care and prudence, adapting his counsels to the capacity of those to whom he spake. He that speaks hard points and high-flown notions, or who speaks in a high language upon any subject to them that are low in parts, speaks rather to shew himself than to profit them. The apostle advises those that teach others to divide the word aright, that is, to administer to every man his proper portion, as he is fit and able to receive it. This dropping may allude to the efficacy of heavenly doctrine falling upon the soul, which not only softens, but nourishes and refreshes it, and causes it to bring forth fruit.

*Ver. 23. And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain.* As the earth by its clefts and chaps doth as it were cry to the Lord for a draught of rain to quench its thirst, so the people came to Job with open mouths, that is, enlarged desires, to receive his counsel. The meaning of the last clause is, they did wait for my counsel as a thing most desirable and profitable, even as the latter rain.

Hence observe, That as rain refreshes and fructifies the earth, so does good counsel and instruction the mind of man, and enables him to manifest that he is neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. It produces effects for which there is no parallel in the natural rain. When this spiritual rain, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, falls into a heart as barren as the wilderness, or as hard as a flinty rock, it transforms it into good ground, and makes it bring forth fruit abundantly. Whereas, the natural rain nourishes weeds as well as the good grain, this spiritual rain withers the lusts that are daily springing up in the heart and shewing themselves in the life; it only strengthens the fruits of holiness. The word of truth and grace is the most desirable thing in the world to all who know its value and their own need of it. It is to be lamented with showers of tears that those who have most need of it are ignorant of its real worth, and that some who profess a regard for the word are so little influenced by it. It is sad to perish for want of the rain of the word, but it is much more sad to perish in it and by it, for as the rain and the snow do not return back without accomplishing that which God pleases, so neither shall his word; it shall have an effect either to convert or to condemn.

*Ver. 24. If I laughed on them, they believed it not: and the light of my countenance they cast not down.* The word *laughed* is used for scorn and derision, Psal. ii. 4.; and it signifies smiling in good will, Eccl. x. 19.; or it imports an affability of behaviour towards others, and so it is opposed not only to sorrow, but to severity and austereness. So it may be as if Job had said, If I used an open, free, and familiar carriage to them, what then? *they believed it not.* Did they think Job's face was the disguise of his heart? No. His jest had a kind of earnest in it, and his smiles did not at all lessen his reputation.

But, some think, *they believed it not*, refers to any matter laid before Job for his judgment upon it, at the hearing of which, if he did but smile, they were ready to doubt their own cause, thinking he saw what they did not; and the last clause is as if he had said, And when I had shewed my approbation of a business by the cast of my eyes, they did not cast down the *light of my countenance*; that is, they did not refuse or oppose me, but they looked upon that sign as a rule to go by.

The *light of the countenance* may be composed of favour, cheerfulness, gravity, courage, &c. all or any of which may be included in the light of Job's countenance, which he says they did not cast down; that is, they did not abuse my favour, nor disapprove my cheerfulness, they did nothing either to grieve or shame me.

Now as there is a vain and sinful mirth, and a mad laughter, so there is a holy and commendable joy, arising, 1st, From faith in, or assurance of the promise, that in due season we shall eat the fruit of it. 2d, There is a gracious laughter, arising from confidence of deliverance in times of danger. 3d, It includes thankfulness for deliverance, and upon the receipt of any mercy.

Observe, That familiarity with inferiors doth commonly breed contempt. Parents are often put to shame by their children on this account; and those who laughed on, or indulged their children, have had much cause of sorrow and grief from them. As it is the appointment of God that man should be ranked into and live in a comely subordination; so it is an act of his mighty power, yea, of his gracious favour, to keep them in it.

Observe, That as it is an honour among men, so it is a mercy from God, when a due reverence towards superiors is kept up in the hearts of those under them.

Job now concludes his whole discourse about the grounds of his confidence, that his worldly prosperity should continue, and gives a further proof of his great authority and respect among the people.

*Ver. 25. I chose out their way, and sat as chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners.*

*I chose out their way*; that is, they applied to me for advice and direction in every difficult business, and they acquiesced in and followed my counsel with good success. No man can, and no good man would, be the chooser of his own way; it is his desire and daily prayer, that God would choose for and lead him in a right way.

*I sat chief*, 1st, In the affections of the people; 2d, And in power and authority; or, 3d, He occupied the chief places in all the meetings of the people.

*And dwelt as a king in the army.* I was as much honoured amongst my people, and as readily obeyed, as a king is amongst or by his army; and notwithstanding of this power and authority, I was a comforter of mourners. Some conceive Job to have been among his people as a king comforting a mourning or defeated army. But it is an excellent example of a wise ruler who does not desert, but is ready to take part with and uphold the spirits of his people in their worst condition. He is a wise man that understands his own way, Prov. xiv. 8.; but to be able to be a public guide is an argument of great wisdom.

Job said of his friends, "miserable comforters are ye all;" but he here asserts that he was a comforter of mourners. Great men should condescend to the poor, and mingle the exercise of pity with the exercise of power. It is well when rulers are at once a terror to evil doers and a comfort to mourners; and it is truly pleasant to see them deserve the love of their people as well as their obedience. The obedience of subjects is like that of servants, only limited; it must be in the Lord, that is, in things honest and lawful.

It is an honour as well as the duty of rulers to be able to direct and point out the way for those under their inspection. They must not only be such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, but able men; that is, men of understanding who know the law; or how shall they direct others? It is well when governors are so just and

righteous that they make no mourners, but far better when they are so kind as to comfort mourners.

Job's whole discourse upon this point is a picture of an excellent ruler and of a happy people. What can be desired more of a man in power, than that he should be so wise as to choose out the way, and have power like an army to defend, and compassion like a father to comfort all his people as their several situations may require.

This finishes Job's description of his former prosperous estate. He now proceeds to speak of his present dark and disconsolate condition.

### CHAPTER XXX.

In this chapter Job gives a description of his poor, desolate, ruined condition, in as pathetic a strain as he did before of his prosperous one. He speaks of the extreme contempt poured on him from verse 1 to 10, and assigns the reason, verse 11 to 18, and then sets forth the diseases of his body, and his present misery from the hidings of God's face. He concludes the doleful story in a proverbial lamentation.

*Ver. 1. But now they that are younger than I have me in derision.* He speaks with grief of heart, comparing what he had been with what he was now. None are so low as they who can only say they have been high. To be derided is more grievous than to be reproached. Sorrow never strikes so deep as when we see and hear others rejoicing and jeering (both of which are included in derision) at our sorrows.

As Job's outward state changed, so did the opinions of men about his person. They that were elder than Job had him in honour formerly, but now his juniors hold him in derision. No sooner is he afflicted but he is slighted and derided.

Hence learn, that it is foolish to be lifted up with the applause, or cast down with the deridings of men. Isa. ii. 22. "Cease ye from man," &c. It is the happiness and comfort of believers that God does not alter his apprehensions of them upon any outward change upon them; and men's doing so is a proof that they are ignorant, and that they are but men. To be reviled by wise and good men, or by those who are young, but especially by those who have formerly applauded us, is a heavy burden. Happy they who are enabled, like Christ, not to revile again. To be more concerned for God's glory than our own honour, is the best means of despising every reproach for his sake.

*Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.* It is probable this was a proverbial speech to point out an unworthy man, and implies that they are held in the very lowest estimation; and how many are in high stations who deserve to be compared to dogs? Isa. lvi. 10, 11.

The silver and gold of a wicked man cannot hide him from disgrace, and the poverty of a godly man cannot obscure his worth. But when any are poor and wicked too, they draw double contempt upon themselves.

*Ver. 2. Yea whereto might the strength of their hands profit me in whom old age was perished?* The text may be rendered, *in whom time is perished*; that is, they have wasted their days in idleness, or doing what is worse than nothing. They were so far from being fit for any employment in their youth, that in old age they did not incline to any honest business, nor dedicate themselves to what was good; they did not live soberly, much less holily in their old age. Though they did not perish in their youth, yet both their youth and their old age perished. The strength of a young man profits little if he is destitute of the good qualities of an old man; and it is mournful that some old men have nothing of old age but the infirmities of it. The hoary head is not a crown, but a reproach, except when it is found in the way of righteousness. Solomon concludes, Eccles. ix. 13. "Better is a poor and a wise child," that is, a child that is ready to hear and follow good counsel, "than an old and foolish king." To be old is a blessing of nature; to be a king is a prerogative of state. To be foolish is to be unworthy of both, especially to be so foolish as neither to be able to counsel himself, nor so tractable as to receive counsel from others. At once to grow old in years and in obstinacy and self-conceit, is the worst of childishness in old men. It may well be said of all who live in folly and vanity, they are dead while they live.

*Ver. 3. For want and famine they were solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste.* Job having described the rabble that derided him, by their sloth and indolence, now speaks of their poverty, which no man is to be up-

braided with, except such as bring it upon themselves by idleness and prodigality. There may be much want, and yet no famine; but famine is a want of all things. When graceless men have brought want upon themselves as to the things of this world, they are destitute of all comfort and contentment; therefore they are *solitary*, or as the margin, They were dark as the night. A godly man knows how to be hungry and how to abound; and a carnal man knows neither. A godly man knows how to have a feast in famine, Hab. iii. 17. They who have an unchangeable God for their portion cannot want a portion of joy and comfort in the worst of changes.

To be *solitary*, is to be bereaved or forsaken of all our friends. Matt. xxvi. 46. "They all forsook him and fled." 2 Tim. iv. 16. "No man stood by me," &c. Some godly men, grieved with the evil conduct of others, have abandoned their society, and some retire that they may enjoy communion with God; or like Jacob, who left his company that he might spread his case and condition before the Lord. And thieves and debtors flee and live solitary, lest the law should take hold of them, which seems to be the cause of those in the text *fleeing into the wilderness*; that is, into any barren or uninhabited place. It is said a widow is desolate, however many friends she may have about her, because she wants the company of her husband. And Christ tells the Jews, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate," because God was departing thence. The greatest throngs and congregations are desolate places unless God by his Spirit be with them in their administrations. Sin drives all that live and continue in it into a desolate condition, wherein there is no way. It leads into trouble, but shews no way out of it. Christ, who is the way and the truth, can direct us and lead us in the way of life. Sin is a spiritual death, and issues in eternal death.

Some take *former time* for lately, and then the sense is, It was as it were but yesterday that they were forced to hide their heads in a doleful desolate wilderness. We at present enjoy fulness of bread, but let us beware of idleness and prodigality, for these often produce want and famine to individuals, even when the industrious and frugal have abundance. The conduct of these men exposed them to punishment, and therefore they ran into solitary places to hide themselves, more ashamed of their poverty than of their sins.

Job farther describes the miserable condition of his deriders by the meanness of their fare, and the pitiful shifts they took to preserve themselves from starving.

*Ver. 4. Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper-roots for their meat.* Mallows are said to be medicinal, and have a peculiar virtue in them to appease the rage of hunger. It is a hard, homely kind of feeding; but perhaps it may be taken here for any coarse fare. And to shew their great want, it is said they eat the juniper-roots, which could not be from choice. Some read, "And juniper-roots to warn themselves by," and then the meaning is, they had mallows for meat, and juniper-roots for firewood.

Hence observe, that hunger will make meat of any thing, and life may be supported with a little even of the meanest and coarsest fare.

Those who feast on delicacies would do well to remember that many are under the necessity of filling their bellies with food that they could not taste. Let such beware of sinning away their plenty. God may justly bring those to be glad of mallows, &c. who indulge in luxury and dissipation. Christ says, John vi. 22. "Labour for the meat that endureth to everlasting life." Who would not endure labour as long as life lasteth, for meat that endureth to everlasting life. The laziness and cowardice of many professors shews they have no holy appetite after spiritual food. They who have a suitable appetite will both labour and endure any pain that they may be filled.

*Ver. 5. They were driven from among men, they cried after them as after a thief.* This is the true cause why these men lived in desert places. It was not choice, but compulsion. The word signifies to be ejected or cast out, and that with shame and disgrace. They were such a generation of men as were admitted nowhere, and nowhere permitted to remain. The godly must not only come out from the world, but when they are gathered into a church, if they find the world, that is, evil men among them, they must drive them out. They who are unfit for civil converse, are much more unfit for spiritual communion. To be driven out from the society of men is a great evil; and to be thrust out of the communion of a church, either directly or indirectly, (by those who plead the judgment of charity for receiving or retaining worldlings in their communion), is such a trial, that nothing but conscious innocence, and the comforts of God's presence, can make tolerable and profitable. They either were



thieves, or they were under as much disgrace as thieves; and slothful persons are justly numbered among thieves; for those who will not labour, steal all they obtain from others; and therefore to succour idle persons, and to give to lazy poor, is not so much a relieving their wants as a strengthening their vices.

*Ver. 6. To dwell in clefts of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks.* As these men were driven into the wilderness, so they abode there without any other house than such as the wild beasts have. To have no other house than the clefts of the valleys or a rock is an uncomfortable dwelling; and therefore Jesus Christ, who was to suffer all those evils which are common to man in this life, had no stately palace prepared for him, but a manger in a stable; and while he was purchasing a house not made with hands, he had no certain dwelling-place. "The son of man hath not where to lay his head." The Heb. is, *caves or holes of dust*. And what is the best dwellings of men but artificial dust formed into a beautiful fabric? All the difference is, that the caves or holes where these men lived were only natural dust. And as if this could not make them miserable, Job goes on to describe these men's misery.

*Ver. 7. Under the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together.* The ass among beasts is properly said to bray. As wicked men in great power roar like lions in the forest, so in distress they bray like asses among the bushes. Those who want the shelter of a good conscience seek it where it is not to be found. Adam having sinned, ran presently among the bushes. There was the beginning of this pitiful shift. What pitiful work do men make to cover their guilt from men, and still worse to hide it from God. Isa. xxx. "Wo to the rebellious children, that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin." This is to hide ourselves among nettles. All the denials, pleas, and excuses, which men of the greatest gifts make to cover and conceal their sins, (without Christ), are but scratching thorns and stinging nettles to vex and smart them. The effects of sin are sad and miserable even in this life. Being among the bushes of a perplexed state, they are in a continual toss and trouble of spirit; they bray like asses. They are described, Isa. li. 20. Both godly and wicked fall into the same sufferings, but they are never the same in their sufferings.

Job next asserts that they were sprung from a base root.

*Ver. 8. They were children of fools, yea, children of base men; they were viler than the earth.* He is a fool who has little or no wit to choose his way, and so is he also who makes little or no conscience of his ways. Perhaps Job means, that they were children of such fools as want honesty in their actions and conscience in their dealings.

*Yea, children of base men.* The Heb. is, of men without a name. They were such as either never lived in any reputation, or, which is worse, they had outlived it. It is said of the faithful elders, Heb. xi. 1, that through faith they obtained a good report; the holy actions of their faith made them famous; but wicked and unworthy actions render men vile and base in the sight of God and all good men. No man has reason to boast of his great titles, power, or high place in the world, as if honour lay in them. True honour is honesty, justice, grace, righteousness, when these shine in the life and conduct of any, they are honourable indeed, and none but the godly are so in the sight of God, Isa. xlii. 2.

*They were viler than the earth.* The word signifies to smite as well as to be vile, and therefore some read, *they were smitten out of the earth*. They were men of broken fortunes, and beaten for their ill manners out of the earth.

Job now shows how they abused him with their words.

*Ver. 9. And now I am their song, yea, I am their bye-word.* The word *now* intimates that the time was when none durst or would be so bold with him; but now in the time of my affliction they unite to abuse me; I am the matter or subject of their song; they make scoffing songs upon me and my afflictions. To make abusive songs of others is the worst way of abuse; it is the height of derision to deride in songs, for it shows the delight the derider takes in it when he can turn his malice into a song and poetize in reproaches. Is it possible that a man can have the least claim to the name of a Christian that can vent his spleen in a manner that sober heathens forbade under a very great penalty, and among the Romans it was death to do it; and if magistrates take care of the good names of their subjects, what should be done to those who make songs in scorn and derision either on the conduct or discourses of their office-bearers in the church? [The order of the day is to wink and pass over for fear of disturbing the peace.]

Hence observe, That it is not only impiety, but inhumanity, to rejoice and make diversion at the distresses of others. If the devil have any joy it is in the misery of man.

*Yea, I am their by-word.* They talk of me frequently, and despitefully, and contemptuously. It is an easy matter to talk much of, but a hard thing to make a right use of the sufferings of others. Few improve them to the glory of God or to their own profit; were we wise when we hear or speak of the distresses of others, we should neither blame nor despise them on account of them, but while we pity and sympathize with the afflicted, we should instruct and admonish ourselves and others by them.

*Ver. 10. They abhor me, and flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face.* It was a great affliction to Job to be jeered in their songs and to be made the subject of their common talk, but to be abhorred and loathed as a man unworthy to live, must have been far more distressing to upright Job. Those who honoured him formerly as if he had been more than a man, now abhor and detest him as if he were some hateful or hurtful beast.

Hence observe, 1st, That nothing is more uncertain than honour from man; for those who adore and flatter the prosperous, will as readily jeer at and abhor the afflicted. 2d, That many are applauded by men who are abhorred of the Lord, and some are hated by men who are honoured and loved by the Lord, Psal. x. 2. "The wicked bless the covetous whom the Lord abhors," and whether we respect things or persons, that which is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God, Luke xvi. 15.

*And flee far from me.* As if they thought they could not get far enough from him. When health and wealth depart, carnal friends and flatterers will flee away. "A friend loveth at all times," that is, it is the genius of a friend, and a true friend will do so. As temptation tries our faith, patience, and sincerity, so it tries the love and compassion of our friends. They are rare friends of whom it may be said, as Luke xxii. 28. "Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations." Happy are they who are interested in that promise, Heb. xiii. 5. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." We may interpret the last clause metaphorically, neither for a direct spitting in his face, nor in his presence, but for any kind of disgrace and disrespect put on him, especially by rude and uncomely language. The best of men may and often have the worst reproaches cast upon them.

*Ver. 11. Because he hath loosed my cord and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me.*

*He hath loosed,* That is, opened or untwisted *my cord*, by which we are to understand the authority and power with which he was invested. *To afflict*, properly signifies to humble and lay low. Self-humiliation is, or ought to be the effect of affliction, and those whom God afflicts will be laid low by the contempt, &c. of the ungodly, as it follows.

*They have also let loose the bridle upon me.* We may understand it either of the bridle of their tongues, or of the bridle of his authority; and when once the latter was loosened, they quickly let loose the former. By the metaphors of a *cord* and *bridle*, authority, and obedience to authority are held forth to us, so inferiors should reverence their superiors. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." This and that sort or model of magistracy is indeed an ordinance of man, or of his appointment; but that there should be magistrates, and that the people should honour them, is an ordinance of God. He indeed changes power from vessel to vessel as he pleases, and in what vessel soever he puts it, we must submit to it. From Job ascribing the loosing of his cord to God—Learn, That it is of God that magistrates retain or lose the obedience of their people. When Solomon provoked God, he loosed the cord of his authority, and the people loosed the bridle before him; and if ever any people loosed the bridle before their prince's face, it was in Rehoboam's case, and this was of God, for the great sins wherewith Solomon had provoked him. Some princes fancy they can hold their subjects under by power and policy. But how is it imaginable, that hundreds of thousands of people should submit to the power of one, or of a few, unless God were in it. I would counsel magistrates, 1st, To be thankful when their cord is not loosed, and acknowledge God in it. 2d, Fear God and serve him, as Psal. ii. If the wrath of Christ be kindled against princes, who knows how soon the wrath of men may be kindled against them also? If God let loose the cord, they will let loose the bridle before the faces of the greatest potentates in the world. No evil could touch Job while God maintained an hedge about him, but as soon as God (for his trial) al-

lowed a gap to be made in it, all evil brake in upon him ; how much more evil will break in upon those from whom God withdraws his protection in anger !

When Job saw his deriders loosing the bridle, he viewed it as a consequence of God having loosened his cord. So did David, when Shimei cursed him, and in the language of Job said, " God hath loosened my cord, and this man looseth the bridle of his tongue against me."

*Ver. 12. Upon my right hand rise the youth, they push away my feet, and raise up against me the ways of their destruction.* The right hand signifies superiority of place, strength ; and here it may intimate, that these young persons were at hand. As to *rise*, includes a sudden unexpected assault ; so to *push away the feet*, implies extreme incivility ; and the last clause signifies a mount artificially cast up, upon which a battery is made against any strong hold, that is, they behaved as if they intended to destroy me. Let us learn, That an afflicted person is a sacred thing, and it is very grievous for an aged afflicted person to be derided by inexperienced youth. Man never sins with a higher hand against man, than in vexing any that are laid low.

*Ver. 13. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper.* To speak evil of the good ways of others, is to mar and destroy their ways. Like the lawyers, Luke xi. 52. " They enter not in themselves, and them that are entering in they hinder." Not to walk in a good way ourselves is bad enough, but to discourage or stop others, is still worse. Thus Job describes their perverseness, by their reproaching him for or opposing him in the ways of equity and piety. The word rendered *calamity*, signifies any evil accident or trouble befalling us in this world. Job's calamity came fast enough upon him, and stuck close enough to him, yet these men set it forward as if they were afraid he would not be soon enough miserable ; and then he represents them as so active, that *they have no helper*, that is, they have none to encourage them, they need none to provoke them to do this mischief, they do it willingly, though they see they can get nothing by it.

*Ver. 14. They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters : in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me.* This similitude may refer to a river when it has broken its banks, or to a land flood which sweeps away all before it. Great waters make clean work. We read of a *sweeping rain*. Thus saith Job, these men having broken the banks of modesty and sobriety, take their full scope to insult over and deride me as they please, and I am no more able to withstand them than a man is able to withstand an inundation of waters breaking in upon him.

Hence observe, That when the Lord withdraws his protection, every evil invades and prevails over us. Our Lord said, " This is your hour." The hedge of divine protection being laid aside, his enemies rushed upon him like a flood under the influence of the Prince of darkness.

Again observe, That wicked men are not only violent in opposing the godly, but unanimous ; they came in like a flood upon Job as if they had been but one man. The divisions of good men in a good cause, is as lamentable as the union of bad men in persecuting the godly. When shall we see the church, as in Acts ii. 42. of one accord, or as having but one soul in many bodies. Their rolling themselves upon him in the desolation, intimates that they took the advantage of his low situation by the blackest slanders and severest censures, to increase his calamity. Wicked men always hate the godly in their hearts, but they have not always an opportunity to shew it. But whenever they are reduced to what Job calls a desolation, or a desolate condition, then they will not spare ; a godly man's extremity is a wicked man's opportunity to vex and distress him, and they proved too successful, as

*Ver. 15. Terrors are turned upon me : they pursue my soul as the wind ; and my welfare passeth away as a cloud.* Inward terrors or trouble of mind are more grievous than all outward troubles.

*Turned* seems to be an allusion to a wild beast, who, seeing his prey, turns upon it, and then follows it with eagerness, as the next words intimate.

*They pursue my soul as the wind.* That is, they pursue my soul to the uttermost, as the wind. It comes suddenly, violently, very swiftly. They came before he was aware, so forcibly. They were flying terrors, so that he could neither flee from nor escape them.

The word which is rendered *welfare* signifies salvation. As there is no corporal good but may wholly and altogether pass away, 1 John ii. 17. so there is no spiritual good which may not pass away in part, or as to the sensible degrees of our enjoyment.

But it is altogether impossible that Job's salvation could pass away as a cloud, or as an eagle towards heaven, which will not be lured back. For when the comforts of the soul flee away, this consolation remains, though not with us but for us, that they shall certainly return, for God is good, and will accomplish the desire of the soul that seeketh him.

Job proceeds to shew the sad effects of these terrors, both on his inward and outward man.

Ver. 16. *And now my soul is poured out upon me ; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me.*

And now, that is, things being come to this pass, it follows, *my soul is poured*, &c. In the former verse the word used for soul signifies his chief or principal one ; but here the word is of a larger signification, and is variously rendered.

When Job says *my soul*, &c. we may take it, 1st, for life ; and then it is, I am ready to die ; I am near expiring, &c. 2dly, My soul, that is, my spirit, my strength, yea, my patience, are all near exhausted. I have been so long wearied with these afflictions, that I can hold out no longer, Isa. lvii. 16. ; and to *pour out* notes abundance, Joel ii. 28. Isa. xlv. 3. When God pours out abundantly, his fulness is nothing lessened.

Some understand this pouring out of the irresolution of Job's mind. When a man knows not what to do, his soul is as it were dissolved or poured out, and when he comes to a settled purpose in any point, the several powers of his soul may be said to be gathered up and knit together again. Prayer may be called a pouring out of the soul to God, because the saints open their whole mind to God ; they keep nothing back. It is an easy matter to pour out words in prayer. But it is only under the influence and by the direction of the Holy Spirit that the soul can pour out earnest and fervent prayers to God, and there can be no doubt that in this sense Job's soul was poured out upon him.

The last clause may be rendered, The days of humiliation, of pressing down have taken hold upon me. Job speaks as if he were under the dominion, rule, and power of affliction.

Hence learn, that afflictions in their commencement and continuance are under an appointment, and will stick fast till God rebukes them. As they cannot touch without commission, so they will neither be persuaded nor bribed to let go until God give orders to release.

Affliction having thus taken hold of Job, he says how hardly it used him.

Ver. 17. *My bones are pierced in me in the night season, and my sinews take no rest.*

Trouble upon the bones, import not only the sorest sufferings of the body, but of the soul also, Psal. li. 8, and vi. 2. "heal me for my bones are vexed." It was the healing of his soul that he prays for, and the trouble which wounded it is called the "vexing of his bones," Psal. cii. 3. When we break the commandments of God by sinning, it is no marvel if he brings us to the deepest sense of his displeasure, even as if he had broken our bones upon the wheel ; and if God break our bones with godly sorrow to repentance, it is a great mercy. It is said of those that keep a fast indeed, Isa. lviii. 11. "and make fat thy bones," that is, he will comfort thee and fill thee with joy, both of soul and body, so thou need not fear the wasting of thy body with fasting. The care of God over every one of his people, is expressed, Psal. xxxiv. "He keepeth all his bones," &c. It may be rendered, "Every one of my bones are shaken." Job laments that all his bones were pierced as if they had been but one bone, and there seems to have been neither mitigation nor interval, for he had no rest, even in the night season. He had a continual fever feeding upon the vitals of his body.

Who can tell the sadness of that man's condition whose mind is troubled, whose body is diseased, and all outward comforts fled from him ?

Ver. 18. *By the great force of my disease is my garment changed, it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.* No man is able to stand before the force of disease, the most mighty of men cannot stand before them. The filth that issued from his sores might change the colour of his garment, or rather it may refer to the shifting of his garments, as if he had said, My disease is so offensive both to myself and others, that I am obliged to change my garments often. O how foolish to boast of bodily strength, or to be vain and proud of gay apparel ! Job's disease bound him about as the collar of his coat, he was straitly bound by it. How many are prisoners to various diseases, and thereby held fast ! There is no getting the neck out of that collar at pleasure.

Those who feel pain, or are arrested by sickness, would willingly spend all they have upon physicians and medicines to get ease and cure. While those who are enjoying health, that prince of temporal blessings, are neither thankful for it nor give God glory by serving him with it. Let us be ready to drop our clay tabernacles, in hope of receiving them again, freed from every disease and sorrow, and every consequence of sin.

*Ver. 19. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes.* I am cast into great and deep affliction; my worldly goods are gone, and so is my good name; my health is gone, and so is my honour; my outward prosperity is gone, and so is my inward peace. To cast any thing away is at once an act of violence and displeasure.

To be cast into the mire intimates to be all over polluted, and also the utmost shame and disgrace.

To be compared to dust and ashes is to be of little or no estimation. It is to be reduced to the lowest state incident to man.

Learn, that every man in his best estate, even when raised to the highest power and honour attainable in this world, is but vanity, dust, and ashes; but he is not convinced of it until he is taught it by afflictions and humbling providences. It would be our wisdom, while we enjoy health and strength, to consider willingly that which a little sickness will bring us to, whether we will or not. Frequent and familiar converse with death might convince the greatest of worldly men of that which the best of saints acknowledge, when they draw near to and converse with God,—that they are dust and ashes.

*Ver. 20. I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and thou regardest me not.* Every godly man prays when he humbly and sincerely makes his request unto God in faith of Jesus Christ. But he that cries does more than manifest his desires, he pleads for no delay, he will not be denied.

In Psal. lv. 17, It is not barely said, I will pray thrice a day, or very often, but he adds, and cry aloud; and what will this cry obtain? a hearing without doubt, "He shall hear me." But Job cried in his affliction, and yet he complains, *thou dost not hear me*; that is, thou dost not answer me.

To this it is answered, God always hears the prayer of faith and answers it; but we do not always hear what the answer is. He may appear to delay, but he gives no flat denials. When God gives an importunity of spirit in prayer, so that the believer cries day and night unto him, how shall he not give him speedily what he asks? I grant there are many prayers that God does not regard; how shall God hear their requests who do not hearken to his commandments? Psal. lxxvi. 18. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

It is an evidence that the Lord has graciously heard their prayer though they have not present deliverance, when, 1st, After pouring out their soul before God, he enables them quietly to rest satisfied like Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18; and, 2d, When he makes his grace and strength sufficient to support under any burden; or, 3d, When he gives faith and patience to wait the Lord's time of receiving an answer and becomes more heavenly-minded, it is a good evidence the prayer is accepted. He that is edified in his holy faith hath certainly prayed in the Holy Ghost.

*I stand up*; which intimates constancy and perseverance in prayer, as well as waiting for an answer; or, as the posture of a servant ready to receive orders. It is an excellent frame of spirit when we cry to God for favours, to stand waiting to know what he would have us to do. Some cry out for relief, but they care not to obey.

*And thou regardest me not.* I have no present testimony of any favour from thee, or acceptance with thee; thou takest no notice of me.

*Ver. 21. Thou art become cruel to me; with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me.* Heb. Thou art turned or changed. There is no change nor turning, not so much as a shadow of it with God; yet he often appears changed to us. To be cruel is to shew no mercy, nor not to be touched with pity and compassion when we see others in misery.

Job complained of his heavy afflictions, and that neither his calamity nor his cries moved God to pity and relieve him; and in the last clause he uses extravagant and passionate language, as he had done oftener than once before. We cannot reckon them among his graces, but among his failings; they inform us what apprehensions a good man may have of God, not what the affections of God are towards good men.

As it is said of the enemies of the people of God, They may do anything against

them but prevail; so God doth everthing against his people like one that is cruel, only he is not cruel. There are changes in the dispensations of God, but he is one mind to his people, and that is a mind to do them good by all he does to them. The greatest storms of divine anger against Zion do not extinguish the divine love to Zion.

*Ver. 22. Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causedst me to ride upon it; thou dissolvest my substance.* As the wind raises and carries away chaff or dust, so Job intimates that he was carried away and tossed about with strong afflictions and temptations, as if he had said, Thou, O God, hast given my afflictions full force and scope against me. Others say the expression denotes Job's former felicity and prosperity, which may well be called a riding upon the wings of the wind, because of the uncertainty and many changes of it. Thus saith Job, Thou hast lifted me up to the wind, and lettest me fall to crush me, as the next words import.

*Thou dissolvest my substance.* The word signifies to melt, as metal is melted in the fire; and so Job's strength and comforts failed and passed away. Whether the Lord deal out judgments to the wicked, or chastisements to his own children, he soon dissolves all that the world accounts substantial. The best substance of a worldly man is like a shadow, but God gives his people an enduring substance that cannot be dissolved.

*Ver. 23. For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.* Some think Job spake this with a view to move God to pity his frailty, that so he might deal more favourably with him, as Psal. lxxxix. 46. "Remember how short," &c. Or rather he spake so because he despaired of recovery; having the symptoms of death upon him, he had the sentence of death in him. He speaks of death as at the disposal of God, and as good news with which his soul was refreshed. A godly man can speak very familiarly and comfortably of death not only as it will end his sorrows, but as the commencement of endless joys.

We should always keep in mind that we must soon die; and that we may die while enjoying health and strength at a moment's warning. How shall they ever die with comfort who are afraid to hear death spoken of. Christ prayed that "the cup might pass from him;" but it was a humble submitting prayer, ending in, "thy will be done." That which makes a believer's life sweet as well as holy is, that his will is drawn forth in continued acts of obedience to the will of God; and to die in obedience to the will of God will make that bitter cup sweet too.

That death, both as to the kind and time of it, is under a divine appointment, should also make us quietly submit to the death of our dearest relatives. To be without natural affection is to be below a heathen; to be overcome by it, is to be below a Christian. The divine appointment teaches moderation. Neither wealth, honour, nor wisdom, can exempt us from death. Jesus Christ redeems his people from death, but not from seeing corruption.

*Ver. 24. Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction.* God can do the greatest things for our help or for our hurt, by putting out his hand. A stretched out hand implies both the strength of God to deliver, and how easily he does it.

Job seems to comfort himself that he should presently die, *Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave.* That is, I know he will not afflict me after I am dead; and so the last clause means, Though men cry and complain under his hand while he is bringing death upon them, yet when dead they shall complain no more.

Death is good to those that are good; the sufferings of believers are but for a season, therefore believers need not fear any troubles, they will soon be over. But let not formal hypocrites nor wicked persons deceive themselves, as if they also would soon get free of pain; for if they could have lived always here they would have sinned always; so when they shall always live they shall always suffer.

*Ver. 25. Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?* Job's compassionate bowels melted and dissolved into floods of tears when he saw others ready to be swallowed in the floods of sorrow. Some weep for their sins who do not grieve for them; and some weep for the sorrows of others when their heart is not affected. But Job says, Was not I inwardly and really grieved? as my heart was grieved for my own transgression, so also for the afflictions of the poor, as they were of the same nature, and I subject to the same sorrows, therefore I was grieved for them. And compassion must be accompanied with action, and our charity with liberality, as we are able, to succour and comfort those that are in trouble and supply their

necessities. Compassion is better than the fruits of it ; but compassion without fruit is not good. Our Lord did not only pity us in our poverty, but he took a course to make us rich, 2 Cor. viii. 9. One godly man should compassionate another as being members of the same body.

Job having described his feeling for others, next shews how he was disappointed of the good he expected.

*Ver. 26. When I looked for good, then evil came unto me ; and when I waited for light, there came darkness.* The word rendered *looked for* notes hope, which is the look of the mind. The believing soul has an eye of faith looking upon the truth of the promise, and an eye of hope looking for the good of the promise. When I expected the continuance of the good things I enjoyed, then evil came upon me as an armed man, which I could not withstand, much less overcome.

Both parts of the verse means the same thing. As light is the same with good, so darkness is the same with evil. Darkness is put for all sorts of evil. God takes away good and sends evil upon us, 1st, When we through vanity let go the bridle of moderation. 2d, When our hearts are hardened against the afflicted, and do not pity and help them. Yet some have met with sufferings, which though as sinners they have deserved, yet have not procured them by their sins.

Grace gives the best title to earthly things, but it does not insure the possession of them. Even those who have become dead to worldly enjoyments may see them die ; and however compassionate any man has been to the poor and afflicted, yet he may become poor, pained, and afflicted, as Job shews from his own experience in

*Ver. 27. My bowels boiled and rested not, the days of affliction prevented me.* The boiling of the bowels imports troubled, tumultuous thoughts, either with fear, or grief, or both. His sorrows ceased not ; he had no intervals from pains and griefs ; new fuel was constantly added to feed the fire, and keep his bowels boiling, and that not only when he was not looking for them, but when he was in expectation of better days. He was not only impoverished but pained and diseased in the best of his days, therefore he might well say, the days of affliction have prevented me. Even when we expect trouble it is grievous enough when it comes, but to meet with evil when we wait for good doubles the weight of it.

What cross, loss, peril, poverty, and disappointment is there that we may not look for ? They are incident to our nature as we are men, are they not deserved by us as we are sinners ? and as saints, if we look not for trials we scarcely know what it is to be a saint. To look for evil fearfully is below faith, but to look so as to prepare for it is a very proper exercise. They are wise men who use their good days and things as if they might every day change to the worst. It is sinful to neglect to meditate on what we may suffer, as well as to be behind hand in considering what we ought to do. The old world would neither believe nor fear the coming of the flood, and so were drowned in it. The days of affliction at once prevented and destroyed them ; happy are they who are at once believing the approach of evil days and preparing for them, and happy also are those who are expecting good days and are duly preparing for them.

*Ver. 28. I went mourning without the sun ; I stood up, and I cried in the congregation.* We may understand Job as referring both to inward sorrow and also to the outward expressions of it, either in speech, gesture, or habit.

Some read, *I went in black.* The word for mourning signifies blackness.

Christ himself was a *man of sorrows*, and those who through grace are his members must not think it strange if they are daily acquainted with grief as he was. Our days at best are few and evil, and that should make us long for that life when we shall sorrow no more, when we shall be pure and happy.

*I went mourning without the sun,* I passed on from day to day without light, I had no refreshing rays to keep up my spirit. Even those that fear the Lord may walk long in darkness and have no light, and Christ who alone can give light in the greatest outward darkness sometimes withholds that light, and then the soul may well say—I went mourning without the sun.

Job standing and crying implies the greatness of his distress, and the extreme sorrow of his heart. To cry in pain is not inconsistent with patience ; it is not unbecoming a man of the strongest courage, yea, of the strongest faith, to cry out in great extremities ; Christ did it, Heb. v. 7. To cry out murmuringly, is not only uncomely but sinful, but to cry out humbly and sensibly dishonours no man. A good man in great pain

said, "I groan but I do not grumble." Now saith Job, when there was a throng of visitants about me, *I cried*. His sorrow was so great that he could not conceal it, no not from the congregation who had come, some of them to see and wonder at him, others of them to counsel and comfort him; extremity of pain will vent itself let who will be present. Thus the good man sets forth his sorrows in all the circumstances of it.

*Ver. 29. I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls.* As if Job had thus bemoaned himself, Alas, I see I am no more reckoned or esteemed among men as a man, nor do I find myself fit for their society, that of dragons and owls seems more agreeable to my present temper and condition than that of a man.

Job was a brother to dragons and owls in the same sense that the slothful man is brother to him that is a great waster, Prov. xviii. 1, that is, he is like him, and it produces the same effect, the waster runs to beggary, and the slothful sits still till beggary comes upon him.

When the Lord threatens to make any city desolate without inhabitant, then dragons and owls are mentioned for its inhabitants; they love solitary places, and have doleful and lamentable cries; I am their brother and companion in affliction in these respects.

Some expound the dragons and owls here metaphorically for those cruel and insolent ones who were void of compassion, yea, of discretion, towards Job; so that he might well say, my soul is among owls and dragons, that is, among fierce and inconsiderate men.

Are there not many, even at this day, who show no more pity or charity, give no more comfort or succour to their afflicted brethren in the flesh, yea, to their brethren (by profession) in the faith, than a dragon or an owl will do? And may not they who are so situate either in their families or in church communion, say, (without breach of charity), "we are brethren to dragons and companions to owls."

Job had very much cause of grief, yet he grieved too much. A good man may act below himself, 1st, In sinning, Psal. lxxiii. "I was as a beast before thee." 2d, In sorrowing; who knows how far a saint may be carried by the weight of an affliction and the pressure of grief?

Hence observe, that we may be called brethren and companions of those whom we imitate, Prov. xiii. 20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." To walk with them is to follow their example and tread the same paths of wisdom; but a "companion of fools shall be destroyed," that is, he that conforms to them and follows their follies.

*Ver. 30. My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burnt with heat.* It was the grief of his heart that changed the colour of his skin. Great and lasting afflictions and sorrows quickly consume the beauty of the body and spoil the fairest face, Psal. xxxix. 11. Let us therefore seek after spiritual beauty, the beauty of the soul that never fades by sickness, but grows fairer by affliction. The beauty of grace holds out against the coldest blasts and the most burning heats.

The last words of the verse are a further description of his calamity. *My bones are burnt*, that is, my affliction doth not only affect my skin, but it dries up the very marrow and moisture of my bones, it drinks up my spirits and is ready to burn the beams and rafters of this house of clay.

Learn, that great sorrow not only spends the beauty but the strength and vigour of man, Psal. xxxii. 3. When I kept silence, (not confessing my sin), *my bones waxed old*, that is, I had such trouble in my soul as even hastened me into old age, or made the symptoms of it to appear upon me before the time.

*A merry heart doth good like a medicine*, that is, a heart merry upon holy grounds. A discovery of our reconciliation to God through Christ, and of our acceptance in him, will make a heart merry to purpose. *But a broken spirit drieth the bones*; sorrow, from whatever cause, is a consumption to the whole body, it withers the flesh, spoils the complexion, it dries the bones, and breaks the spirit.

Such were Job's sorrows, and no wonder that his organ and harp was silenced.

*Ver. 21. My harp is turned into mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.* It seems Job had used his harp and organ both to excite and express his joy; but now he either totally disused them, or used them only to play sad and doleful tunes to strengthen sorrow. Although music is not unlawful in itself, yet it may become so when it is used to excite sinful desires, when it is immoderate and unseasonable. As we must not use it much at any time, so not at all at sometimes; which times are expressed, Isa. xxii. 10, 12. These two great affections of joy and sorrow



are both beautiful in their seasons, even sorrow is comely in its season, and joy itself when unseasonable, hath not only no beauty, but much danger, because much provocation in it, and then with astonishment he adds, ver. 13. "Behold joy and gladness," as if he had said, what a strange sight is this, that men should thus either perversely contradict, or grossly mistake the directions of providence, that on the very day they were called to mourning, &c. they should be found rejoicing. Now, as the prophet sets a *behold* of wonder before such a joy, so he follows it with a dreadful denunciation, ver. 14. *this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die*, that is, it shall never be purged or pardoned, and while sin is not pardoned, we are in danger of punishment every hour.

When God bids us "put off our ornaments," that is, lay down our pride that he may know what he will do with us, as Exod. xxxiii. as if he should say, I will shew thee mercy if thou repent, or I will punish thee if thou persist in thy impenitency. Wo to those who will not be afflicted when God afflicts them, who, when God casts them down, yet hold up their heads in mirth and jollity. The Lord loves to see us bear our cross, but he cannot endure that we should make light of it, and sport with it. We may suppose Job laid aside his harp and organ, not only as being unseasonable, but as being irksome and distressing. All music is grievous to those that are grieved. Is any man merry, let him sing, that is, holy songs for the matter, and also in a holy manner, not to please the flesh, but to quicken spiritual devotion. In

## CHAPTER XXXI.

Job makes a long narration about his own integrity, &c. yea he binds the heaviest curses upon himself by dreadful imprecations of divine vengeance, if it were not so. And this he did not as the Pharisee, proudly to proclaim his own goodness, but to wipe off the foul aspersions which his friends had cast on him, or to shew that he was not continued under these grievous sufferings as a punishment either of close hypocrisy, or of any wicked practices.

*Ver. 1. I made a covenant with mine eyes ; why then should I think upon a maid ?* The word covenant here imports, that Job did use all serious and sanctified means to keep himself from every taint of unchastity, even to an impure thought. He gave the law to his eyes, and would not suffer them to wander, much less to feed where they should not. A good man must use every mean to avoid sin, he fortifies himself with sacred oaths and covenants against all the assaults of Satan's temptations and his own corruptions. A hypocrite will sin if he might, but he that is sincere sets himself with all his might against sin. A covenant is a sacred bond, and to trifle with it is a great aggravation of sin. It is no easy matter to stay ourselves from thinking of that which we have been looking at, and therefore we should prevent, if possible, our eye from ever seeing that which we would not have our minds to think upon. To pluck out the right eye and cast it away, is to mortify the lusts of the flesh through the Spirit, and while this work of mortification is carried on, the eye shall no more offend us, that is, shall not cause us to offend. This is the proper effect of making the covenant with the eye. As evil thoughts are very sinful, so they are always more dangerous than other sins, because of their multiplicity and the imperceptible way in which they operate. A gracious heart is as careful not to sin by evil thoughts as by evil acts, and to avoid evil thoughts is an excellent mean to preserve from sinful actions.

*Ver. 2. For what portion of God is there from above, and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high.* Can any man look for a good portion or inheritance from God, who looks not to himself in holy fear, but gives undue liberty to his eyes and thoughts. The love of God makes promises, and the care of God fulfils them. But what portion is there wrought out by the providence of God for his good, whose ways are evil ?

Hence observe, That he who does wickedly has no ground to hope for good from God, for the apostle says, a natural man is without hope, as well as without God in the world, that is, while he is without the favour of God, he is without any true ground of hope. It is best to watch against and oppose sin from a genuine love to God and holiness ; yet we ought to keep our heart and eyes, lest we sin and draw down evil upon us, or prevent the promised good. As they have no part in Christ, John xiii. 8. so he does not look upon them as his own who are not washed.

This verse may be understood as a question—What hath God designed them to, and provided for them? to which Job replies,

*Ver. 3. Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?* Whether we take these words as an answer to the former verse, or a second reason of what Job asserted in the first verse, the meaning is alike, he would not hinder his own mercies nor would he run upon his own mischief. He does not say, is not destruction to him that sinneth? but, *is not destruction to the wicked?* That is, to such as love and live in sin, and to intimate the certainty of it, like the fall of Babylon, it is spoken of in the present time. Wicked men always flatter themselves with hopes of peace here, and salvation hereafter, and they are often flattered by those who ought to deal plainly with them. But utter ruin is the portion of wicked men as surely as if they were already destroyed. That is strange to us which is seldom seen or done,—so a strange punishment is what is not common, or what he was loth to express. Alienation from God, or to be given up by him to work iniquity industriously, is the worst of all punishments. Workers of iniquity may include the highest degree of sinners, resolved and obstinate sinners.

*Ver. 4. Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?* This is the third reason of what he affirmed in the 1st verse, and also a reason of what he said in verses 2 and 3. that God would surely withhold all good from him and bring all evil upon him if he lived wickedly. As seeing is an act of sense, so counting is an act of the understanding; God is (as it were) both the arithmetician and the watchman. *Doth he not see my ways*, which may be taken for thoughts, purposes, &c. and then *steps* denote, words and actions, which are external and progressive. Job here gives glory to God, as Psal. xvi. 8. "I have set the Lord always before me." As by faith he sees the Lord who is invisible, so he considers himself as visible before the Lord at all times and places. And as the remembrance that God sees us is a powerful means to prevent sinking under afflictions, so also to withstand temptation. It is impossible to live either comfortably or holily but in so far as we view God always graciously present with us. It is said, Psal. x. 14. "Thou hast seen it." That is, all that wickedness and oppression of the poor, spoken of in the former part of the Psalm, also the blasphemy of the wicked against himself, verse 13. and for what purpose does he see it, it is added, to requite it with thy hand. As thou hast seen what mischief they have done spitefully, so in due time thou wilt requite it righteously.

He next proceeds to acquit himself from all deceit in his dealings with men.

*Ver. 5. If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit.* Or, if vanity and I have been companions. *Vanity*, signifies rashness, inconsiderateness, and unprofitableness, and it may be taken generally for any sinful way, or the pursuit of any worldly thing; and so the meaning is, If I have made it my business to obtain the world, for the best of mere worldly things are but vanity. Again, to walk with vanity, is to deal falsely, and so is the same with deceit in the latter part of the verse. The *feet* signify the affections, which are to the soul as the feet to the body. Deceivers are quick and forward at their work. *Deceit* is any subtle, close, or secret way of wronging others; it is an odious thing, both to God and good men, it is far worse than open violence, for we have no defence against it, for it is often done under the mask of friendship. What an hypocrite is in religious, a deceitful man is in civil things; yea, such is the baseness of our hearts, that we often deceive ourselves. And indeed we are always (though not intentionally) contriving our own ruin, while we pretend to please, and hope to raise ourselves by deceiving and wronging others; yet self-advantage blinds us so much, that we can hardly discern deceit or danger where we see profit.

Hence learn, That every man who gains by injustice, is a loser by his gain; for whenever God gives a sinner true repentance, his conscience not only preaches to him that sin is folly, but insists that he restore what he has gotten unjustly; and is it not a great vanity to obtain what we cannot keep with a good conscience? And on supposition that he neither repents nor makes restitution, yet he is under the curse of God, and sometimes he is exposed to trouble and shame in this world. But suppose he keeps his ill-gotten gain and his reputation too, yet he will find at last that he has a bad bargain, for all the treasures of this world cannot balance the loss of the poorest soul. A godly man may step out of the way, but he does not continue to walk in crooked ways. Job durst not say, I never did any thing vainly, but he said confident-

ly, "I have not walked with vanity." The greatest honour which a man can do to God, is by believing to set to his seal to His veracity.

*Ver. 6. Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity.* I desire with all my heart that God would take full cognizance of me, and that he would assume my judgment into his own hand, and I know that he will discern me upright, notwithstanding all my afflictions.

*Integrity*, here, is the same with honesty and faithfulness; and as Job's friends had charged him with failing in these, he desires to be tried, that it might appear that he had performed his promises and discharged his trust according to agreement. Thus Job still held fast his integrity, and is as if he had said, I would be weighed, that God may know, approve, or give testimony to my integrity. Rash and unnecessary judging of others before they are weighed in an even balance, is very dangerous; we must weigh persons and things in the balance of justice and moderation, not in prejudice and passion. It is far more difficult to get an even internal balance of reason and judgment to discover the right of a cause, than to get a just balance to find out the weight of any commodity. There are not more false balances for wares and merchandise, than there are for persons and actions. It is a small matter for the sincere and upright, either to be condemned or commended by men. The approbation of the Lord is their chief concern. Though a godly man has the root of all sin in him, and much sin hath been done by him which he bewails and mourns over, yet he has an integrity abiding in him, both towards God and man.

*Ver. 7. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to my hands.* There is an inward step, and that is desire, or the motion of the heart, and there is the motion of the body, or an outward step to do any business. We must understand this protestation of his purpose and aim to walk uprightly, as if he had looked at every step, and that he did not give way to any wandering thought for the advancement of his own profit, at the expense of his neighbour's loss or damage. But this does not suppose that he was never misled or mistaken through inadvertency or infirmity.

The 2d clause may include these negations. I have not acted according to sense, but according to rule, reason, or faith. The eye often misleads the heart. The look of the eye strikes force upon the heart, and then sin is perfected, unless grace prevent. There are three steps of sin. By sense when that is pleased; by desire when that is moved; by the will when that is fully resolved upon any sin. If once sense stir up desire, it is more than probable that desire will overcome the will, and fix it upon the attainment and enjoyment of the most sinful object. The eye is an important suitor to the heart, and it is a great part of spiritual wisdom to know when we ought to give way to and when to deny that which the eye sues for. The seed of all sin is in the heart; but it is ordinarily drawn out by the sight of the eye or the hearing of the ear. Indeed, if there was no corruption in the heart, the eye could not mislead it. If the heart was not vain, what the eye sees could not engage to or after vanity. As there is scarce any man in passing through this who does not get some blots; but sin blots cannot cleave long to their hands who have real union with Christ; for whenever they are convinced of them, they are restless till they have washed their hands in innocency, by renewed acts of faith and repentance. Though there are some things indifferent in their nature, that is, they may be done or left undone without sin, yet there is nothing indifferent when it is done by us. Job speaks as if there was but one way, and indeed the way of holiness is not only better than the ways of sin and error, but it is the only way: all that leave it are in a wilderness.

Thus Job was a pattern of integrity, both for our instruction and imitation. His step did not turn out of the way; his heart did not follow his eyes; nor did any blot (of unjust gain) cleave to his hands; and that it was so with him he upon the matter takes his oath, by a vehement imprecation in the following verse.

*Ver. 8. Then let me sow and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted out.* That is, let me till my land and sow it, or let me labour in any kind, and let another receive the benefit and take the profit of it. Our actions are as seed sown in the ground, and our harvest will be suitable to our seed time. God often punishes sin in such a way that we may read our sin in the punishment.

The word *offspring* signifies a plant or branch of a tree, and in scripture it is taken for children; and though at that time he had no offspring upon the earth, his imprecation carries this general sense, that he would undergo the greatest of penal evils if

he had done those sin evils of which he was suspected. Sorrow for sin, yea, the sorrow for that special sin of piercing Christ, is compared to the sorrow of him who mourneth for his only son, and is in bitterness for his first-born. God lays his axe to the root of a man's heart when he lets him see his offspring either rooted out or rendered a vexation to him.

Job having protested his innocence of these crimes specified, proceeds to acquit himself of another crime still of a more heinous nature.

*Ver. 9. If my heart hath been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door.*

The *heart* is here put for the will and affections. The word translated *deceived* or allured, signifies to seduce or deceive, either by flattery or any kind of craft. He is a wise and a holy man indeed whose heart doth not deceive him. And he is no less so whose heart hath not been deceived. The woman was made for a help to man. All that God made was good, and it was all made good for man. But man, turning to evil, hath turned all his own good to evil. The first deceit that ever was put upon man was by the agency of a woman. A resolved will to do, without the deed done, is enough to demonstrate us either good or evil. It is not our being prevented from doing the evil that we had a mind to do, but our repentance that there was such a mind in us, and the pardon of it, that makes us guiltless.

When Job speaks of *waiting at his neighbour's door*, he speaks of a far greater sin than barely to have had his heart deceived by a woman, because that may be done in a moment of unexpected temptation. But to wait to sin is to do it deliberately, and with full determination. From all such studied wickedness he clears himself by this protest, which he follows up with another imprecation, in

*Ver. 10. Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her.* This is Job's wish of evil to himself if he had done either of those evils mentioned before. To grind in a mill is the meanest employment. Therefore it means, Let her be reduced to the lowest condition of servitude. But I conceive another sense rather intended, even a breach of the conjugal covenant. But how could Job without sin wish such a thing as this? I answer, 1st, He wished this not because he desired to have it so, but to shew how far he was from giving any cause why it should be so. 2d, He might do it to point out how much he abhorred the crime, and that he deserved it should be so if he had done so. Breach of the marriage covenant is a due reward for marriage covenant breakers. Job knew not how to wish a greater mischief to himself as to any worldly comfort than this, an unfaithful wife.

Job having protested his innocency both in heart and life as to any breach of his conjugal covenant, proceeds to speak of the greatness of the crime in its own nature.

*Ver. 11. For this is an heinous crime, yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges.* Some sins compared with others are eminently great; but those that take liberty to do any sin because they think it little will find it a great one at last. The force of the word used implies a studied and contrived evil, and that makes the least sin an heinous crime. But adultery is so, as it is a direct breach of a divine command, and also of a special solemn covenant between husband and wife at their marriage, when they solemnly promise to be faithful to each other.

*It is an iniquity for the judges.* It is not only a sin that men should avoid, decry, and reprove, but should be brought to public judgment and censure; and so the words to be *punished* is well supplied. There are sins which the magistrate cannot punish; but this sin falls under his cognizance, because it many ways disturbs the peace of families and nations, and especially because it provokes the wrath of God, and brings dreadful calamities upon nations, and therefore it is the duty of magistrates to prosecute and execute the laws which concern either the preventing or punishing this heinous crime. And if it does escape punishment from men, God will take his time and way to punish it, yea, he will make this sin a punishment to itself, as Job shews,

*Ver. 12. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase.* This is a farther consideration which kept Job from these defilements. This sin is like a fire that consumes not only body and goods, but the furniture of the soul, and withers the real grace of godly men, as in David's case, Psal. li. 10. 12. It kindles divine wrath, which is often compared to fire. It is an abominable sin in itself, and it has awful effects. The word *increase*, which it is said to root out, signifies any thing that cometh forth, especially the increase of the earth or of cattle. 1st, It consumes riches. It is as a moth in a man's outward estate. A Hebrew proverb is, As

the palmer-worm to the buds of the pomegranate, so is a harlot to a man. 2d, It consumes that which is better than wealth, a man's honour and good name. The scar of reproach which that sin made in the name of David was not quite wiped away. That sin is mentioned when all his other sins are passed over. In a word, it defiles the conscience, brings untimely old age, or makes an end of him before he is old, &c. When the apostle mentions this sin among the black catalogue that shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, as if he had foreseen that some would think it was too harsh, he cautions against self-flattery and deceit, 1 Cor. vi. 9. "Be not deceived," &c. And lest they should be deceived with the vain words of other men who might speak peace to them in their sins, he says, Eph. v. 6. "For because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children," &c. The judges of the earth often let these wholesome laws which have been made against this heinous crime (as it was once complained in the commonwealth of Rome) lie dormant, yet the judgment of God against it slumbereth not, Heb. xiii. 4. A good man opposes sin chiefly as it is a breach of the law, defiles the soul, and as it is a grief to the Spirit of God. But he knows how to make use of the danger of sin, so as to avoid it. Fire is an unmerciful element, but sin is ten thousand times more so, for unless it is washed away by the blood of Christ, it never ceases its operations.

Job proceeds to disclaim a fourth sin, and that is injustice towards or harsh dealing with his servants.

*Ver. 13. If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me.* Men in power are very apt to despise those who are below them. To despise another is to slight him; but Job treated his servants with all that respect that was due to them; "I examined his cause, and did not deny him justice."

The word rendered *maid-servant* signifies to be true, trusty, and faithful, and the just complaint of such a servant should not be slighted. But saucily to gainsay a master's orders, or unreasonable murmuring upon every frivolous occasion is not to be permitted, far less cherished; such ought to be despised and dismissed. It is difficult, if not impossible, to walk so evenly in any relation but there may be occasions of complaint; and as the master may have many causes to complain of his servant, so the servant may have just cause to complain of his master. Masters should be as ready to perform their duty to their servants, as to require duty and service of them. When the apostle (Eph. vi. 5.) exhorts servants to do their duty "in singleness of heart as unto Christ," he adds, ver. 9. "And ye, masters, do the same things unto them." That is, do that in your place which belongs to you, as you expect they should do what belongs to them in theirs. As they ought to serve, so you ought to govern in the fear of God, doing what is just and equal.

As every servant must be justly dealt with, so some deserve to be kindly and respectfully dealt with. Good and faithful servants are rare, and therefore precious.

*Ver. 14. What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer?*

*What shall I do?* saith he that does not know what to do, and asks counsel and advice; and he that is perplexed in mind, about what he has done or fears to suffer, and thinks himself quite undone, says in grief and despair, "What shall I do?" If Job had been chargeable with that which God and his conscience testified he never did, he might well have said, "What shall I do?"

*When God riseth up.* God is said to sit, in allusion to earthly judges; and when he proceeds to execution, then he is said to rise up.

To *visit* is the work of any superior, when he reckons with those who are under his charge and inspection. This is as if Job had said, When God, who is the great superintendent over all the families of the earth shall come to visit me, what shall I answer? or, what should I answer if I had wronged them? Job knew there was one who would visit him, to whom he must give an account of his conduct in his family. When magistrates and masters remember they have a Master over them, and act as men accountable to a higher power, then nations and families are most likely to be happy.

Hence observe, 1st, That it is the fear of God, and not of man, that keeps a godly man from despising or injuring the meanest of his servants. 2d, That sinners of all sorts, especially oppressors, will not know what to do, or what to say, when God arises and calls them to an account. They who now will not do what they know they ought, or will do what they know they ought not, shall at last in vain cry out, what shall we

do? Let every sinner seriously say often to his own heart, "What shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer?" Only such as have their consciences purged by the blood of Christ will be able to answer.

He now subjoins a second reason why he did not despise the cause of his servant.

*Ver. 15. Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?* The word *fashion* signifies the firmness and exactness of a work. How admirably is the body of man contrived and put together; it is the most proportionable and best fashioned piece in the world. Though the bodies of men have distinct and particular features, &c. by which they are distinguished, yet they have all one common fashioner and Father.

God is as much the maker of man by natural generation, as he was the maker of man at first by creation. *Psal. cxxxix. 14. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works,"* &c. That is, Thou hast made me; I am a part or parcel of thy marvellous works. And when he enlarges upon it, *ver. 15,* he takes no notice of father or mother, but ascribes the whole to God.

Since God is the former of our bodies and souls, and most of all, of that wonderful work of God, the new creature in the soul, let us give glory to God for all that we are and have. And as saints owe themselves in special to God because he has fashioned them by his word and Spirit; so all men owe themselves to God because he fashioned them in the womb. Let us beware of pride, and of perverting God's work to his dishonour.

One of the ancients said, He that contemns any man because he moves in a lower worldly sphere than himself, is not above, but below all men, for he divests himself of his humanity while he so proudly conceits himself above other men. They are men of no real worth who value themselves overmuch beyond other men. Servants came not at first from the institutions of God, but from the sin of man. When we look upon our servants it should mind us of our disobedience to our Maker, and humble us on account of our rebellion against him.

*Ver. 16. If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail.* From this to *ver. 24,* he avows his care of and tenderness to the poor.

The word *poor* imports a person spent, utterly wasted and exhausted.

*Desire* is the motion of the soul after any apparent good. Job neither denied the poor his purse to relieve their penury, nor his power to defend them from oppressors, nor his counsel when desired. But Job certainly intends real desires arising from their wants, not of artificial desires proceeding from covetousness and false pretences. We should carefully distinguish between the desires of the poor and their clamours. As there are many who feign piety, so there are some who can feign poverty, and whose distresses are but artifices.

The second clause is similar, and from both learn, That we ought not only to hear and help, but to do it speedily. Whether God or man keep us long in suspense as to what we ask and expect from them, our eyes may be said to fail. Total denying and long delaying are nearly allied; it grieves the heart, *Prov. xiii. 12. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick."* It is a charge against the princes of Israel, *Isa. i. 23. "They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the widow's cause come unto them;"* that is, they refuse to receive, and delay to hear the widow's cause; she cannot bribe it to a hearing, and therefore it sticks by the way. But though men will not judge, yet God will, for, (*Psal. lxxviii. 5.*) God is spoken of as if he were a Judge for none but widows.

They who are full of wants are full of desires. A sense of need begets importunate requests that will scarcely take a denial. O what strong and vehement desires the poor in spirit have after spiritual enjoyments; they never say, it is enough; their fullest attainments in grace do but discover their poverty and emptiness, and also gives them a clearer sight of what is yet to be attained, and therefore their desires are always increasing; and surely the Lord will not withhold these poor from their desires, as Job says he did not from those who applied to him for help and supply, of which he gives a farther testimony.

*Ver. 17. Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof.* Charity may be exercised without doors, but hospitality is within; and that hospitality is best which is also an act of charity.

A *morsel* is properly a mouthful, by which diminutive word the scripture usually sets forth the ancient entertainments, which were as frugal as they were hearty, *Gen. xviii. 5.*

That hospitality which is inconsistent with sobriety, or unfits for duty, is uncomely and sinful in any man. Some are given to riotous house-keeping, but few are given to true hospitality. A bishop must be given to hospitality, yet sober and of good behaviour. It must neither hinder their private studies nor public labours. As their sin is great who make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof; so also is theirs who do not make a suitable provision for their families, and for relieving the necessities of the poor. What is given to the poor is lent to the Lord, who giveth us richly all good things to enjoy; and therefore what is given to the poor should be good in its kind. Let us not lend base money or mouldy bread to the Lord. A gracious person, instead of thinking much of what he does or gives to the service of God, is disposed to bless God for enabling him to give any thing, and wishes to do all to the glory of God.

*Ver. 18. For from my youth he was brought up with me as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb.* Job gives an account of his charitable practice, as that which he had been long accustomed to; as if he had said, I very early took notice of their condition and laid it to heart, and gave them my best assistance. Compassion to, and upon right objects, is an eminent act of grace.

As we partake with others in the good things they enjoy by rejoicing with them; so we partake with others in the evils which they suffer by sympathizing with them. And as it is the comfort and support of the whole church, and of every believer, to believe that Jesus Christ suffers with them now, who once suffered for them; and as it is the joy of all suffering saints that they are brought up with Christ as with a father, so it is a great comfort to afflicted saints that their brethren in Christ are affected with their condition. Some have great appearances of goodness in youth, but instead of growing up with them it withers and comes to nothing; but as Job began in youth, so he persevered.

How is it said that Job *guided* the widows? It was by his counsel and advice. He directed her in any difficult business, and helped her out of this or that distress.

*From my mother's womb.* This is a hyperbolical speech, importing that he had been early and constantly the widow's guide. It is a great favour to direct and assist a poor widow in the management of her affairs. Eliphaz (chap. iv. 3, 4.) upbraids Job and informs us, that he had been a soul guide, which is the most useful and necessary of all guides.

Job had been charged (chap. xxii.) with having stripped the naked of their clothing; he now not only denies the charge, but affirms the contrary.

*Ver. 19. If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering.* Some read, If I have despised him that was ready to perish for want of clothing.

A man in fine apparel is apt to despise, instead of supplying the poor in rags. But Job was not satisfied with feeding the poor, he also clothed and covered them. He not only abounded in all sorts of charity, but he extended it to all sorts of persons. We must be always abounding in the work of the Lord, and charity to men is the Lord's work, as he commands it, and as he enables us to do it, Gal. vi. 10. "As we have opportunity let us do good to all," &c. We must make a difference between men upon whom we bestow our charity, "especially unto them who are of the household of faith," but we must not restrain it from any man. How unbecoming is it that any should have full tables and many changes of apparel, and yet see the poor starve for want of food and raiment!

The root of the word here used for a *covering* is applied, Psal. xxxii. 1, to the pardon of sin. When sin is pardoned it is covered. Those poor who are without a covering for their bodies are to be pitied; but with what tears should we lament those who are without a covering for their souls? However rich they are in this world, they are exposed to the dreadful storms of divine wrath, from which there is no escaping but by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ in his righteousness, to justify us, and in his grace to sanctify us.

*Put on the new man, that is, Christ in his graces.* Let all, as they have opportunity and ability do good to all men, especially to their souls.

*Ver. 20. If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep.* The loins are here put for the person, and may imply the strong and affectionate desires of the poor for a blessing upon Job; for as a man is said to do that with his heart which he does sincerely, so a man is said to do that with his loins wherein he puts forth his strength to the utmost.

Hence observe, that it is the duty of those who are relieved to pray for a blessing

upon the instruments of their relief. If we are to pray for those who use us despitefully, how much more for those who kindly serve us? An unthankful receiver renders himself altogether unworthy of what he hath already received, much more to receive any more. If a poor man ought to bless his benefactor for any morsel of bread to stay his hunger, for any cast garment to cover him, how should we trumpet forth his praises who daily loads us with his benefits! How should we bless Jesus Christ who satisfies our souls with spiritual provision, and covers with his robe of righteousness! Every work doth either curse or bless us; when our works are evil, though all men speak well of us, what can it profit us? but if our works are good, though no man speak well of us yet we shall reap the benefit.

By *the fleece* he means garments made of his fleece which he gave to the poor as a defence against wind and weather. Job was as honest as he was charitable, it was the fleece of his own sheep with which he clothed the poor, from which,

Learn, that what we give to the poor must be of our own; give not that to the poor which you have unduly gained though from the rich; what is wrongfully got must be restored.

Job having asserted his charity to the poor, protests against all injustice.

*Ver. 21. If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate.* To lift up the hand is in Scripture taken sometimes in a good and sometimes as here, in an evil sense; and so it is as if Job had said, I have neither threatened nor have I actually vexed the poor and fatherless; I have neither given a sign to others by lifting up my hand to afflict them, nor have I done it myself, yea, I have been so far from oppressing them, that I have not so much as lifted up my hand against them; it may also mean that he had not given his suffrage or voice against them.

By *the gate* understand the place of judgment, where all were ready to assist me if I had only given them a signal with my hand; but I have not injured the fatherless when I could easily have done it. Thus Job repels and denies that charge of harshness and unjust dealing to the utmost.

Observe 1st, That to possess power to do wrong is a great temptation to do it, and men in authority seldom want assistance to do the most unjust and oppressive actions if they but desire it. 2d, That righteous magistrates will be careful not to oppress others; they must not satisfy themselves with what will pass among men, but consider what is right in the sight of God.

Let men in power diligently consider the end for which they have received it, and then they will not easily go out of the right way in the exercise of it. Nothing hinders some from doing evil but the want of power, and even the best of men find it difficult when power and opportunity and their own interest meet together to act uprightly. How powerful and glorious is the grace of God that teaches a man to loath and avoid sin however much he is solicited to it and has it in his power!

*Ver. 22. Then let mine arm fall from my shoulders, and mine arm be broken from the bone.* Job having protested his integrity and tenderness to the poor and fatherless, even when he had opportunity to oppress them, he now binds that protestation by a solemn and sacred imprecation, calling down a dreadful judgment upon himself if it were not so.

This imprecation may refer to the whole context, but particularly to ver. 20, which is most suitable to the law of retaliation. *If mine hand, &c. Then let mine arm fall, &c.* or, Let God punish me in that very member which may most evidently point out my sin. God has so compacted and framed this house of clay, that if any one member be wanting or out of order the whole body is disabled. The apostle, 1 Cor. xii. 26, shows what a sympathy there is or ought to be among the members of the church, and in the suffering of any one of them they all suffer, (alas, where is such to be found?)

While we enjoy the service of all our bodily members, we seldom take notice of the mercy, and are never truly thankful for it, so as to use our bodily members to the honour and service of God. Let us beware of misemploying our bodily members lest we provoke God to deprive us of the comfortable use of them.

The next verse seems to contain what deterred him from the evils mentioned.

*Ver. 23. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.* Destruction signifies any noisome killing vapour. Such are the wrathful dispensations of God to man; such destruction as God uses to send upon oppressors, or such as evidently declares that God is the author of it, was, (saith Job), *a terror to me*. There is a slavish terror of God as an avenger, and there is a terror which arises at once from looking upon God as a Father and as a righteous judge.



This terror was upon Job, he knew that if he should take liberty to break the bonds of duty and transgress the law of God, he should smart for it, (though he was a child of God), for God may deal with one of his own children in outward dispensations, as he does with the world, while he conforms to the world.

Though a believer obeys God and opposes sin from higher and nobler ends than fear of wrath, yet he makes a good improvement of those terms, wrath and destruction from the Almighty, when they are such a terror to him, that as he will not, so he dares not sin.

The root of the word, which we translate *highness*, signifies to elevate or lift up, and imports highness of place and highness of power and dignity, *by reason of his highness*, or of his majesty.

*I could not endure.* The Hebrew is only, I "could not," and instead of *endure*, one reads, "I could not withstand or resist," and another, "I could not escape nor get out of his hand." His highness is such, that if I had done wickedly, there could be no avoiding or fleeing from his avenging hand. The power and majesty of God confounds man and puts him out of countenance. The Most High has all power and highness originally and fundamentally in himself; all the power and highness of man flows from and is derived from him. This superlative highness of God appears in the extent and absoluteness of his jurisdiction. This is fully acknowledged by Nebuchadnezzar, the highest then on earth, after his seven years' banishment, Dan. iv. 34, 35. From the consideration of the highness of God, learn 1st, To walk humbly before Him. As it is our strength, so it is our duty to sit still in dependence upon God for his help; so it is our wisdom to sit still in submission to the hand of God. The Most High expects that every thought exalting itself, whether against any of his standing laws or ordinances, or temporary dispensations and providences, should be brought down. 2d, To have an high esteem of him and exalt him not only in, but above all our selfish designs. For if any man sets his own ends above God, he sets himself above God too, yea he makes himself his god, which is at once the height of sin, madness, and presumption.

† *Ver. 24. If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence.* That is, if I have highly esteemed it, or had a longing desire after it. To hope for any thing immoderately is sinful, but to make gold or any creature our hope, is abominable, and they who do so will quickly make it their confidence, which is the fullest rest of the soul. A carnal man rests on worldly things, as a godly man rests in and upon Christ. To see a man rich in purse and poor in spirit is a great wonder; therefore, when God gives riches, suspect what your heart may do with them. It is good to "fear always." To be jealous over ourselves, is the best means of safety next to trusting in God, and they only trust in him who truly know him, Psal. ix. 10. And as we seldom err in our affections, till we err in understanding, therefore we should study to form a right judgment about worldly things, for we cannot but overlove that which we over-value. We should consider that riches cannot make us wiser or better, or our lives more comfortable to us, Luke xii. 15. Riches at once sink the mind downwards in covetous cares and lift it upward in proud conceit. So the apostle charges the rich not to be high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, which is the only way to overcome. It is indeed hard to abound in riches and not to trust in them; hence the caution, Psal. lxxii. 10. "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them."

*Ver. 25. If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gotten much.* Rejoicing is the opening of the heart upon receipt of some present good, for if it be absent, it may be called hope, unless it be so strong and lively that it gives a kind of present fruition and enjoyment. Job had the greatest occasion to rejoice in his wealth, yet he protests that he did not: but is it not our duty to rejoice in and be thankful for the smallest portion of temporal mercies? Why then does Job disclaim rejoicing in the greatest? When our joy in earthly prosperity does but abate the edge, and allay the sweetness of our joy in God, it is sinful. What must it be when it not only makes us forget, but rebel against God? And that is it which Job here disclaims, he did not so rejoice in his wealth as to lessen his heavenly joy: his joy in God conquered all his other joys.

Those who rejoice in God through Christ, and in the means of enjoying fellowship with him, and in the testimony of a good conscience, have something more and better than wealth to rejoice in; they can rejoice in tribulation, taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, yea, of their lives, for Christ, and that is joy worthy of a Christian.

But what a poor portion, what a short-lived joy have they that have nothing else than wealth to rejoice in, for they shall soon mourn and weep over their gold and silver, for the misery that shall come on them! "Wo to you that laugh, for now ye shall mourn and weep;" that is, you who laugh in the use or possession of outward things, and have no interest in Christ, no favour with God to rejoice in, shall weep at last and mourn for ever. One reason why Job did not sorrow much in losing his wealth, chap. i. 21. was, that he did not rejoice immoderately in them while he retained them. If we would learn to weep as if we wept not, when deprived of earthly enjoyments, then we must rejoice as if we rejoiced not while in possession of them, for we are always afflicted with the passion of sorrow in parting with any thing, in proportion to our joy in holding it. Carnal men ascribe their wealth more to their own diligence and industry, than to the blessing of God. Man is not only a covetous, but a vain, proud creature; he attributes all to himself, and thinks he has all from himself; like Nebuchadnezzar, they say, "by the might of my power," &c. Beware of seeking any thing by unlawful means, or of trusting to or rejoicing in what you have gained by lawful means. They who avoid these two evils, will be kept pure from any defilement, and free from all bondage by their riches.

In the three following verses, Job protests his freedom from and abhorrence of idolatry.

*Ver. 26. If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness.* But is there any harm in beholding the sun, &c.? Is it not our duty to view and consider the creatures? It is at once our duty and privilege, 1st, That in them, as in a glass, we may see the glory, power, wisdom, and goodness of God. Let us look through and by them, to Him who is the Creator. 2d. And as it is our duty to behold the sun and moon, &c. to honour and exalt God in our estimation, so to humble and abase ourselves before him, Psal. viii. But to attribute to them any of that comfort which we receive from them, as if they had divine power, or were worthy of divine honour and worship, is wrong, and this is the iniquity which Job here disclaims, and is as if he had said, I never beheld any of these goodly creatures, so as that my heart was enticed to give them any veneration.

From which observe, That man is extremely prone to idolatry, which must be a very great sin, as it is giving that honour to a creature which is due to God alone. As the heathens were much given to this kind of idolatry, so the Jews did not forbear to imitate them in it, though they were not only shewed the vanity of such worship, but warned against it, and threatened in case they should do it, Deut. iv. 15, 19. which is as if it had been said, will you serve the sun and moon instead of God, whereas God has made them to serve you and all nations? and how improper is it for any in the world to worship as a God, that which God has made a servant to all men, by holding as it were the candle to them in all the labours of the day. Man naturally likes any way of worshipping that is of his own framing, rather than that which is of God's appointing. All duties of worship ought to be voluntary, that is, not constrained; but they must not be voluntary, as voluntary is opposed to instituted or appointed.

A natural man loves not that which is spiritual, he loves to worship that which may be seen, rather than what is to be believed. As we are to worship none but God, so he will not endure any other way of worshipping him than he has appointed. A godly man dares not follow a multitude to do evil, he will not take up superstitious customs upon trust, either because they have been long used, or because many do it, or our forefathers did it. Example is no plea against a rule, nor antiquity against truth.

*Ver. 27. And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand.* In the former verse, he disclaimed idolatrous worship as to the object of it. In this he denies it as to the manner of it, both as to internal adoration or external, both heart and hand were free. Idolatry begins at the heart; though the occasions of sin may be from without, yet the original of it is in the heart. When the folly and madness of idolatry is described, Isa. xlv. 9—20. it concludes, "a deceived heart hath turned him aside." Idols can do no hurt till the sight of them infect the heart. Secret worship may be performed wholly in the heart, or when out of the view or hearing of others, though words are expressed. The most secret acts of sin are both obvious to and odious in the sight of God, and shall not go unpunished. However much God is honoured by public and family worship, yet he is neither pleased with nor can accept of them without heart worship. When we worship in secret and pour out our hearts

unto God, we thereby give the most certain proof that we acknowledge him to be the only true God, and our God in Christ.

Outward adoration of any creature is sinful; God requires the heart especially, but he must have our bodies also. In Rom. xii. 1. The call to worship God is, "present your bodies in living sacrifice," so that soul and body must go together in our drawing near unto God in acts of worship of his own appointment. From the pomp and parade introduced into use by the inventions of men, it would seem as if they meant to compliment and shew themselves mannerly, rather than to humble themselves before God and to be made more holy. All should consider how they will answer that question, "who hath required this at your hand?"

*Ver. 28. This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.* The original is, "This also is an iniquity for the judge," that is, as we render, "an iniquity to be punished by the judge." This supplement is not corrupting the text, but a fair exposition of it.

*This also*, seems to refer to verse 11. where Job had spoken of a sin in a similar way, as if he had said, what I spake of adultery at ver. 11. I affirm also of idolatry. All the other sins that he disclaims are such as fall under the punishment of God only, except adultery and idolatry, which are to be punished by the judges, for as the great judge in heaven will certainly punish these crimes, so earthly judges may and ought to do it. But why does Job assert that idolatry is an iniquity to be punished by the judges? He answers in the next clause, It is a God-denying sin. Some kinds of idolatry are a flat denial of God, and every species of idolatry, is but a feigned subjection to or a flattering of God and a shameful disowning of him. "They change the truth of God into a lie," that is, into an idol; it includes all sin bound up in one. Idolaters deny God, by attributing that honour to creatures which God never gave them, nor allows us to give to any but himself. There is a denying of God openly and in express words, but many a man's practice declares aloud that there is no God, even when he makes a fair confession and profession with his tongue. The word *above*, intimates, that God is above all in power, place, glory, and dignity; and if, while we pray to the God that is above, our hearts are grovelling here below, it is certainly very sinful and unbecoming.

*Ver. 29. If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him.* Joy is a passion of the mind, and the word here notes a very fresh and active joy; *destruction*, utter ruin, or ruin without remedy. The root of the word to *hate*, signifies both to hate and to neglect, yea, to contemn. Not to rejoice at the destruction of our enemies, may carry the full sense of the law commanding us to love our enemies. There is a love of pity and compassion which we are to have to our enemies, but not a love of complacency and delight; for no man is bound to take his enemy into his bosom; but not to rejoice at the destruction of an enemy is a convincing argument of love to him, and signifies much more than merely to abstain from hurting him. The prosperity of an enemy tries us whether we can bear it and not be surprised with envy; and if we see or hear of his fall, it tries us whether we do not feel some satisfaction and joy. And doubtless, he that is troubled at the prosperity of an enemy, will also rejoice at his calamity. No man can tell how difficult a thing it is not to rejoice at the hurt of an enemy, but he who has been injured and reproached by an enemy. A man may forbear to hurt his enemy, and yet heartily wish his destruction by others; and therefore Job puts himself to the surest test whether his heart was right in this thing when he said, *If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me.* The last clause is as if Job had said, If I have used any vaunting behaviour or triumphing gestures when I heard of or saw that any evil had found my enemy. It is an usual scripture phrase to say, "evil finds a man" when he falls into it; but there is a finding, upon inquiry, which may be the sense here, "when evil pursued and found him;" as if Job had said, When divine vengeance had followed and overtook mine enemy, I did not lift up myself. Or, this *evil found him*, may point out the security of a sinner who has not the least suspicion of danger, for evil finds the sinner when he least expects it.

From the whole observe, How much the conduct and patience of believers excel all others, whether in bearing afflictions or forgiving injuries. A good man watches the motions of his mind, as much, or more than his actions. When we are careful to regulate and moderate the inward workings of our minds, as to our joys, sorrows, hopes,

and fears, it discovers a spiritual mind indeed. When we affirm that it is sinful to rejoice at the destruction of those that hate us, or of our enemies, we are especially to understand it of personal and private enemies, and not of the enemies of our public peace, or of Zion's prosperity.

*Ver. 30. Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin, by wishing a curse to his soul.* Job having said that he did not rejoice at the destruction of him that hated him, we may easily believe that his mouth did not break out in evil speaking. The power of lust is great, both in opposing us when we would do good, and in provoking us to do evil. Job's mouth would have been speaking unduly if he had not restrained it. Peter rebuked Ananias, Acts v. 3. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart?" Why didst thou yield up thy tongue at the command of thy covetous or unbelieving heart?

Consider, that it is a matter of great glory not to yield ourselves at the call or command of corruption, and that it is not only the sin, but the shame of man, to be ruled by and at the disposal of his lusts. Indeed, our opposition to all sin, as well as against evil speaking, is so faint, that we cannot prevail; and besides being weak, it is false and treacherous; we are not hearty in our resolutions to oppose it.

Job made an effectual resistance, because he set himself in good earnest not to suffer his mouth to sin. This unruly evil may be brought under good government in the persevering exercise of believing prayer, and watching. While some decry both evil works and evil words, they delight in them, and hold secret correspondence with them, and is it any wonder that they never attain a victory over them? It will be the charge and condemnation of the world that they have suffered themselves to sin. If we consider the profane, idle, unseasonable words, and many other corrupt communications that proceed out of our mouths, we will soon find what loads of guilt we contract in this way, and that as we need the blood of Christ to cleanse us from it, so we need the power and grace of Christ to subdue sin in us. The people wondered at the gracious words which Christ spake, and we have reason to lament at the unseasoned words that proceed from us. Our words should be seasoned with salt, with the truth of assertion as opposed to error and falsehood, and with sincerity opposed to hypocrisy, and then with the salt of grace and holiness.

The particular sin that Job kept his mouth from is mentioned in the last clause.

The word rendered *to wish* signifies, 1st, To demand a thing as our due. 2d, To ask a thing as a favour. And, 3d, As here in the text, it is often used as requesting any thing of God in prayer. I did not wish, that is pray, for a curse on his soul. He that wishes a curse upon another desires God to do that which he either cannot do, or is ashamed and afraid to do, which is a great sin.

*Ver. 31. If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied.* In this verse, as connected with the foregoing, Job tells us that he forbore the least intimation of or inclination to revenge upon those that hated him, yea, though there wanted not those about him who laboured to provoke him and fire him with a spirit of revenge.

*The men of my tabernacle.* That is, the men who lived nearest to and about me, such as were of my household and family. They said, *we cannot be satisfied*; we cannot live comfortably if they live; nothing will satisfy us but the death of thine enemies. They could not bear the affronts and injuries that were offered him. They did what they could to excite a spirit of revenge in Job. But his patience had a perfect work under the reviling and abusive tongues and hands of men, as well as under the afflicting hand of God. We cannot do any man a worse office than oiling his wheels by counsels and encouragement when we see him in any sinful motion. Such counsel has often proved fatal, and such encouragements precipitate men into ruin. He loves his friend to purpose who provokes him to love; and he is the best servant who excites his master to good works. As they are blessed who hear good counsel and receive it, so are they also who hear bad counsel and refuse it. Jesus resented the ill counsel of Peter (a man of his tabernacle) with the greatest indignation. We should not only not do the evil we are advised to, but make the adviser know that we take it ill to be so advised.

Job having declared himself free and far from revenge to enemies, though provoked by his own servants to it, now declares how ready and free he was to shew love and respect to any that needed it.

*Ver. 32. The stranger did not lodge in the street, but I opened my door to the traveller.* A stranger is a person absent from his home, and here he is destitute of lodg-

ing and necessities. In those days there was no common inns for lodging strangers, and so if none opened to them they must lodge in the streets. The root from which the word *stranger* comes signifies *to fear*, and the reason is, because they are subject to many dangers, and consequently to many fears; and the laws given to the Jews respecting strangers seem to intimate the hard treatment they often met with in travelling through this world. And therefore the people of God, who are all strangers in this world, should be always prepared for hardships in it. It is unsuitable, as well as sinful, for them to lust after worldly things. It is both the honour and safety of those who are strangers in the world, to be strangers to it; and because they have but a little while to stay in it, to look but little after it, and expect little from it. It is a duty to shew kindness to strangers. Jesus Christ is a stranger in his members; and he says, "I was a stranger and ye took me in." We have no reason to think that Job made entertainment for tipplers, (nor should any good man do it). Some open their doors to riotous friends, and use such excess in their houses that they have not a morsel to spare to true strangers. It is very inconsistent, though it often happens, that a professed Christian grudges a trifle to Christ in one of his poor members, when large sums are lavished away in feasting wealthy neighbours.

In the next verse Job seems to prevent an objection which might be made against him for his long discourse in vindication of his own integrity. What! have you no sins? Has your life indeed been free from faults and errors? &c. In answer we may suppose Job to reply, I am far from saying I have not sinned; I have confessed them to God, and believingly begged pardon at his hand, and have not studied to conceal my sins as Adam.

*Ver. 33. If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.* The original word signifies properly to cover with a garment or veil; and metaphorically it is applied, 1st, To that gracious act of God in pardoning sins. 2d, To man's denying or excusing his transgression. Blessed are they whose sins are covered by the free favour of God, by the righteousness of Christ, and by the charity of their brethren, either not divulging them, or converting the sinner from them, all of which are spoke of in scripture as covering sin. There is a covering of sin which is both the sin and misery of man, such a covering as will cover him with shame and confusion of face. And this is it which Job disclaims.

*As Adam,* may refer to the first man, or, as Broughton reads, If I have covered my sin as every man does, implying that this is an epidemical practical disease, infecting all sorts and degrees of men.

*To hide,* is a cunning artificial hiding. *Mine iniquity,* that which I am most addicted to. *To hide in the bosom,* imports the closing with and loving embraces of any iniquity.

This verse implies that Job did not only not hide his sin, but that he confessed it with sorrow, thereby giving glory to God under a sense of his own vileness, and of the riches of free grace in the pardon of his sins. The desire to cover sin arises, 1st, From pride. He has some care of his credit, though none of his conscience, and would preserve his own honour, while he dishonours God. 2d, This attempt to cover sin is from unbelief. He that does not believe that his sin shall be covered by God, will not confess it to God. True confession proceeds from faith, and is one of the blessed fruits of it. An unbeliever will never be a confessor either of the truths of God, or of his own sin. God has in great mercy provided a covering for all our sins. But how foolish are the most of men, who try to cover one sin with another, and by refusing to accept of God's method of covering sin, are adding one sin to another; and to all such the Lord is saying, "Wo to them that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit;" that is, not with such a covering as my Spirit hath exhibited for their acceptance. A godly man doth not only not hide, but is ready to confess his sin. He confesses always to God, and to man also, when he has a call to it, and sees it to be his duty to do so.

Confession of sin, which is opposed to the covering or hiding of sin, includes, 1st, A confession of the fact. 2d, Of the fault. That is, that in doing so we have done amiss, or done sinfully and foolishly. 3d, True confession includes a submitting to the sentence of the judge, yea, a judging of ourselves, and a justifying God in all his dispensations. But it is said, Why should we confess to God what he knows already? I answer, 1st, We confess not to inform God, but to honour and glorify him. 2d, As we make confession of the mercies and goodness of God to us, that we may be the more

affected with thankfulness for them; so we are to make confession of our sins that we may be the more affected with the vileness and filthiness of them, and with godly sorrow on account of them. 3d, The knowledge which God has of sin is enough to condemn us, though we do not confess them; but he will not know them so as to acquit us but in the way of confessing them; and that must include, 1st, A confessing all sin, without designedly concealing one of them. 2d, In all the circumstances and aggravations of our iniquity; and it must be done, 1st, Feelingly, as to the weight and smart of it. 2d, Sincerely, not because of the inconvenience or disadvantages of it, but with uprightness of soul. 3d, With self-abhorrence, as well as sin-abhorrence, Job xlii. 6. 4th, He that confesseth his sin, in opposition to this covering in the text, does it believingly, with one eye upon sin and another on Christ. As the word of God, which forbids the commission of sin, doth not profit us unless it be mingled with faith, so neither do our own words, by which we confess sin and profess our repentance for it, please God, unless they are mixed with faith. God never covered any sin graciously which was not confessed believingly.

Though Job or any other godly man may have some special sin to which he is more subject than to any other sin, yet he has no beloved sin. David, Psalm xxxi. 10, found much grief and sorrow *because of his iniquity*; some sin had specially overtaken him which was so far from being a beloved sin, that it was the breaking of his heart. All men are alike liable to sin, and also to sin as Adam in hiding it; it is only grace that makes the difference.

*Ver. 34. Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me that I kept silence and went not out of the door.* As if he had said, the violence of the people never hindered me from doing my duty, nor did I at any time go out of my way lest I should displease the members of my own family, or those of the greatest. The contempt and opposition of no man however great, or of no family however numerous, made me keep silence, or in the least prevented me from doing what was just and equal unto all men.

Hence observe, that the multitude often oppose that which is good, and those who act uprightly. In Psal. ii. 12, we find the multitude opposing the greatest good work that ever the Lord did. Obedience to Christ is the world's bondage, and so they rage and imagine vain things. *The multitude is an unruly beast*, hurried by passion, not guided by rule or reason. The stream of the multitude often carries magistrates down with it. Pilate's fear of the multitude carried him to condemn an innocent man. Thus some do injustice for fear of the multitude and others to gain their favour, as Herod, Acts xii. 2.

Observe second, that a good man in every station will do justly though all the world rise up against him. It is necessary both to have and keep the heart so established as neither to do nor forbear to do any thing for fear of the multitude, or for fear of the great and powerful, or out of respect to our kindred.

It is a pity that any man should have the office of a magistrate who cannot condemn the contempt of families. And this is a good pattern for office-bearers in the church, that they should not fear to do the duties of their place and station, though the multitude are displeased, or though their relations condemn them for it, and though great men in their anger threaten and abuse them for doing their duty. Happy are those states and churches where men who fear God and hate covetousness bear rule, and happy would every community be if all the members feared God and had no other fear.

Job having given many proofs of his integrity in the foregoing parts of this chapter, and seriously imprecating the judgments of God upon himself if his testimony were not true, in the three following verses he shows his assurance of the goodness of his cause by his willingness to have the whole matter more fully heard and examined before the purest and most impartial tribunal.

*Ver. 35. O that one would hear me!* He speaks as if he were very indifferent who the person were that should have the hearing of his cause. But while he begs for a judge or hearer; he does not appeal from God as if he were unwilling to acquiesce and rest in his judgment, as appears by the second clause.

*Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me.* That is, that he would undertake and clear my cause, that he would witness on my side, for to answer signifies also to testify concerning another. Again, we answer, 1st, In words, when we confirm and approve what another has said or done. 2d, We answer by our actions when we do the thing that is desired of us. Job knowing that none but God knew his heart

perfectly, therefore he appeals from men to God, who cannot err, and therefore Job desires, (and every godly man), that God would judge him, Psal. xxvi. 1, and xlii. 1. The Psalmist desires that God would be as an advocate to plead his cause and a judge to determine it. And I am willing that God should know the worst of my case; and therefore he adds, *and that my adversary had written a book*, (the Heb. is, *the man of my contention*), whoever he is that will contend with me had drawn up his accusation against me, it would be all one to me what he would say against me while I have the Almighty for my judge. This alludes to those who bring forward a written indictment or charge against offenders, upon which they are to be tried. Strife is the very element of some men, but there are others who are said to be men of contention to the whole earth, that is, though they only speak the truth and hold forth the purity of the ways and worship of God, by which they vex all formal professors as well as the openly wicked, Jer. xv. 10. Rev. xv. 10, "They tormented the men that dwelt upon the earth." We read, Rev. ii. of Antipas, a man against all men, not that he was for contention, but he was a man so holy in his life and so zealous for the truths of God that all men, (upon the matter), contended with him, and he was slain in the contention. Such are men of strife and contention to the whole earth, none can bear them.

Hence observe, that while the book of our own conscience is for us, we need not fear nor much care who censures us, nor how many books of slander they write against us. A good conscience is an impregnable fort, it fears not the fiercest battery of evil tongues or pens; *our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.*

Again observe, that it is a proof that a man has a good conscience and a good cause, when he is willing to be tried, and to have the worst that his adversaries can say brought forward against him.

He that is guilty catcheth at any thing for a covering, he is afraid to have his actions and ways examined; but he that is honest makes no coverings of what he has done, nor doth he fear the discoveries which any man can make of them, he is willing to be tried.

*Ver. 36. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder and bind it as a crown to me.* These words are a confirmation of what he spake last, as if he had said, Let mine adversary write my faults and failings, I can bear the book upon my shoulders. Why? Because he knew that he could not charge him with any sinful practice that he lived in, or loved, or desired to keep in his bosom; or, I will take it patiently, I am ready to submit to the reproofs of men as well as to the chastenings of God.

Job could not think that he could bear the guilt of any sin upon his shoulder, only, if found guilty, he would quietly bear the blame; but if his adversaries' book should be found a slander, and his integrity appear through all his accusations, then I would bind it as a crown to me.

But why does Job speak thus? Had he no fault? Did he think nothing could be written of him which he had cause to be ashamed of? Job knew that God had much cause to charge him with folly, and therefore, in this boasting expression he only intimates his integrity, that he was neither a lover of sin nor a despiser of goodness. Job's friend's had charged him with many things that he had never done; but suppose the fact charged to be true, yet if he had accused himself with it, confessed it to God, and received a pardon in the faith of Christ's atonement, it cannot turn to his shame. Sins hidden and continued in are our shame, and will be our confusion, but sins confessed and repented of are our comfort and crown. We cannot take comfort in any sin, though confessed and repented of; but we may take comfort that to our knowledge we have no sins but such as we have confessed and repented of.

Hence observe, that pardoned sins cannot hurt the sinner, for though he grieves that he has sinned, yet his sins cannot hurt him. He who is once purged hath no more conscience of sin, Heb. x. 2, that is, though he knows he has many sins and mourns over them too, yet he has not a tormenting accusing conscience, because he is purged and his sins pardoned through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is the glory of the gospel. Free grace in justification is the blotting out of transgressions out of God's book as they had never been.

Take the following counsels respecting evil reports that may fall upon us, 1st, If ill reports are true then be humbled. 2d, When they are false be thankful. 3d, When they are not altogether untrue it is good to search and try our hearts and ways more strictly, whether we have not given just occasion for such a report. 4th, Though we are not so bad as some suspect and report of us, yet we are not so good as we would be

thought, and ought to be, which is matter of present humiliation and future caution. Unjust accusations are matter of honour rather than of disgrace to the innocent; he that is sincere is ashamed of the least sin, but he shall not be put to shame for the greatest, as it follows,

*Ver. 37. I would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near to him.* I should be so far from refusing the book written against me, though all the miscarriages of my life were raked together and summed up in it, that I am ready to give an account of my whole life, and to make a fuller declaration of my sins than any adversary can make against me, so that I would furnish him with matter for his book beyond what any can possibly know of me; I would tell him the number of *my steps*, that is, the motions or actions of life, in thoughts, words, or actions; I would describe the course of my whole life, even as if I had told every step without trying to conceal any one of them. It is not to be supposed that any man can remember all his sins, but if he hide or seek to cover any of them, it is his sin.

It shows much holy confidence, and a testimony of a clear conscience, to be willing to make known the whole course of our lives to God or man. Job seems to have kept an account of himself and all his ways. It is a necessary part of practical religion to put the question to ourselves, What have I been doing, thinking, or speaking? Only those who keep an account are or will be willing to give an account; a godly man knows he must declare his ways to God hereafter, and he is ready, (when there is a cause), to declare them to his brethren here. We should especially commune with our own hearts, and search diligently into our aims, ends, motives, and intentions in all our conduct, when God gives us up to the scourge of the tongues of slanderers.

*As a prince, &c.* I would apply myself to the Almighty with a princely spirit; or, I would come boldly to the throne of grace. By faith we draw near to God, and the more faith we exercise in coming to God, the nearer we draw to him. A believer has a princely boldness with God. When David by sin lost his confidence and courage before God, he prays, "Restore me," &c. "Uphold me with thy free (or princely) Spirit."

Though we are not justified by the testimony of conscience, yet conscience testifies that we are justified; and we may rise up to a holy confidence that we are accepted in Christ, and that he hears our petitions notwithstanding our sins.

*Ver. 38. If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain.* Here Job returns again to, and resumes his former subject, purging himself from all oppressive ways either in getting or using the things of this world, by an express imprecation in the last verse.

As a godly man will confess all his sins to humble himself before God, so he may assert his integrity to the utmost, and vindicate himself from every aspersion cast upon him by false friends or real enemies. Job was not afraid of overdoing in this point; he had formerly affirmed himself (God was his witness) an upright man, and these his last words seal the truth of the affirmation, that he had walked uprightly.

The land may be said to cry, and the furrows to complain, when it is obtained unjustly, is never suffered to rest, when servants are oppressed and their wages denied, or their payment unduly delayed.

Hence observe, That sin is so hateful a thing, and so burdensome, that even senseless creatures may be said to complain, and cry out of the oppressions of evil men.

From the words *crying, complaining*, observe, That some sins are crying sins that cry for vengeance upon the doers of them. Every action hath its voice; the good we do commends us, and every evil action reproaches and reproves us.

The secret sins of men that are neither seen nor cognizable by magistrates, and the open sins of great men, who are above the justice of men, as they break the rule of the law, so they fear not the penalty of the law; there is no coercing them by any human power; such cry to God for justice, who is able to humble the proudest, to crush the stoutest, and deal with the strongest transgressors, however high and powerful they are.

*Ver. 39. If I have eaten the fruit thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life.* This expresses more particularly what it is to make land cry, &c. Some read, If I eat her strength without silver. When the earth brings forth fruit it puts forth strength, Gen. iv. 12. "It shall not henceforth yield to thee her strength;" that is, it shall not be fruitful. The produce of every year is a witness of the goodness and faithfulness of God, filling our hearts with food and gladness.



not only blindness, but pride and blasphemy; and yet Elihu brings this severe charge against Job in

*Ver. 2. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram; against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. From the name Elihu, which is, He is my God; and Barachel, which is, The blessing of God. Let all who name the name of Christ, by professing to believe on him, depart from all iniquity, and live, blessing God for Christ, and praying for his blessing through him, and labouring to attain to a full assurance that he is their God, by walking in and living in the Spirit.*

From Elihu's parentage being so distinctly stated, we may be assured that this is a true history.

No sooner were the former speakers silenced, than Elihu comes forward, and in a rage charges Job with justifying himself rather than God, which no doubt was a sufficient cause for a good man to be filled with holy anger. But is it possible that Job had done so? He certainly did not, either explicitly or intentionally. Yet in the heat of this long dispute he gave too much reason for such a construction; and though Elihu did not strain beyond the sense of the words spoken, yet it was beyond the sense of the speaker. And considering the situation of Job as teased and vexed, &c. it was hard in Elihu to charge Job thus, and in such a manner. As one says of the difficulties and seeming contradictions of scripture, Distinguish the times, and the scriptures will accord.

We are lawfully and necessarily called upon to justify ourselves, though we are thereby exposed to the censure and reproach of others. 1st, When we are charged with doing any evil which we never did, then we justify ourselves by a flat denial; and, 2d, We may and ought to vindicate ourselves when the good we have done is charged upon us as an evil deed, or we are spoken of as evil doers when we have done nothing for the matter but our duty, and have acted according to rule as to the manner. This self-justification is often very necessary; for as there are some who call evil good, so there are others who call good evil, and make that a man's fault which is his commendation, like Paul, Acts xxiv. 12—14. It is said, Rom. iv. 5. "That God justifies the ungodly," which he does, by making them holy by the grace of sanctification, as well as righteous by justification. Righteousness of life is always the fruit of righteousness by faith. Nothing is more desirable than to be justified by God, and nothing is more dangerous than to justify ourselves, either by or in our own righteousness. To praise ourselves is unsavoury. To compare ourselves with others is odious. How much more to justify ourselves rather than God, which we do when, 1st, Like Job, we speak much of our own innocence, and comparatively little of the justice and goodness of God. Or like him, who, 2d, Not only complained of the greatness of his affliction, but boldly offered to plead his own cause at the tribunal of God. 3d, He complains not only of the severity, but of the continuance of his afflictions; not only wearisome nights, but months of vanity, which seems to reflect upon the honour of God, and is rather a justification of himself in bearing the cross, than of God for laying it on. 4th, He seemed to justify himself rather than God, while he was so much troubled, because God did not reveal to him the reason why he was so afflicted.

Let us learn, to rest satisfied that the most wise God has a reason for every stroke of trouble he lays upon us, though we see it not. And until we allow that all that God doth is good and best for us, yea, unless we praise and glorify God, not only in his justice, that he has done us no wrong, but in his goodness, that he has done all for our profit, we in some degree justify ourselves rather than God. Words and actions well meant may sometimes justly bear an evil construction. If we speak unadvisedly we may thank ourselves for the reproofs we meet with. While those who speak should give no occasion for censure, those who hear should interpret every word in the best sense.

*Ver. 3. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.* It is too common to condemn both persons and opinions without proper investigation, and of course without being able to give a reason why we have done so, which is very unbecoming conduct.

But did not Elihu condemn Job as well as his friends had done? They condemned him as to his state, judging him unsound at heart. But Elihu condemned him only as to particular acts or speeches. 1st, Because he spake so largely in his own justifi-

cation, chap. xxxiii. 8—11. 2d, He condemned him for complying with the wicked. That is, in his sufferings he spake sometimes like them, chap. xxxiv. 8. Again, he charged him with stubbornness against God, chap. xxxiv. 17. Thus Elihu condemned Job, but not without finding an answer, yea, such an answer as Job neither would nor could make any reply to, and this is the special business we have to look at in examining his discourse, to find out wherein Job had failed or exceeded, either in bearing the cross, or in managing the controversy with his friends.

*Ver. 4. Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were older than he.* Broughton translates, *Yet Elihu waited to speak with Job.* That is, with the most patient expectation, and also in much confidence, or reserving ourselves till a favourable opportunity. Elihu waited for the issue of that great and long debate between Job and his friends, or he waited as it were with open mouth (as the word implies) for such an answer as might satisfy him, and determine the question under debate.

Hence observe, that they who would wish to speak to any man's case properly, must first hear him patiently. If they must wait as hearers who would be learners, how much more ought they who would be teachers, reprovers, or reformers? As there is much wisdom in selecting the matter what to speak, and the manner of speaking, so in embracing the time and season when to speak.

*Because they were elder than he.* This is the reason given for Elihu's waiting. There are elders in days, and elders in wisdom and understanding. They are our elders indeed who are wiser than we. Eldership in time deserves respect, but eldership in wisdom commands it. Every senator ought to be a wise man. They who are to govern others wisely, must be furnished with wisdom themselves. Grey hairs alone cannot make a good magistrate. And young men, especially young ministers, should be so holy and grave in their conversation, as not to draw contempt upon themselves. "Let no man despise thy youth." And as no man ought to despise the young merely because they are young, so all men ought to honour old age. But as young men should not be forward to speak in the presence of their elders, so they should not be afraid to speak when they have a proper call to it, especially when their seniors forbear or refuse to speak any more.

*Ver. 5. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.* When he saw they had no more to say, either to convince Job of error, or to defend the truth of God, which they had undertaken, and for this reason his wrath was kindled. There is nothing can excuse anger but the cause of it; and he that has a good reason for his anger will probably manage his anger with reason, yea, and mingle it with grace, and so it proves not only a rational, but a gracious anger. In the next verse we find Elihu speaking soberly, and to purpose, notwithstanding his great anger.

*Ver. 6. And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion.* This begins Elihu's own preface, which he continues through the whole of this chapter, to prepare his hearers to attend to what he had to say. Young men have few days, and old men have many days, compared with one another, but all men have few days in comparison of eternity. There is a cowardly as well as a modest fear. To be afraid of doing any thing that is unlawful or uncomely, is no part of cowardice; it is good to fear our own judgment, or to fear that we may err. Young men should take heed of rushing into unnecessary questions or disputes, and as there is nothing they are more apt to do, and nothing more hurtful, therefore the apostle counsels Timothy to "avoid unprofitable questions, knowing that these gender strifes." These questions cannot promote faith in, or holiness towards God, which only foment strife among men; and the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all and patient. These virtues and graces are opposed chiefly to the youthful lusts, which Paul exhorts Timothy to take heed of; as if he had said, Be not too hasty (as young men are very apt to be) in pursuing controversies. Youth drives furiously, and often carries presumption with it. And they who have most ability to speak, are usually most sparing of their words.

*Ver. 7. I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. Or, Let days speak.* Old men should speak by rule, their words should have weight, they should speak somewhat worthy of their years; he only is a good speaker who speaks edifyingly, even the aged speak like children when they speak foolishly or unfruitfully. To communicate and diffuse our knowledge is the noblest way of using it,

and the best way of improving it. The aged who have enjoyed means of knowledge, may be ashamed to be found ignorant or unskilled in any thing they ought to know.

They who are old and ignorant, will at last find their old age a great aggravation of all their sins, but especially of their ignorance, Heb. v. 11, 12.

*Ver. 8. But there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.* The scope and meaning of this verse is, that although every man has a reasonable soul, yet the furniture of the understanding, wisdom, and knowledge, is by the gift or inspiration of the Almighty; and therefore some read, "Surely there is a spirit in man, but the inspiration of the Almighty maketh them to understand." Knowledge to order common things is of the Lord, Isa. xxviii. 26—29; how much more in spiritual things, Prov. xvi. "The preparation of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue, (that is, the fitting the heart for any right answer of the tongue is from the Lord) both the general preparation of the heart for service, and the special preparation of it to this or that use, is of the Lord, and so is the answer of the tongue for the discharge of it. It is said, God gave Saul another heart, that is, understanding for the government to which he was called; and when it was said, "is Saul also among the prophets?" one answered, "But who is their father?" Why do you wonder at this? consider who is the father of Saul as a prophet. It is God that gives diversities of gifts, 1 Cor. xii.; and as the apostle shews that the rise and spring of all is from God, so he hath shewed at ver. 7. that the reason of all this is the benefit of man. The inspiration of the Almighty not only gives light, but teaches us to know sin and hate it; and to know Christ and love and obey him, so to know as to be conformed unto, yea, transformed into that which we know; it gives a heart-changing and life-renewing understanding.

The power and grace of God triumphs over all human power and infirmity. Since a right understanding is the gift of God, let us not only pray for wisdom, but be industrious in searching the Scriptures to obtain it; for the gift of God does not supersede the diligence of man. Let such as have received much understanding, beware of boasting, as if they had not received it, and let them take heed of despising those who have received less. They despise the wisdom, and question the understanding of God, who despise those to whom he gives less wisdom than he has given to themselves. And let not those who have received only one talent, envy those who have received more. Let all study to improve the gifts bestowed on them, even the least. It is the best method to attain an increase of them.

Elihu having shewed that all the wisdom of man comes from God, and therefore,

*Ver. 9. Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment.* Some affirm, that the apostle does more than allude to this verse, even quotes it, 1 Cor. i. 26. "You see your calling, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh," &c. are called. So here, great men are not always wise. Why not? Because God does not always bestow wisdom upon them. Wisdom neither flows from, nor is it always associated with greatness. Great men are not always wise in civil things, very rarely in spiritual things. The aged do not always understand the rule to walk by, nor do they always act according to the rule which they do understand. They who fail in one, much more in both these, do not understand judgment.

Hence learn, 1st, That the Spirit of God is not tied to any age or degree of men. True wisdom is not the birth of time, nor peculiar to any set of men; the Spirit of God is most free, both in what he gives and to whom he gives. The priest's lips should keep knowledge, yet they who rest on their wisdom may soon be deceived. 2d. Let us not reverence any man's person to the prejudice of the truth; believe what is said because you judge it to be true,—not because such an old, great, or good man, hath said it. We must prove all things, and hold fast that only which is good. The gesture, tone, and gravity, &c. of a speaker, affect some hearers so much, that they are ready to swallow all that is uttered, without attempting to weigh what is spoken in the balance of the sanctuary. 3d. We ought not to despise what is said by young men because of their youth. As it is a sin to adore old age, to give up our faith and conscience to it, so it is a sin to despise youth; in doing so we may despise the truth.

*Ver. 10. Therefore I said, hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion.* Elihu addressed and requested the attention of all present, though he spake principally to Job. Discreet men, though both young and poor, should be heard while they speak truth and reason; yet the words of Solomon are too often verified, "The poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard." Some think, if a man be poor, his counsel is so too, and if he be young, how can he be a counsellor? "Yet hear me,"

saith Elihu, "I also will shew mine opinion," or my knowledge in this case. Some have knowledge who will not shew it. They who keep in the knowledge that God has given them, either through idleness or shame-facedness, do almost as ill as they who shew their opinion through pride and vanity, and when we do shew our opinion, it should be from pure motives, such as to instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful, quicken the slothful, but, above all, that God may be glorified.

*Ver. 11. Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, while you searched out what to say.* The word which we translate, "to wait," imports, 1st, An act of hope, or an excessive desire to enjoy the object of our affection. 2d, It implies the grief felt in disappointment. 3d, It includes patient waiting for future enjoyment, though grieved with present delays. I have long expected you would say what is right, and I have considered what you said. He intimates that he took the greatest pains to find out the utmost tendency and purpose of their discourse. The word, *to search out*, signifies the strictest search after that which is hidden and secret; as if he had said, I am persuaded you have exerted yourselves to the utmost to find out what to say. We must diligently hear, weigh, and consider, what is spoken, before we attempt to answer. When the word is preached, it is our duty to wait, not for a sound of fine words dressed up with affected eloquence, but for savoury words that have weight and light in them, to prevail upon the heart to love and obey God, these are the only words worth the waiting for, and for these we ought to wait.

From Elihu's patient attention learn, That we must not form a judgment from any one part of a discourse, but must take all together; and that those who have had the patience to hear others, ought to have the privilege of being heard.

From the last clause observe, That we ought to ponder and try what we intend to speak. The preacher, Eccl. xii. 10. sought (no doubt by diligent study and earnest prayer) to find out acceptable words. Not soft words that will pass with all sorts of men and make them fancy all will be well, though they go on in sin. But words of truth and sobriety, "faithful sayings," full of holy and wholesome doctrine.

Elihu seems as if he had not yet made a sufficient apology, and therefore he goes on :

*Ver. 12. Yea, I attended unto you; and behold there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words.* I attended unto you, that is, I not only desired to receive full satisfaction from you, but I attended, hoping at last to find it.

To convince, is to prove or make good what is affirmed either by reason and argument, or by testimony and authority. When such proofs are brought in as a man can neither evade nor reply to them, he is convinced. The apostle, Heb. xi. 1, says of faith, "It is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence (or conviction) of things not seen." The Holy Spirit brings such clear proofs and evidences that the soul is convinced that it is so as really and fully as if seen with the bodily eye. The same word signifies "to reprove or rebuke with words, Matt. xviii. 15, and 1 Tim. v. 20. them that sin, (that is, either openly before all, or where sin has been proved before all), rebuke before all. The word is also used to correct and chasten, but here it must be taken in the first sense: *There is none of you that hath convinced Job*, ye have called him an hypocrite, and said that he had oppressed the poor, &c. but ye have proved none of these evils against him.

John viii. 46, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" as if our Lord had said, Find a spot in my life if you can; I know you are ready to slander me, but you cannot convince me of evil.

I shall notice three great convincers: 1st, The Holy Spirit. John xvi. 7. "He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," that is, he will shew sinners their evil states and evil lives; he will also bring home to their spirits the all-sufficiency of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and so overcome their unbelief; he will also exhibit such reasons to them why they ought to be holy, that they shall neither have power nor will to gainsay. 2d, Conscience is a great convincer. John viii. 9. "Being convicted by their own conscience went out one by one." 3d, Jesus Christ, at the great day, will convince all the wicked,—"every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

Let those that undertake the work of conviction remember the method to be used in it; prove the matter and then reprove the man. This is the first thing that Elihu blames Job's friends with. They reprov'd him but did not bring sufficient convincing proof against him; and then he charges them, that they had not answered his words, as ye have not proved your own allegations so ye have not refuted his reasons. Not-

withstanding all they said, they gave no satisfactory answer; Elihu could not agree with them; and he gives a reason why he could not.

*Ver. 13. Lest ye should say we have found out wisdom; God thrusteth him down, not man.* That is, that which will surely prove us wise men, and gain us the reputation of wisdom among all wise men; and what had they found? That Job's affliction was from the hand of God, and therefore he was a wicked man.

From the first clause observe, that man is very apt to indulge in high thoughts of himself, and then he is in danger of uttering them in words; they that think highly of themselves think themselves higher than they are. God's having taken so many ways to humble man seems to prove that he is naturally very proud. God would not set up man again to work his own salvation lest he should be proud of his works. Though we are now called to work out our *own salvation*, yet it is wholly wrought by another, and what we are called to do is with fear and trembling, not with presumption and boasting.

Again observe, that man is very prone to boast of or glory in that which he calls his wisdom. The more a gracious man knows, he is the more humble, because he thereby sees his own vileness and emptiness; but a carnal man does not know himself, and, therefore, the more he knows the prouder he grows. A vain man cannot desire any good but in reference to some evil that cleaves to it, and therefore he is more desirous to be thought wise than to be wise. The very grace of a believer, much more his outward privileges, may be an occasion of boasting; it is rare to find any man rich in gifts and graces, and poor in spirit; poverty of spirit is the purest and truest riches of grace. Wisdom is not only very rare but useful and ornamental, and weak man is easily puffed up with peculiar ornaments.

The conclusion of Job's friends, that a man must be a great sinner that is greatly afflicted, may be urged from the consideration, that God is just, gracious, wise, &c. and therefore, he will not afflict without good reason. But we must consider that God is a Sovereign lord who has many good reasons for afflicting his people, for the trial of their faith, patience, &c. and to make them examples to others, Jam. v. 10, "Take my brethren the prophets for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience;" they serve Christ to purpose who can suffer while they serve. Let us not then imagine that any man hast cast off the yoke of Christ because he has a heavy load of affliction upon him. But when we see good men thrust down by the hand of God, instead of judging them let us be watchful over ourselves lest we put a rod into the hand of God to chasten us, or a sword into his hand to wound us.

*Ver. 14. Now he hath not directed his words against me; neither will I answer him with your speeches.* The word *direct* may have an allusion to an archer who aims at a mark, or to a commander who draws up his men in array against an enemy, as if Elihu had said, Job hath not aimed at me nor ordered his words against me as he hath done against you, by which you are unfit for any farther contest; but as I am no way prejudiced I shall endeavour to compose the differences between you.

From which observe, that our words should be well ordered like a well disciplined army in rank and file; confusion in words is as bad as confusion in things. Some heap up words but they do not rightly dispose of nor order them. A word fitly spoken as to the joining and disposing of it, as well as to the season of it, is at once beautiful and useful. We may take the second clause two ways, 1st, As their speeches had too little light of reason in them. 2d, As they had too much fire of passion in them, as if he had said, I will use milder words and stronger arguments; I will neither insist upon your theme to condemn him as an hypocrite, nor use your argument to prove it, I will bring forward such as I hope will be more effectual for attaining the end. And it must be acknowledged, that though Elihu gave Job many severe reproofs, yet always in a more friendly manner, to convince him that he had spoken over boldly, or that he was like to entrench upon the sovereignty of God, while he so warmly defended his own innocence. And here let us notice the kindness of God to Job, who had been so hardly used by the former speakers, in at last sending one more meek and compassionate to allay his sorrows.

From the example of Elihu, we learn, that a moderator or composer of differences must avoid five things, 1st, Lightness of spirit and of speech. 2d, Passionateness either of spirit or speech. 3d, Partiality; it is very unseemly for a judge to make himself either a party or an advocate. 4th, Timorousness; he must not be afraid of what man may say or can do against him in the discharge of his duty. 5th, He must

avoid instability, and suffer neither the persuasions nor opposition of man to turn him aside.

Observe 1st, That it is not good to imitate others in any thing they do or say, merely because they do or say it. 2d, That we should look at the failings and mistakes of others as beacons to prevent us from doing the like. 3d, We should answer every person and speak upon every subject with reason and meekness, not with passion and bitterness.

In these two verses, Elihu has been still carrying on his preface to prepare Job for what he had to say; he now addresses the standers by and signifies to them in what condition he found Job's friends.

*Ver. 15. They were amazed; they answered no more; they left off speaking.* The word from which amazed comes signifies to be affected with a very passionate and strong fear, even such as they are arrested with who flee or fall before their enemies in battle. They became as silent as if they could not speak at all, they were as mute as fishes.

*Ver. 16. When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more.)* Elihu uses many words to the same purpose, to show that there was something extraordinary in their silence; their mouths were stopped as being either unable or ashamed to urge their accusations or arguments any farther.

From these two verses, observe, 1st, That amazement unfits us for argument. 2d, That some changes are so great and so visible that we can scarce discern that they are the same persons they were before. Eliphaz said, ch. iv. 2, "Who can withhold himself from speaking?" and now he has not a word to say. 3d, That false grounds or positions cannot be always maintained. Truth may be borne down by power, or outbraved by impudence, but it cannot be overcome. Never fear to undertake a good cause; truth may and will be opposed, but truth defenders shall never want a tongue to speak for it. It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak, for the Holy Spirit will direct and enable you to say such things as your opponents shall not be able to gainsay or resist.

From Elihu saying, "I had waited," observe, That it is the duty of all to wait till they are properly prepared and fully inclined before they enter on any service, Matt. ix. 38. "Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust forth labourers into his harvest;" he does not say, Pray that labourers would thrust themselves into the harvest; but the prayer is, That he would powerfully incline their hearts to the work whom he is pleased to fit and prepare for it; and when any one is prepared and inclined, it is best to set about the work without delay. Elihu did so, as appears, ver. 17.

*Ver. 17. I said also I will answer my part; I will shew my opinion.* As if Elihu had said, They have done their part; now I see it falls to my turn to speak, and I will do it. In the former verse he was waiting, here he is purposing to speak.

Hence observe, That those who would speak to advantage should consider well and wait the proper season. It was long ere Elihu offered to speak, but he spoke to purpose when he did speak. 2d, That order must be observed in speaking; "I will answer for my part;" or my turn is come to speak. The apostle would have no interruptions, no confusion in church meetings or church speakings. 3d, That he who has received a gift or talent should use it and not hide it. It is good to be doing our part, and shewing our opinion where we may be useful. Some love to act other men's parts rather than their own; but whatsoever our hand finds to do, that is, as Elihu calls it, our part, that we should do "with all our might." 4th, Every man should think himself concerned to speak for the truth when it is injured, and do his best to right it; and when others fail, we should labour to support the cause of truth. It seems from what follows, that Elihu did so, not only to do his duty, but to empty and ease his own spirit.

*Ver. 18. For I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me.* This is as if Elihu addressed Job's friends, Though ye have spent your store upon him, yet I have plenty still; I am full of such words as will carry a conviction home to thy conscience, and will silence thy complaints.

The word we translate *constrain* signifies to press very sore, Judges xiv. 17. and 2 Cor. v. 14. "The love of Christ constraineth me;" I am not able to get out of the power of it. What spirit constrained Elihu? Some say the Spirit of God dictates both words and matter to him. Calvin says God has printed such a mark in the doctrine of Elihu, that the heavenly Spirit is apparent in his mouth. The Heb. is, The spirit of my belly. And Solomon, speaking of the church, says, "Her belly is like

an heap of wheat set about with lilies;" that is, she is big with holy thoughts and conceptions as a woman great with child ready to be delivered. A gracious heart is continually meditating on holy things, which it brings forth upon every proper occasion. What he here asserts he illustrates by a similitude in

*Ver. 19. Behold my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.* Elihu hereby shews that his desire or necessity to speak was so urgent upon him, that though he should strive with himself as much as he could to refrain from speaking, yet speak he must; "I am full of matter," &c.

Hence observe, 1st, That a man should not begin to speak, especially on weighty matters, until he is well prepared. 2d, That there is a residue of the Spirit; and so God can and does furnish those whom he calls to any work with necessary and suitable abilities.

Elihu was a man cut out on purpose for this work; he had a spirit of prudence and courage as well as of discernment. When he saw those men (though good men) had put a wrong construction on the truths and dealings of God, his spirit was filled with much zeal for God; and when any man, or set of men, however numerous or exalted in station, disguises the truth and defaces the doctrine of faith and pure worship with their own fancies and false glosses, it should kindle a holy fire and fervour of spirit in all the people of God to assert and vindicate the truth. In all such cases our spirit within us should constrain us. When the rulers and high priests thought to stop the apostles, those bottles full of the new wine of the mysteries of Christ, and therefore gave them counsel, yea, a command, to speak no more in his name, they answered, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Those were much mistaken who said, "These men are full of new wine;" that is, they are drunken; but they were full of gospel truths, and like bottles full of new wine, they could not contain, but they must speak what they had seen and heard. Such men as Elihu must speak not only to instruct and refresh others, but as it follows in the next verse, to ease and refresh himself.

*Ver. 20. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips, and answer.* The Heb. is, That I may breathe, or that I may have room. The word properly signifies that which is enlarged or widened, I will speak that I may have room: I will open my lips and answer.

To open the lips, is a preparation to speaking, and no man can speak without opening his lips; and why did Elihu open his lips? It was to refresh himself. To speak one's mind sometimes gives ease to the mind. They are good words indeed which refresh both the speaker and the hearers; but the design of speaking is rather to refresh the hearers than the speaker. What shall we say of those who speak only to be applauded and commended for eloquent orators, without any design of doing good either to themselves or others; these are sad designs of speaking; better be no orator, or even deaf and dumb, than such an orator. Unless we speak that others may be informed, comforted, edified, or some way or other bettered, we may as well be silent, 1 Cor. xiv. 19. "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." We should think all these words even as lost to us, by which we have not at least intended the gain and good of others. But suppose they get no good by what is spoken sincerely intended for their good; yet, like Elihu, they who speak useful things from proper motives shall be refreshed.

It was very difficult to moderate between Job and his friends; to take down that height of spirit which was in Job, and to allay that sharpness and bitterness of spirit which was in his friends. When we have been enabled to discharge our duty to all others, and done our duty at the proper season, how pleasant is the reflection! And when we neglect to speak when the cause of God and truth requires it, how painful and distressing is the recollection.

When Mordecai advised Esther to speak for her people, he intimates that if she does not break through all difficulties her silence will cost her dear, probably thou mayest lose thy life by it; or if not, then certainly thy conscience will trouble and vex thee for it as long as thou shalt live. We often offend in speaking; and in many cases we offend both God and man, yea, and ourselves too, (when we see our opportunity lost) by neglecting to speak.

*Ver. 21. Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man.* To accept the person of a man is not a fault in itself, yea, it is

a duty to accept the person of a man, that is, to give him favour, honour, and due respect. Therefore when Elihu says, *Let me not accept any man's person*, that is, let me not do it in prejudice to the cause that is before us. When in any business or controversy we have respect rather to the person of the man than to the matter or truth of the cause in hand, we may be said to accept persons. However much reverence and respect Elihu owed these men on account of their age and dignity, yet he owed greater respect to God and truth than to their persons, and was therefore resolved (though he had many and great temptations to do it) not to accept the persons of men. Prov. xxviii. 21. "To have respect of persons is not good." That is, it is very evil not only in itself, but in the issue of it. For it follows, "For a piece of bread that man will transgress." He will pervert justice for a very trifling gain. Neither the fear of the powerful, nor the favour of the rich and honourable, nor the interest of friends and relations, must be allowed to weigh in the matter of right and wrong. In administering the things of God which are spiritual, no man is to be known after the flesh. That is, no man is to be valued merely upon natural or worldly accounts. If we do we are become judges of evil thoughts: that is, have formed our judgments of these persons according to the dictates of our own corrupt thoughts, not according to the rule of the word.

The second clause is but two words in the Hebrew. The verb signifies *to hide*, or *conceal*; because in flattering there is a hiding of what men are, and a shewing of what they are not. We should call men as they are, and as they deserve. How grossly do they give flattering titles unto man, who extol fools for their wisdom, and commend the wicked as patterns of virtue.

We should give honour to all men to whom it belongs, but we are not to flatter any man. Rom. xii. 10. "Be kindly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another." The people of God should be so far from an ambitious affectation of superiority above others, that they should freely and really (not in compliment only) give pre-eminence to others. Phil. ii. 3. "Let each esteem others better than himself." As it is good to judge (according to truth) the worst of ourselves, and the best of others, so it is good to have a better opinion of others than of ourselves. It was observed that Christ was far from pleasing, that is, humouring any man, Luke xx. 21.

Ver. 22. *For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.*

*I know not.* That is, 1st, I have not set myself to learn the art of flattery. Besides, we may say he knows not to flatter who abhors flattery, and can say as Eph. iv. 20. "He hath not so learned Christ." That is, he has heard no such lessons, nor received any such instructions in the school of Christ. 2d, Not to know a thing is not to be accustomed or practised in it.

Hence learn, that the spirit of a good man is set against all evil; he cannot comply with it. We should always remember that we are formed by the power of God, and supported and preserved by his Almighty arm; and if we are redeemed it is by the precious blood of Christ, which should constrain us to love, honour, obey, and submit to God in all things.

Some render, "He would take me away as a little thing." But the mind of our translation is, "He would take me away in a little time." As the word signifies *to burn*, as well as *take away*, some render, "He would soon consume me." To suffer ourselves to be flattered, is both sinful and dangerous, as we see in the example of Herod. O take heed of entertaining flatteries when given! We should put them back from us as we would a poisonous cup. High commendations of sermons given to the preacher may have sad consequences. And when ministers flatter the people, how doth it ensnare their souls? To heal the hurt of the soul deceitfully, is the greatest injury that can be done to the soul. Flatteries are these pillows spoken of, Ezek. xiii. 18. sewed to the arm-holes or elbows of wicked men, upon which they sleep without fear till they are destroyed. And if flattery is so dangerous to the receiver, what is it to the giver? Doubtless some spiritual and invisible judgment will overtake those who flatter others, or who love to be flattered, though they may not immediately suffer by a visible and corporal judgment, like Herod.

It is necessary, and very profitable, to converse with the threatenings of God. Could we set the Lord before us, either in his mercies or in his terrors, we might say, "Because he is at my right hand, therefore I shall not be moved," Psal. xvi. 8. That is,



as I shall not be utterly overthrown by any evil of trouble, so I shall not be overcome by any evil of temptation.

This furnishes the preface, in which Elihu shews why he undertook to deal with Job, and what method he would follow in it.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

Elihu having spoken in the former chapter to Job's friends, now directs his speech to Job himself, and calls upon Job to attend to what he was about to say, entreating him in a mild insinuating manner.

*Ver. 1. Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words.* As if he had said, I do not come authoritatively, to demand thy attention, but as a faithful friend I desire thee to hearken to my words. The apostle's rule is, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." To be enabled from proper motives to reprove, so as not to provoke and irritate, is a great attainment. Meek words meek the spirit. It is hard to refuse what we perceive is spoken to us in love. Affectionate entreaties are blessed picklocks that open the heart to receive counsels and reproofs. Thus Elihu begins with Job, *I pray thee hear, hearken*, that he might thereby lead him to receive with candour what he had to say, or reply to it calmly.

*Hearken to all my words.* Not to this or that only, but to all. As if he had said, I intend not, and I hope I shall not speak one needless word.

Hence observe, that those who speak for exhortation, admonition, or instruction, should not use one word more than is necessary and useful. And if we should be careful not to speak one idle word, not one word unworthy to be heard, how should we avoid every word that tends to corrupt the hearers? Among many hearers there are but few hearers. I mean such as weigh and duly consider what they hear. *To hearken* is to obey, to submit to, and yield up ourselves to the truth of God; to obey and hearken is the same thing. "Mine ear hast thou opened or digged," saith Christ, Psal. xl. 6. signifying his readiness to obey, as it is expressed, ver. 7, 8. So Elihu presses Job to hearken with a purpose to obey. Though some truths are more necessary to be known than others, yet we must hearken to and obey the whole will of God that has the stamp of divine authority, because all divine truths are equally holy and precious, and to slight any of his truths is to despise the authority of God as a law-giver. The condition upon which God promises to hear our prayers is, that we should obey and submit to his will in all things. 1 John iii. 22. "Whatsoever we ask we receive, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that please him." It is not confidence, but most detestable impudence, to expect that God should give us what we ask, while we despise his authority, by contemning any of his commands.

So Elihu would have Job hearken to *all* his words, because they were not his own, but the words of God. He requests an immediate audience.

*Ver. 2. Behold now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth.* They that speak out of season may be said to have their mouths always open. The opening of the mouth implies speaking after long silence, (and due consideration of what they have heard), things of great worth, with much prudence; in a proper place and time, from proper motives and ends.

The last clause is a strange expression. Where should the tongue speak but in the mouth? Heb. "palate." That is, I have tasted or duly considered what I have spoken, and still intend to speak to you.

Hence observe, that judicious persons will taste and try what they intend to say. The speaker presents his words to the taste of the hearer. The ear trieth words as the mouth tasteth meat.

Again observe, that there is every reason we should hear attentively what the speaker has prepared with care. Elihu produces a still stronger argument to quicken attention.

*Ver. 3. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart; my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.* I'll speak truth plainly; what I believe, neither in passion, nor with partiality, nor without clear proof. The heart and tongue should go together. As some hear without their hearts, only with their ears, so some speak without their hearts, only with the tongue. Others speak what was never in their hearts; they

have no experience of what they say to others. It is sad to speak a truth that we have not felt the operation of upon our own hearts, with a view to comfort others. How are they to be lamented who speak of the things of God as a stage-player!

From the last clause observe, that truth should be spoken clearly, without the mixture of human inventions, or the chaff of unwritten traditions. They who wrap up sound doctrine in hard uncouth words, or with an unnecessary multitude of words, do rather puzzle and confound their hearers than teach and instruct them.

Elihu having assured Job that he would deal candidly with him, he next brings forward another argument to procure attention; that he was a man of God's making as well as Job was, and why should they be unwilling to give or receive counsel and help from one another?

*Ver. 4. The Spirit of God hath formed me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.* The soul of man flows immediately from God. Man is the masterpiece of all the visible works of God; He not only gives natural life unto man, but he prepares and furnishes them for every duty to which he calls them in this life. Since the Spirit of God not only forms and fashions, but instructs and quickens for every service; therefore we should, in the exercise of love and gratitude, surrender ourselves wholly to his service, and be ready to lay down our lives to his honour. This verse, as connected with the former, is as if Elihu had said, though I am thy inferior in age and degree, yet I stand upon even ground with thee as a creature formed by God. Thou hast been long under the care of God, and the former speakers have rather entangled and troubled, than eased thy mind, and who knows, but that I, who have been a hearer all this while, may be enabled to say what may be useful to direct and comfort, I therefore pray thy attention, while I deliver what I intend to say. And as connected with the following verses, Job is encouraged to pay the strictest attention to what may be said, as he is at full liberty to reply, yea, his answer is solicited.

*Ver. 5. If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up.* Some think this is a boasting speech, intimating, that Job could not answer what was to be said; others say, that Elihu informs Job that he was resolved to bring forth the strongest arguments possible to convince Job, and so calls upon him to prepare for a reply, or these words may be taken as a gentle invitation to defend himself. If thou hast spirit to reply, then spare me not; I will not be a terror to thee. Do not think, that though I am come prepared to take notice of the speeches that has past between thee and thy friends, that I wish to impose silence upon thee, or to compel thee to stand to my sentence, as if I were thy master. No! I wish thee to do thy best for thy own vindication; I am ready to receive it from thee, and to give thee my opinion candidly.

*Set thy words,* thy reasons and arguments, as it were, in battle array against me. The word is also applied to the exercise of the heart in prayer, and intimates meditating on and disposing of the strongest scripture reasonings to prevail with God in prayer. Prayer is, as it were, a battle fought in heaven, not in wrath and revenge, but with faith and holy submission. Thus the word is applied by a metaphor, both to disputations with men, and supplications to God. Speeches should not be heaps of words, but words placed in regular order.

From Elihu desiring Job to prepare to answer what he had to say, Learn, that in all matters of difference, we should be as willing to hear what others can answer, as we are desirous that they should attend to what we advance in support of our opinion.

It is a great duty to refresh and comfort the distressed whether in body or mind. Every man should do his best for clearing or maintaining a good cause; we should especially do these two things with all our might, Eccl. ix. 10. 1st, Maintain the truth of God, and 2d, Our own integrity. Elihu was chiefly to defend the first, and Job the second. There is nothing more unworthy a man, much more a Christian, than to leave either truth or his own integrity to sink or swim. Thus Elihu gives Job a friendly challenge, and encourages him to accept. From

*Ver. 6. Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay.* Job had often wished that he might be mildly heard by God, and not so harshly dealt with by man. Elihu says, I am according to thy wish, that is, now thou hast thy desire, for as I will be a faithful advocate for God, so I will not be terrible or dreadful to thee. Some are too forward to comply with the wish of others:—when they say, Come run with us into all excess of riot, &c. they answer, We are according to your wish, we are for you; whereas we should steadfastly withstand every temptation

to sin. But to comply with the honest desires of others, is a part of fulfilling the law of love, and in this sense we should become all things to all men, both for their edification and consolation. But how came Elihu to be in God's stead? Every man that speaks of the things of God, must speak according to the oracles of God. Some render, "in respect of God;" as if he had said, In respect of God, I stand on the same terms with thyself, for he is the God of us both. We and all mankind are alike formed out of the clay, which consideration should make all mankind kind and compassionate to one another, much more should they beware of insulting or oppressing one another. Why should one earthen vessel dash upon another? When we are tempted to pride in ourselves, let us remember that we are clay; when we are provoked to anger or any harsh dealing with our brethren, let us remember that we are clay. Elihu seems sensible of the frailty of another from the experience of his own, and therefore he subjoins this assurance of his respect to Job's weakness in what he should say farther.

*Ver. 7. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.* Elihu had given Job much security already that he would deal fairly with him, and here gives an additional declaration of it. What terribleness is there in a clod of earth? What are the most terrible of the sons of men that they should be a terror to us? We ought not to trust in the mightiest among men, why then should we fear them? Isa. li. 12, 13. "Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy maker?" We never unduly fear men, till we either forget God who made us, or forget of what we, and even the most terrible of men, are made.

It is possible for a man, though he be but clay, to clothe himself with terror and appear very formidable and terrible to his brethren? Man should be meek and gentle to all men, especially to the afflicted. A man's hand may be heavy upon one whom he never touched. Our vexing or troubling another, whether by doing or saying that which afflicts him, is the laying of a heavy hand upon him. Great afflictions of any kind are an heavy hand upon us. Elihu saw the heavy hand of God upon Job already, and therefore gives him the comfortable promise that he would not add grief to his sorrow.

Hence learn, That it is very becoming to deal gently with those whom we would wish to reclaim from any error, or reprove them for any fault. If such a spirit as Elihu professeth in this controversy could be exercised, how soon might all our controversies be ended. O that we could with sweetness and gentleness treat about our differences, and say, as a man full of zeal for truth once said: We will not terrify you with the magistrate's sword, nor deal with subtlety; we will carry all things fairly and amicably, waiting in the use of proper means, such as counsels, convictions, and prayers, till God shall make a way into every man's spirit to receive the truth in love!

Elihu having ended his ingenuous preface to prepare Job for an attentive hearing, for a candid construction, and a ready acquiescence in what he was about to say, drawn from what he heard.

*Ver. 8. Surely thou hast spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words.* That is, I have not gathered from uncertain reports, but have been an ear-witness of what I am now to bring against thee. I know thou canst not deny that thou hast said the things that I am offended with, and I believe, when thou hast heard and considered better of them, thou wilt not undertake to defend them. When our own sayings are brought against us, what have we to say? Christ told the unprofitable servant who tried to excuse himself for not using or improving his gift. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee." And as he did nothing before, so then he could say nothing, because judged out of his own mouth. He that is condemned by his own sayings, dies by his own sword, like Goliath. As the words of those who slander others often turn to their own disgrace, so do their's for the most part, who are much in commending or in vindicating themselves, which is what Elihu charges Job with in the following verse, "I have heard the voice of thy words," saying,

*Ver. 9. I am clean without transgression, I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me.* This thou hast said, and this I charge upon thee as a great iniquity. In this verse, the same thing is said four times, twice affirmatively, *I am clean, I am innocent*; and twice negatively, *I am without transgression, there is no iniquity in me.* When Job said, *I am clean without transgression*, it may be understood thus, Though I have many failings, yet I am free from defection; though I have many weaknesses, yet I am free from rebellion and obstinacy; I still retain an entire love to God, and I am

ready to submit to his will, though I often find my heart, through corruption, rising up against my duty ; I am turned aside through the strength of temptations, but I turn not aside through the bent of my affections. This is somewhat like what Job meant when he said, *I am clean without transgression*. Thus Job intimates, that sin is an unclean thing, and that it makes men unclean, and that if he was guilty of transgression, he must have been unclean.

*I am innocent*, I have done no hurt. Sin is a hurtful thing, by it we hurt ourselves, injure others, and dishonour God.

*Neither is there iniquity in me*. Iniquity is a departure from the way, and from the scope and mark to which we should direct our whole course. This is a most grievous charge against Job, as it includes pride, self-conceit, and making God a liar, which is the worst kind of self-deceit, 1 John i. 8. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," &c. ver. 10. "he maketh God a liar." Elihu might bring this charge from some of Job's assertions concerning his innocency, as chap. x. 7 ; xvi. 17 ; xxiii. 10 ; and xxvii. 5. "God forbid that I should justify you, my righteousness I hold fast," &c. It must be admitted that Job's three friends had charged him in the same manner ; yet if Elihu had considered the testimony of God concerning him,—the provocation he suffered,—that he never affirmed he was not a sinner ; and had he interpreted what Job said as he meant them, that he was just in all his transactions with men, and had not wickedly departed from God, there would not have been so gross a charge brought against him.

It must indeed be allowed that Job gave too much cause of blame, 1st, Because he spake many things of himself that had the appearance of boasting and so of vain speaking. 2d, Because he so often and so boldly complained of the severity of God's procedure with him, for which Elihu attacks him in the two following verses. Job could not say he had never spoken these words, though he did not speak them in the sense Elihu took them. When words are spoken they must abide the judgment of the hearers or according to the sense they will bear, though different from the intention of the speaker ; and this should teach all to speak with caution.

Hence observe, that Elihu very justly reproves Job for talking so much of his innocency under his affliction, when he should have been chiefly employed in glorifying God by humbling himself under his mighty hand.

Ver. 10. *Behold he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy*. Or, as one translates, He, (that is God), picketh a quarrel against me. He either finds or makes something to complain of against me to lay his heavy hand upon me, to ruin me, and break me to pieces. But did Job ever say, that God sought occasions against him ? In ch. xiv. 16, 17, he says, "For now thou numberest my steps, dost thou not watch over my sin ?" that is, thou watchest me so strictly that I cannot in the least step aside, but presently I am observed and shall be sure to hear of it. "Yea, my transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity," that is, thou keepest my sins in remembrance, thou dost not pass them by, but hast them ready by thee. When Elihu heard these things might he not say, that Job hath said, "God seeketh occasion against me," yea, as it follows, "and counteth me for his enemy."

Observe 1st, That even good men when sorely grieved under the afflicting hand of God, are ready to suspect and fear that God is no friend to them. 2d, That when God deals most strictly and severely with his people they should not take it as an argument of any ill will against them, or that he counteth them his enemies.

A gracious soul has often a sore combat with his own heart to get and keep up honourable thoughts of God when suffering under dismal dispensations of providence.

Ver. 11. *He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths*. That is, he presseth me with very close and sore afflictions. Afflictions keep us under restraint ; they do more than restrain through the blessing of God, they prove the death of corruptions. When a good man hath the world at will his corruptions try to have their will too, therefore, God hedges the way of his people with thorns to prevent them from sinning. When we need this discipline we may look for it, and it is a mercy to be under it. Afflictions are a restraint to our comforts as well as to our corruptions. When in prosperity we take unlawful liberty, God sends an affliction, as his stocks, to deprive us of lawful enjoyments.

To be in the stocks is a disgraceful thing ; it is a reproach, it exposes to shame. Job's afflictions were interpreted by many to his disgrace, and he was looked upon as a vagabond whom God had put into the stocks for his misdemeanours. Though afflictions

diminish no man's honour or esteem in the sight of God or his people, (an afflicted saint is as precious to them as when in the greatest prosperity), yet in the opinion of worldly men they do. The stocks are a witness against a man that surely he hath done some ill thing.

*He marketh all my paths.* Though the Lord seems to have let him out of the stocks, yet he was but like a prisoner with his keeper at his heels. He marks what our thoughts are, and what is our aim and end in all things. As the Lord marks all our paths so it is our wisdom to mark our own paths.

Elihu proceeds farther to deal with and refute Job, and to answer for God.

*Ver. 12. Behold, in this thou art not just; I will answer thee that God is greater than man.* Elihu tells Job plainly of his faults, and applies them home to him. He does not say what others think of the matter, but speaks directly from himself, *in this thou art not just.* We should reprove with plainness, and lay our finger upon the very sore. In this or that thou art not just. No man had ever any cause to repent either giving or receiving a wise and seasonable reproof. To be unjust is not to give every one his due. Elihu intends chiefly what Job had spoken unduly either to or of God. Many think they are very honest men because they observe second table duties—they give men their dues—who never consider that unless they fear, love, and obey God, worshipping him in the manner and season of his appointment, submitting quietly to his rod, taking all well whatever he does with them, is to be unjust to God, because they thereby deny him that sovereignty over them which is his due.

Elihu observing Job's carriage, and what he had said, gives him a reprehensive answer, and that is, the Puissant is greater than sorrowful man, yea, than man at his best estate.

But did not Job know and even assert this great truth? and who doubts that God is greater than man? Elihu did not question whether Job thought God greater than himself, that was not the point in controversy, but he saw that the principle did not influence Job's practice; and so it is with many under heavy trials. How apt are they to speak and act below, yea, beside those principles which they profess to believe! Many admit that God is greater than man, yet while they do not subject themselves wholly to God, they in effect deny it. Many acknowledge that God is righteous; yet when they rest not in his dealings with them they contradict their profession. Whenever we are over-grieved at any affliction, or would have things different from what they are, we, upon the matter, make ourselves wiser and greater than God. We only acknowledge God in his greatness when we acquiesce in all he doth as just, and receive it as good, however bitter it is. It is easy inwards to own what God has revealed himself to be, but O how difficult to live under the practical influence of such confessions. Did we really understand and believe that God is greater than man, it would presently stop our mouths and for ever silence all our complainings, whether in reference to personal or public concerns. But if Job discovered so much impatience as practically to deny the greatness of God, how is he held up as a pattern of patience? I answer, his patience was sincere and without hypocrisy, but not complete nor without infirmity; it was perfect as to kind, but not as to the degree.

*Ver. 13. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.* This is a reproving question, as if he had said thou dost very ill to strive, why dost thou chide and complain because God will not render thee a reason of his dealings with thee in this affliction? O how variable are the best of men; Job, who at the commencement of his troubles was all submission, is found striving with God.

It is natural for man to oppose and strive against God, which we do, 1st, By disobeying his commands, which is a strife with his holiness; for all the laws of God bear the stamp of holiness. 2d, Men strive with his faithfulness and power when they either think him so weak that he cannot, or so unfaithful that he will not fulfil his word. 3d, Any murmuring word about, yea, any discontented thought with our condition, and all impatience under any cross which he lays upon us, is striving with God, and this was the peculiar way in which Job strove with God. It is a great presumption and the height of folly to strive with him who may do what he will, and can do nothing but what is right. By striving with God, we only increase, but cannot lessen our troubles.

The power and dominion of God is absolute as well as universal. Why should we expect an account from God who owes nothing to any creature, who neither doth nor can do any thing which is unjust? We shall never want matter of quarrelling with

God till we learn to submit simply, that is, graciously to him. A stoical stupidity and a proud despising of rebukes is equally to be avoided, for they are as bad, if not worse, than striving. We may, and we ought to be duly affected with every stroke we receive from God.

Let us beware of striving with God, as it not only dishonours him, but prevents the exertions of the new creature, for while a person is murmuring against God, he cannot strive by believing prayer with God. In order to keep us from this great sin, a sin containing many sins in it, and disposing us to all sin, let us consider our own nothingness in comparison of God;—that we suffer nothing but what our sins have deserved. Every sin has a cross in the belly of it; and shall we strive with God on account of our crosses, when our sins procure them?

If a man had all the comforts which he could possibly desire, they could not make him happy. Why then strive with God when they are removed? The people of God should keep in mind that afflictions are their appointed portion in this world, and they shall work for their good, therefore, instead of striving against God in his sovereign dispensations, strive against inordinate affections, pride, envy, &c. Let us strive against the corrupt practices, courses, and customs of the times we live in, though we should especially strive against our own corruptions, yet we must strive against sin in whomsoever it appears, avoiding every temptation to yield to their solicitations. Why should we strive with God at any time, or in any thing, whom we ought constantly to serve and obey? So much for this chiding question in which Elihu reproves Job, and for which he had given but too much reason.

Elihu having asserted the absolute sovereignty of God over man, to mitigate and allay the seeming severity of this assertion, he adds, that God is pleased to give clear and repeated intimations unto man what is his will, if man had but will and understanding to perceive it.

*Ver. 14. For God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not.* When God gives us any intimation of his will, of what he will do for us, or of what he would have us to do, then he is said to speak to us, Heb. i. 1. Though God does not speak to us immediately as he did to the prophets and apostles; yet all the prophetic and apostolical writings are God speaking to us, besides what he speaks to us inwardly by his Spirit, and outwardly in his works of providence, whether by mercies or crosses.

*Once* is as much as surely, certainly, and sufficiently, but it also signifies exclusively; God may speak once and no more for ever. Though he is very patient and long-suffering, yet he hath not given any man the least encouragement to continue in sin, or to delay for a single day to obey his command to believe on his Son, in expectation of an invitation to-morrow. While God is waiting to be gracious, giving precept on precept, and sorrow upon sorrow, let us listen, believe, and obey his call.

The word *man* is a supplement in the last clause; but it is common to leave out a word which must necessarily be understood. "God speaks once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not;" and that proceeds from the blindness of all men by nature, Eph. iv. 18; 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," &c. This comes to pass sometimes from the judgment of God upon carnal men. Isaiah's hearers were under such a doom, that the very light which he held out blinded them, so that the more he spake the less they perceived. Isa. vi. 10. This is a dreadful scripture. But Elihu rather seems to mean here, that even those that are spiritual do not always perceive spiritual things, which shews the weakness and imperfection, or the negligence and slothfulness even of a good man.

Elihu proceeds to state the several ways by which God speaks to man, and he mentions dreams and visions in ver. 15, and that God aims at the instruction of man therein, ver. 16. to lead him to repentance and humiliation, ver. 17. and all with a view to man's salvation, ver. 18.

*Ver. 15. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep filleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed.* In dreams there is an image of persons or things represented to us, Eccl. v. 3. "A dream cometh through the multitude of business;" that is, what a man has been doing, saying, or hearing in the day, impresses his mind in the night. God sometimes reproves, instructs, comforts, and reveals future events by dreams. The Heb. has a word for sleep in general, another for deep sleep, and a third for any slight sleep, which is here translated *slumbering*.

From God teaching by dreams, we may observe, That he is superior to all teachers, who must have their scholars not only awake but attentive; and he may thereby pos-

sibly intend to shew us the distinct essence of the soul, which can be instructed and retain the remembrance of what is communicated when the body is as dead. For what is sleep but a kind of death; and death is a long sleep. Dreams and visions were frequent under the former dispensation, and in the infancy of the new, while the canon or rule as to all matters of faith and holy life was not fully finished and recorded in writing. And though we must be far from limiting God, yet he has limited us from expecting any knowledge of his will above what is written. It cannot be denied that men may make profitable use of dreams at this day. To make them the rule or warrant of what we do is extremely dangerous; but when the matter hinted in a dream is consonant to the will of God, it may be lawfully attended to.

*Ver. 16. Then he openeth the ear of man, and sealeth their instructions.* The opening of the ear imports the removing of those things which hinders the effectual hearing or obeying of those messages that God sends to men, as ignorance, unbelief, pride, &c., or love to any sin. God alone can open the ear, which he does, when he makes us not only to attend, but understand, believe, and obey what he commands. The ear of Christ was never shut, either through ignorance or unbelief, but he is said, Psal. xl. 6. to have his ear opened only to shew his constant readiness for obedience. As faith sets the whole soul at work for God, so faith is the great work of God upon the soul.

The *sealing of instruction* signifies the efficacy, energy, or effectual working of God with the word; he ratifies and confirms it to the soul, he makes it as sure to them as a sealed bond both with respect to the duty commanded and the mercy promised. When a sinner is converted his instruction is sealed upon him; and when a saint is built up and edified, then is instruction sealed upon him also. And until we thus profit by the word, we have the word without a seal, nothing fastens upon us.

The word for instruction signifies also *correction*. So some read, He openeth their ears, or sealeth their chastisement. If the ear be not obedient to instruction, the back must submit to correction. The correction of the dearest children of God is sealed if they hear and do not.

Elihu having spoken of one end of God in revealing himself in a vision by a dream, viz. to fasten his word on men, so in all this his purpose is

*Ver. 17. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.*

*Withdraw* signifies to take off, or put away, to remove or change for the better. Some render, That he may turn man from those things that he hath done; that is, by bestowing the grace of repentance, and turning him from his evil ways. Our translation imports, that God by dreams prevents men from their purposes, as he did Abimelech and Laban. When God draws a man to good, and from sin, he at once shews the sinful stubbornness of man, and the riches and power of his own grace, for nothing less can turn men from sin to God.

Hence learn, that it is a great mercy to be delivered from sinful inclinations, and prevented from purposing any evil. Disappointments are acts of grace; if God stop us from doing evil, not only by his word, but by blows, or by an hedge of thorns, we ought to be thankful. To be suffered to go on and prosper in sin, is the secret judgment that God inflicts on sinful man in this world. To be given up to famine, pestilence, and sword are grievous judgments, but to be left to the power of our own lusts is far worse, for then we walk in our own counsels, by which we dishonour God and ruin our souls.

The word rendered *hide*, is to hide by casting a veil or covering over what we wish to be hid. "A prudent man concealeth knowledge." He does not pretend to know so much as he really does know. God hides pride from man by pardoning or covering it, Psal. xxxii. 1.; or by keeping man from acting proudly.

The word rendered *pride* signifies eminency or excellency, because men are usually proud of that wherein they excel; and the Lord may be said to hide pride from men, when he hides that from them which through the power of corruption excites pride. We may take pride in a large sense, as comprehending all sin; for every sin is a species of rebellion against God. Pride is opposed to humility, which is not only a choice grace, but the ornament of all those graces which are hidden in the heart and manifested in the life of a true believer. The secret pride of man's heart discovers itself in manifold instances. It arises from an inordinate self-love and a foolish conceit, that what we receive is procured by our own superior wisdom, industry, &c.

As he who idly puts his talent into a napkin, so he who vainly shews his talents is

in danger of having them taken away from him. Pride is a vile and abominable sin in the sight of God, which he constantly opposes as contrary to his nature and law. Various considerations and means for mortifying pride might be mentioned, but the most effectual is frequent believing meditations on Christ humbling himself, &c. as revealed by the Spirit in the holy Scriptures.

*Ver. 18. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.* There is a keeping back by outward force. 2d, By persuasion, seasonable counsel, &c. 3d, By authoritative command. By one or other of these ways God keeps back some from attempting to execute their evil purposes; but he more frequently arrests and rescues those that are ready to fall into the pit. It is said, "He keepeth back his soul," to teach us that the very soul, as well as the body, is exposed to destruction by running on in sin. As God keeps back his soul from everlasting, so his life from temporal destruction. Whatever doth afflict, vex, or destroy, may be called the sword. The general sense of this verse is, That the Lord withdraws man from his purpose, and hides pride from him, that so he may preserve him from perishing both in body and soul. The way of man naturally is down to the pit, and all that he does of his ownself is for his own undoing. And when he is kept back from the pit, "it is by the power of God through faith unto salvation." When a sinner is turned from his purpose, and from his sinful ways; when his pride is subdued and he is emptied of himself, then his soul is kept from destruction, and his life from perishing by the sword.

*Ver. 19. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain.* This and the three following verses contain a description of the second means which God uses for the humiliation of man, and by which he reveals his mind unto him. Also imports that this is an additional mean whereby God awakes sinners to attend to and obey his voice. It is a sorrowful subject a sick man, and the first effect is *pain*, strong pain.

*Chasten* is to reprove and convince both by authority and reason, and to correct and instruct. To be chastened with strong pain upon his bed, implies extraordinary pain. The word *strong* signifies perpetual, lasting, as well as strength or might. When pain comes to the bones it must needs be a very strong pain. They who will not be humbled and turn to the Lord by dreams, that is, by gentle means, shall be instructed by pains. If men will not return upon word, admonition, the Lord hath his sword and arrows to reprove them with, Psal. vii. 12, 13. The voice of God is in his rod beyond all the eloquence of words. Though Elihu speaks in the third person, yet he points out Job's condition, and is as if he had said to Job, Hath not God clearly told thee his mind and thy duty? What are the pains of thy body, &c. but so many voices of God calling aloud to thee to repent and humble thyself? God is speaking to thee in his own way, therefore be satisfied, and do not stand desiring that God would answer thee after thy way, nor complaining because he doth not.

The purpose of God in chastening man is not to vex and destroy him, but to humble him. The same word signifies both to be afflicted and humbled, and to teach him to know the evil and bitterness of sin by its consequences, and to learn him to abhor it. To excite prayer, self-examination, and give an opportunity for the exercise of faith, patience, and submission. To make thankful for recovery from pain and distress, and to make us more diligent and attentive in discharging the duties we owe to God, to ourselves, and to all others, while time and opportunity lasts.

Elihu having shewn us the sick man in pain, proceeds to the next effect.

*Ver. 20. So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.*

*His life*, that is, his living body. *Abhorreth bread*, that is, he nauseates common food as if it were filthy and unclean. *And his soul dainty meat.* Meat of desire; not only such meat as men choose for its wholesomeness, but such as curious palates desire for the pleasantness of it. All sickness weakens the appetite, and the sick man abhors that which he desired before. That which gives the best taste to our meat, is a taste of the goodness of God in it. The best of creature comforts may soon become loathsome, and of no use to us when we have most need of them. Happy they who feed upon Christ by faith, in health and in sickness; when all worldly comforts either leave them or become tasteless, their comforts will remain; whereas a sense of divine displeasure will make all things they have desired to feed their lusts, like gall and wormwood. Let all, therefore, take heed of abusing their enjoyments, and receive their bread and dainty meat with prayer and thanksgiving.



The third effect of sickness is contained in

*Ver. 21. His flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out.* This, in a very elegant manner, sets forth the deplorable state of a sick man; pain and sickness quickly consume the body. The flesh of man is a very fading thing, for old age will waste what sickness and famine have left; therefore, 1st, Be not desirous, much less ambitious, of a fine bodily appearance, or of being proud of any thing that is called flesh, as it may soon melt away as a snow-ball. 2d, Be not careful to provide for the outward man, for the meat you prepare for your body is not more perishing in its nature than your own flesh. 3d, Be ready to serve God and seek communion with him, however much your bodies may be wasted thereby, even to the giving up of life. But where grace is real and active it will not consume, but increase and improve by every self-denying exercise.

Flesh and bones are the eminent materials of this fair and most regular building, the body of man, but sickness soon discovers the bones; and a sense of sin is said to have consumed the bones, Psal. xxxi. 10. And the bones are said to be burnt as an hearth (Psal. cii.) with grief for the afflictions of Zion. Our bones are not made of brass; sickness will diminish, and pain master them. Afflictions make wonderful changes and discoveries, both as to the outward and inner man. It puts out of sight that which was seen, and brings to light that which was not seen, and that not only in regard of his flesh and bones, but also as to that which is moral and spiritual in man, his virtues and vices, his graces and corruptions.

How many, in the time of prosperity, cover by a profession many corruptions which a day of tribulation discovers, and causes them to give up the cloak of a profession. On the other hand, afflictions consume the remains of corruption in the godly; and their patience, submission, and self-resignation to the will of God, &c. that lay hid, shew themselves in a day of trouble, or on a death-bed.

*Ver. 22. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.* The soul here, as frequently in Scripture, is put for the person, and it is spoken of as if man were nothing but a soul, in Matt. xvi. 26.

*Unto the grave.* The pit of corruption, disease, and death are near one another. A sick bed and a grave are not far distant, therefore, we should listen to every pain and sickness as admonitions to prepare for death, and in order to this, let us draw near to God when we are well, and all is well with us. O, how earnestly should we draw nigh unto God in the exercise of faith and love, in the appearance and approaches of temporal death! How miserable is their condition who have death near them and God far from them, who know not how to draw near to a God in Christ as their God! Since the sick are drawing near to the grave, let those who visit them give prudent hints of their approaching end, of the necessity of an interest in the atonement of Christ, and of the freedom of access that we have unto him as sinners, and the security and safety that they enjoy who embrace the forgiveness of God, believing that it is a righteous thing with God to justify the ungodly who believe in Jesus.

The second clause is rendered by one, "and his life to killing maladies," and so whatever is mortal to man may be included in *the destroyers*; others read, "His life draws nigh to those who are destroyed or dead." Dying men are so near to death that they may be reckoned as dead men. Diseases are destroyers, as by them God says, "Return ye children of men to your original dust." Every disease and pain is death if so commissioned by God.

Those afflictions sent by God only to correct and instruct, may appear as if they were intended to destroy. It is a mercy not to be pained or sick, and though it is a more sensible, yet not a greater mercy to be relieved from pain and recovered from sickness.

Hence, learn to be thankful for health continued or restored, and be careful to show that your gratitude is genuine by abstaining from whatever may injure your health. All the content that intemperance can give cannot compensate for pain and sickness, which sooner or later proceed from it. Some have died with hunger, but pampering has destroyed many more.

O ye that are given to appetite, or rather are masters of appetite, studying to gratify it till ye are mastered by it, consider that health is more than meat and life than dainty fare. The best way to support under or obtain relief from pain, &c. is in the exercise of patience to persevere in earnest wrestling with God in prayer. When any man glories in his strength, it shows his mental weakness, and a fit of sickness or his natural decay will quickly teach him another lesson and spoil him of his boasting.

In the four following verses we have the third method by which God reveals himself to man and recovers him from his sin, as if Elihu had said, When God brings a man to his sick bed, and yet does not perceive either his own errors nor the purpose of God in his afflictions, God manifests, 1st, His kindness, by sending a messenger to counsel him, ver. 23. 2d, By providing a ransom, ver. 24. 3d, The special benefits of this deliverance to his body, ver. 25; and to his soul, ver. 26.

*Ver. 23. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness.* If there be, supposes that it is not always so, and that it is a special privilege granted by God to send a messenger to whom he pleases. Jesus Christ is the great angel or messenger, and he primarily and chiefly does all the business for poor sinners; he is the messenger sent from God, and the interpreter of the mind of God; he reveals the mysteries of heaven to us by his Holy Spirit; he is indeed the one of a thousand to show unto man his uprightness.

An interpreter is one who is taught of God. It is not enough to know divine things, but they must be known by the teaching of the Spirit. Rev. x. 8, John is commanded to eat the book, which signifies the spiritual knowledge of divine truth, in this sense we know no more than we eat. Natural parts, and human learning, may give us a knowledge of the literal meaning of the law of God, but cannot open our eyes to discern the mysteries of the gospel. This opening of the eye is the Lord's work, and should be marvellous in our eyes, for it can make the most ignorant man among a thousand an interpreter. Eccl. vii. 24, "One man among a thousand have I found." He might find men in great number, but the number of those that deserved to be called men was very small, so that he found but one among a thousand. So Elihu teaches us that such a messenger was rarely to be found, or that he is very excellent and valuable when he is found. If we take the word messenger for ministers, we will find that not one amongst a thousand are willing to dedicate themselves to that laborious and poorly rewarded service. And if we abstract all that are ignorant, idle, unsound, scandalous, and formal dispensers of the word, we will scarcely find one of a thousand who is faithful.

*To show unto man his uprightness.* The pronoun *his*, is said by some to refer to God, and if so, then the messenger shall convince this man that God does him no wrong when he afflicts him, and this view suits Elihu's purpose, who was about to show Job that his complaints were very sinful.

When the antecedent to *his* is the afflicted man, then the showing, &c. may be taken, 1st, As implying the man's ignorance of that uprightness which he hath, and then it becomes the duty of a messenger to state a scriptural view of an upright man, as distinguished from an hypocrite. But, 2d, He is to show unto man his uprightness, by exhorting him to turn from sin and take hold of Jesus Christ by faith for righteousness, by which he shall be justified, and then he must evidence this uprightness by his sanctification or holiness of conversation; and, 3d, He must direct him how to manage the sword of the Spirit, &c. by a constant dependance upon Christ as his righteousness against all the fears that may assault his peace.

The Spirit first convicts of sin and then of righteousness. When Elihu speaks of showing unto man his uprightness, he cannot mean that the troubled soul is to be directed to his own good works as a ground of comfort; no, we must be made sensible of our own miserable and undone condition when we embrace the righteousness of Christ, by whom we are reconciled to God, and made one with him. We never see where our uprightness is till we see there is nothing that can make us stand upright in the court of heaven but only Christ as our righteousness. This is the great duty of the messengers of Christ—to declare to man this righteousness for his uprightness.

*Ver. 24. Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom.* When the messenger hath opened up the condition of the afflicted man, and showed him his uprightness, or how he may stand upright before God, by which he is humbled and brought to an unfeigned sorrow for sin, by a lively faith in Christ, exhibited in the word, *then he is gracious*, &c. which word signifies pity, compassion, &c. When a man is reduced to the utmost extremity then is the season of mercy with God. The Lord suffers many, as 2 Cor. i. 9, "To have the sentence of death in themselves, that they may learn not to trust in themselves, but in him who raiseth the dead;" therefore, let us thank God for all our deliverances, and trust his power and faithfulness for all that we yet need. The free grace of God is the source of all our mercies. He is an everlasting spring of grace; he never wearies

in doing good, nor empties himself by all that he bestows on his creatures. "He waits that he may be gracious," that is, he waits to bring us to a due temper to receive his grace.

The Lord waited to be gracious to David after his grievous fall, but he never intimated to him that he had put away his sin till his heart was broken, and he confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord." When Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. prays, "Turn me, O Lord," &c. how graciously does the Lord speak, "Is Ephraim my dear son, is he a pleasant child," &c.? But this is no way inconsistent with the free grace of God in calling sinners when in the heat and hurry of their evil ways, &c. for he does not justify a sinner for any good that he sees in them, which is clearly illustrated in the wretched infant, Ezek. xvi. which represents the best of men in their fallen natural estate, as altogether miserable and unlovely, "Yet then," saith God, "thy time was the time of love." Then the Lord gives out an order, "Deliver him from going down to the pit;" the word deliver signifies also to redeem.

Hence observe, that the word and work of deliverance is from God alone. Things are so ordered in the covenant of grace that though the Lord acts with infinite freeness, yet he has appointed and ordered a way in which alone he will do it; as expressed in the last clause,

I have found a ransom, I know how to do this man good, and to save him, and yet do my own honour and justice no wrong; his sins are pardoned through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

As consolation in this life, so salvation in the life to come is not bestowed upon any till they are prepared for it, therefore, those who have received grace must live in the exercise of it, increasing and abounding in every good work till they are made meet for the full enjoyment of God, where no unclean thing can enter.

When we hear of a ransom it should remind us of our captivity and slavery to sin, which unless covered by the blood of Christ, will appear to our shame and confusion at last. Let us therefore give all diligence to obtain an interest in Christ, as the only way of being delivered from going down to the pit, and so live and die, blessing God for finding a ransom.

Ver. 25. *His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth.* The word which we render comparatively *fresher*, signifies to wax soft or tender. It is an elegant hyperbolical expression, to shew the perfect recovery from mortal sickness to health. As if he had said, God will so completely restore him, that there shall be no appearance of his former disease seen upon him. The spiritual estate of renovation by Christ, as to the purity and perfection of it, is stated, Eph. v. 27. "That he may present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." The church being then perfectly recovered from her spiritual sickness, her flesh may indeed be said to be fresher than a child's.

When Naaman obeyed the prophet's counsel, which at first he despised, and washed in Jordan, "His flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child." And the Psalmist charges his soul to "Bless God, who satisfied his mouth with good things, so that his youth was renewed as the eagle;" which may be, 1st, As to his bodily strength. 2d, As to his civil state. 3d, As to his spiritual enjoyments. Saints may indeed be said to renew their strength as the eagle, Isa. xl. when they by faith feed on Jesus Christ, and are recovered from all their weaknesses while they lay hold on his strength; and thus "they shall bring forth fruit in old age."

Ver. 26. *He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him; and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his uprightness.* The word to *pray* implies the multiplying of prayer, not so much by number, as by weight. Like Christ, Heb. v. 7. "With strong crying;" or with importunity of soul, like Isaac, "He entreated the Lord." It is this word, he poured out many and strong prayers.

*He shall pray.* That is, he shall make a business of it. He shall pray to purpose, with his whole strength, like Paul, Acts ix. 11. Prayer is a duty never out of season; yet it is peculiarly seasonable in time of affliction, temptation, &c. God only is the object of prayer. As none can hear and answer prayer but God, so no other is worthy of the honour and adoration of believers.

Hence observe, that if we would have any mercy from God, we must ask it. The conversion of a sinner, or his first turning to God, is well named a preventing mercy, as it is conferred before it is asked; but as for converted persons, who are called heirs

of the promise, if they will have any good out of a promise they must ask it. Promises and prophecies are the express will of God, and shall certainly be fulfilled in their season; yet Ezekiel having declared many glorious things that the Lord would do for his people, concludes, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," chap. xxxvi. 37.

*And he will be favourable unto him.* That is, he will accept him, or he shall have a gracious and speedy answer.

*And he shall see his face with joy.* Every manifestation of God fills the heart with joy. True joy does not consist in the sight of any thing here below, but in a sight of God while we are below, and in the hope that we shall have an everlasting sight of him at last. Happy they who are always seen at the work and in the ways of God. The shew-bread, Exod. xxv. 30. in Hebrew is the bread of faces, because that bread did shew that God spread a table for them in the wilderness, where they had no harvest, and also to testify that his eye was always upon them, ready to do them good upon all occasions. And this is the joy of the people of God, that whatever good they have, it is the face of God to them; and they look upon the love and favour of God to them in these things much more than upon the things themselves. The next clause shews the ground of this joy.

*For he will render unto man his righteousness.* It is God's righteousness, not our own, and yet it is our own, it being reckoned unto us for our righteousness. It is the believer's righteousness, as given to him; it is Christ's, as wrought by him. Though the mercy that God shews to a returning sinner be not for his returning or repenting, yet it is according to them, Psal. xviii. 20. "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness," ver. 25, &c. That is, thou shalt be to men in thy dispensations as they are in the frame and bent of their hearts and lives, ver. 27. Isa. iii. 10. A man's righteousness or justification is as lost to him when he wants the evidence, that is, the comfort and peace of it. And so when peace is restored to the soul, righteousness or justification is restored also.

*Ver. 27. He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right and it profited me not.* God looketh upon all men as if he had but one man to look upon. He looks both to the frame of their hearts and the course of their lives. The Lord may be said to be always looking down upon nations or congregations, to see if any have a right understanding of him, and a hearty affection unto him. He looks upon the sick, to see how they take it; what effect it has upon them. He looks upon all, to observe who are going on faithfully, in a right way, or repenting that they have gone wrong, saying, *I have sinned.* It does not mean a bare saying so; but if any, burdened with a sense of the evil of sin, and from tasting the bitterness of it, add, *And have perverted that which is right,* which is to be willingly, yea, wilfully unrighteous. Though it contains only a general confession of sin, yet he that saith, *I have sinned,* &c. will not hide any one of his sins; and he that in truth confesses any one of his sins, will cover none of them; he owns the law of God to be a right rule.

There is no sin excepted from pardon but that which at once refuses and despises it. Wo to those who sin perversely, that is, against the light of their own conscience, upon hopes of pardon. This text speaks of a person confessing and bewailing that he has sinned perversely, not of one proposing to go on in sin, as appears in the last clause, wherein he confesses farther, *And it profiteth me not.*

The apostle queries Rom. vi. 21. "What fruit had ye then in these things whereof ye are now ashamed?" The profit of every unpardoned sin is the loss of the soul. And suppose a sinner repents, what does he get by sin but the sorrow of repentance? And though none shall have cause to repent of true repentance for sin, yet none has cause to boast of their gain by sin, which has occasioned the bitterness of true repentance. At the best, sin dishonours God, defiles the conscience, and breaks the peace. True penitents willingly confess sin now, and impenitents shall be made to confess it at last. It will be the cry of sinners to all eternity: O what hath sin profited us! The affirmative is, it brings trouble, and renders us for ever miserable.

*Ver. 28. He shall deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.* As if it were said, he will deliver the penitent from death, both from temporal and eternal destruction. And the second clause is, "he shall live to see the light." He shall recover out of his deadly sickness. Or it may include not only that he shall live, but that he shall live comfortably and prosperously.

To see the light is to live and rejoice. It comprehends all the comforts of this life, and of that to come. So extensive is the favour of God to repenting persons, that time is too narrow for it. Everlasting light shall be their portion. It is called "the inheritance of the saints in light."

Observe, that the mercy of God to humbled sinners is a complete mercy. Here is not only deliverance from evil, but the bestowing of good. It is much to be kept from going down to the pit, but it is more to see light—the light of comfort here, and the light of glory hereafter.

*Ver. 29. Lo all these things worketh God oftentimes with man.* This is the application of the former doctrine. Elihu calls upon his hearers to lay it to heart. As if he had said, I have been speaking of what is really and daily taking place among the children of men.

*Lo* may intimate that it is a strange thing that God should take so much pains with and exercise so much patience with poor creatures, and that he is ready to magnify his own grace in doing them. And also, that they are matters of great consideration that we should weigh well, viz. That God should awaken the consciences of men by dreams, by grievous sicknesses, sending an interpreter, &c. and at last delivering his soul from going down into the pit.

The native sense of the word *worketh* implies a willing work, not forced, but a full and complete work carried on to perfection.

Hence observe, that God is the author of all the good that is done to or among the children of men. Whatever instrument is employed, yet the work, as to the matter and manner of it, as well as to the result and issue, is the Lord's. 2d, Observe, that God will perfect his work and bring it to an issue. God continued working with Job till he fully humbled him. If once or twice will not do, he will do it thrice, or often. "God is a rock, and his work is perfect." His providential works are perfect, or shall be, before he hath done with them; and as God works often to bring man out of the state of sin to grace, so he will not cease working till grace is perfected.

The same means by which faith and repentance are wrought at first, do also increase and strengthen them. As no man can be a true branch till he is purged, so God purges them more and more, that they may bring forth more fruit; and as the means by which he purges them (that is, mortifies their corruptions) seldom produces the blessed effect at once or twice, therefore the Lord is constrained to apply the remedy often to bring the work to the intended issue. There is a frequency in the work of God to reduce sinners, but not a perpetuity.

*Ver. 30. To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.* It is likely Elihu spake thus, to hold out a hope to Job, that upon his repentance, he should be delivered from his afflictions, and have his comforts restored to him. When God restores a man from any desperate condition, either of soul or body, he may be said to give him a new life, and all who partake of such deliverances should give the praise and dedicate themselves to his service, and live under a habitual sense of their obligation to him. We are "enlightened with the light of the living," when the comforts of this life are restored, much more when restored to the comforts of spiritual life, and so to the hope of eternal life. Man would ruin himself for time and for ever, if God did not powerfully keep him from destruction. It is a work, therefore, both of mercy and power to keep us from the pit. The design of God in every affliction, as well as by every ordinance, is for the good of those who love him, and are the called according to his purpose.

In conclusion, Elihu calls upon Job to consider what he had said, to listen attentively to what he had farther to say.

*Ver. 31. Mark well, O Job; hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak.* To mark, is to observe and lay to heart the things that are spoken; and hearken, this includes hearing with understanding, yea, it takes in obeying and submitting to what is spoken.

*Hold thy peace.* As we should hold our peace at or submit to all the truths of God in all cases, so especially in these three. 1st, When we are reprov'd for our sins in practice, then we should repent, instead of excusing or extenuating what we have done. 2d, When we are convicted of any erroneous opinion, then we should without disputing recant it. 3d, We should hold our peace when our duty is plain before us; instead of questioning we should perform without delay. Elihu was dealing with Job upon all these points, he told him his sin, that he had been too querulous and impa-

tient ; he shewed him his errors, that he had been too bold with God, because innocent towards men, and he pressed him to duty, both that, and how, he ought to humble himself before the Lord. It discovers a gracious prudence to know how and when to hold our peace. This counsel which Elihu gives Job, does not include to refrain from necessary speaking, as appears,

*Ver. 32. If thou hast any thing to say, answer me : speak ; for I desire to justify thee.* The Hebrew is, "If thou hast words, answer me," that is, if thou hast arguments to defend thyself, or in opposition to what I have said, bring them forth, for I am willing to hear thy defence, and I am not afraid of what thou canst object. This offer made by Elihu to Job, is a good pattern, and shews us how to deal with brethren in all such cases. The most prudent speakers are also patient hearers.

*For I desire to justify thee.* As if he had said, I have not spoken all or any of these things to thee from a wish to conquer thee, nor do I invite thee to speak because I have a mind to entangle thee by thy answers, for my aim in all this is from a desire to justify thee.

Let us learn from this, that a good man seeks not victory, but truth, and the good of those he converses with, and his object is to convince them of their error and to recover them from it ; and when they are able to clear themselves of the charges brought against them, he is glad to find any man's cause or case prove good, or better than he thought.

*Ver. 33. If not, hearken unto me : hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.* Job having declined to reply, Elihu re-assumed, and re-inforces his former counsel, *Hearken, &c.* A teacher should be a leader, he should go before those that hear him by good example, as well as by wholesome doctrine.

*I will teach thee wisdom,* that is, I shall acquaint thee with that which may make thee wise, or I shall shew thee wherein true wisdom consists, which is, 1st, The knowledge of ourselves. 2d, In the knowledge of God, and it appears in the close, that Job got a fuller light into both by what Elihu said to him. He that hath learned, and is in the power of these two lessons, is certainly a wise man ; and he that faithfully teaches them, may well say, I will teach, or have taught you wisdom.

Hence learn, That there are none so wise, none so holy, but they may learn more wisdom and become yet more holy. He was never good who thinks he can be no better, nor does he yet know any thing aright who imagines he needs to know no more. It is our wisdom to work for a right end, and that work can never attain its end, but by the use of right means. If any man be truly good, he desires the enjoyment of God as his ultimate and highest end. And for this purpose, as Prov. xviii. 1. "He separateth himself" from all those impediments that stop his way, and then, "he seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom," that is, with all real and substantial wisdom. Now, if nothing but wisdom can lead us to that end, what is there worth the learning or knowing, except that which makes us wise ? They that are humble and meek, are fittest to learn wisdom. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." The humble have received grace already, and that secures an increase of it. Psal. xxv. "The meek will he teach his way." The whole discourse of Elihu is about spiritual wisdom, not about the wisdom of the world, which God will destroy, nor how to be great or rich, but how to be holy and humble, how to give glory to God and be fitted for enjoying God in glory, and these are the lessons chiefly to be taught and learned by every man who undertakes to be a teacher or desires to be a learner.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

Elihu now proceeds to his second speech, and the first four verses are a preface.

*Ver. 1. Furthermore, Elihu answered and said.* How can it be said that Elihu answered, when Job made no reply to what he had said before. In answer, We find it so in the gospel, "Jesus answered," and though Job said nothing now to which Elihu made answer, yet he had said much before that Elihu only now begins to answer.

*Ver. 2. Hear my words, O ye wise men ; and give ear to me ye that have knowledge.* Some men are wise who have not much knowledge, and some have a great deal of knowledge who have very little wisdom. Now Elihu addresses a choice and select auditory, *wise men* that have great understanding and judgment, and men of

*knowledge*, who have improved themselves by study and experience, and requests their attention.

*Hear and give ear.* He requests a studious hearing of the matter which should be presented to them, that they might be able to judge aright. The words of the wise are as goads to provoke and excite us to hear with attention, as well as nails to fasten the truth spoken. Eccl. xii. 11. Elihu having called wise men to hear or ear his words, shews the use of the ear.

*Ver. 3. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.* It is the office of the ear to convey words to the understanding, that a judgment may be formed before they are either received or rejected. The ear is, as it were a furnace, by which we discover whether what is said is dross or pure metal. But when the word of God is preached, is it to be tried by the hearers? The word of God is perfect, and it is our judge, therefore we cannot try it; yet we may try whether the doctrines and interpretations of the wisest of men are founded on the text. "That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," is the sum of the gospel, and to be believed without dispute; yet it may be mingled with such things as are not to be received for the word of God. When it was asserted by some who professed to believe in Christ, that except they kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved, which others denied. "When the apostles," &c. came together, "to consider of this matter," it was to try which of these two opinions was according to the word of God. Thus, when we hear a sermon, though the word of God and Christ crucified be the general subject of it, and that is not to be tried, but received and obeyed, yet what is spoken upon it, and delivered about it as the mind of God in the Scripture, is to be tried, 1 Cor. ii. 15. "He that is spiritual, *trieth* or judgeth all things." We must not take for granted all that we hear, but every one must judge for himself. Therefore, every one that speaks, should not only speak according to the oracles of God, but make it plain to the meanest capacity that he is doing so. It is surely unreasonable to impose opinions and assertions on those who hear them, and not to call upon them to try them by the scripture, and it must also be very dangerous to receive, even a truth of God, on the authority of man. To do nothing but hear, or to hear and do nothing, to hear much and act little, is a high provocation.

*Ver. 4. Let us choose to ourselves judgment; let us know among ourselves what is good.* This verse contains the second request which Elihu made to Job's friends. The sum of it is, that they might proceed judiciously in the cause before them.

*Let us choose.* To elect or choose, is the work of the will, and to choose what is good and right is a gracious work of a renewed will. This affirmative seems to imply a negative renouncing whatever is contrary to or a hindrance of judgment, that is, the laying aside, 1st, All animosities or undue heats of spirit. 2d, Of all prejudices. 3d, Of all groundless suspicions and jealousies of the person we have to deal with; we can never choose judgment till we are clear of all these. *Judgment* may be taken for the act of inquiry, or it is the result or sentence given upon hearing and debate. That by judgment Elihu means a right sentence, appears clearly from the following words.

*Let us know.* Knowledge includes, 1st, Simple intelligence. 2d, Approbation, when we conclude what we know to be true or good.

*That we may know what is good.* That is, 1st, That we may discern good from evil. 2d, That among good things we may know what is better or best, 1 Cor. xii. 31. as if he had said, This is a good way you are in, the exercise of the best gifts, but the exercise of grace is a more excellent way. Judgment is a choice thing, it is not to be snatched up hastily, but duly chosen. How uncomely (besides unrighteous) is it to judge men or matters rashly, to be hurried on to election with passion, or to judge upon hearsays or conjectures. Matt. vii. 1. That is, do not judge hastily nor rigidly, much less falsely; for if you judge without due deliberation, you expose yourself to a judgment of condemnation; and it is not enough to do judgment, or that which is right, but we must choose it, Prov. i. 29. they did not "choose the fear of the Lord," that is, the true worship of the Lord, or any work of obedience by which we testify a holy fear of him. Possibly they prayed to him and heard his word, but they did not choose the fear of the Lord, they did not, after careful examination, judge that best or most necessary, but took it up by accident or by custom, because they saw others do it. Our elections are more eyed by God than our actions. To be found doing good will not turn to our account, unless we choose to ourselves that which is good. God himself is good, and

to know and enjoy him in Christ through the Spirit, is our chiefest good here, and will be all our good hereafter.

From the comparative sense of the words, Learn, that it is not enough to have the knowledge of good things, but among them the best are to be sought out. To these highest attainments, Elihu excites these wise men, as if he had said, come let us attend to this business with diligence, that we may at least choose judgment, and know among ourselves what is good, what is best.

This finishes the preface, and the five following verses contain the charge drawn up by Elihu against Job, two of which are in

*Ver. 5. For Job hath said, I am righteous; and God hath taken away my judgment.*

For imports the clearness and truth of the charge, though we do not find this direct assertion in so many words, yet what he spake in several places amounts to it, as chap. xiii. 18. and xxvii. 6. and chap. xxxi. throughout; in all which passages, and some others, Job spake highly of his own innocency, and said in effect, *I am righteous*. The design of Elihu seems to have been to convince Job, that though he was a child of God, and had walked uprightly before him, yet he ought to humble himself, and bear with meekness and patience the sorest visitations of God; and therefore he should not have pleaded his own integrity to privilege him from affliction, nor have said, Why do I suffer, seeing I am righteous? Job certainly did insist too much on his own righteousness, and he reflected as if God had done him injustice; he did not duly consider God's sovereignty.

We may plead the righteousness of faith against condemnation, but not against correction. If we make our own righteousness our staff, God may make it our rod; and though he is far from scourging any because they are righteous, yet those who proclaim their own righteousness, or even think much of it, expose themselves to correction. Elihu charges Job with complaining that God had taken away his judgment, that is his right.

Job's trouble was long continued, and the reason of it hid from him, which made him cry out, (chap. xxvii.) "As the Lord liveth, who hath taken away my judgment," &c. In this he was too bold with God, and so he gave Elihu just cause to blame him. It does not become thee, O Job, to speak so, because God does not tell thee why he has so long afflicted thee, therefore humble thyself for what thou hast said, and say it no more.

Hence observe, That when God takes away our judgment we fall under the severe censures of men, which is no easy burden. But the promise, (Psal. xxxvii. 6.) administers comfort; yet the righteousness and judgment of a good man may be so obscured, that he has no light of comfort till the promise is fulfilled.

*Ver. 6. Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression.*

The word translated *right*, is the same that is translated judgment in the former verse, and is as if he had plainly said, I am falsely accused. Every false accusation brought against any man is a lie against his right. Elihu brings this as a strong proof of the height of Job's spirit, as if to confess his fault were to belie himself; but to acknowledge we have done that which we have not done, is to lie against our own right. It is our affliction only to be wronged by others, but it is our sin to wrong ourselves as well as to wrong others. No man is at liberty to give up his own integrity, yet we may quickly overact in standing upon our own right. The caution, (Eccl. vii. 16.) seems to carry this observation in it. Some expound this precept as a rule of policy, as if it were possible to carry true piety and real godliness to excess; but I conceive one or all of these three things is intended, 1st, To take men off from an opinionativeness about what they judge to be righteous, and a caution not to lean to their own understanding as if they were infallible. 2d, Do not exact of others to the utmost that the rigour of the law allows; for he that will not remit any thing of his right, is not only over-righteous, but may soon do wrong. 3d, He would not have them speak much of their own righteousness, but rather sometimes take blame to themselves than proclaim themselves altogether blameless, which was Job's case. As we are not to betray our innocency, neither should we boast in it; we seldom lose by saying little of ourselves.

The word *incurable* signifies not only grievous, but deadly. To say that we receive the least wound without transgression, is a great thrust at the justice of God. A good man's sayings are often worse than his meaning. Evil men may speak good words, but it is with a bad heart. Good men may speak offensive words, yet with honest hearts;



and when their minds become serene, they are ready to recant and repent of them. Every speaker is at the mercy of his hearers; and, therefore, though I would advise every hearer to use as much charity as possible, yet I would also advise every speaker to leave as little as may be to the charity of his hearers. Here are four sayings brought against Job, none of which he ever said in so many words.

The three following verses contain the second charge that he draws up against Job.

*Ver. 7. What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water.* Was there ever such a man heard of, who either used such scornful language against others, or laid himself so open to the scorn and contempt of others? To drink scorning like water is to be much and often at it, as if he could never fill himself enough with scorning. Not to do good is sinful, but either to scorn that which is good, or those that are good, is far more sinful; scorners are the vilest sort of men. That man is ascended to the highest step of sin who gives himself liberty to scorn others, Psal. i. 1.

Elihu proceeds to accuse Job with too much familiarity with evil men.

*Ver. 8. Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men.* As if he had said, You may know what he is by the company he keeps. As holiness is expressed by walking with God, so walking with wicked men denotes a sinful walk "according to the course of this world." Elihu could not mean that Job associated with wicked men, but as a man is said to go and walk with others when he does what seems to favour their principles or practices; so Job in the anguish of his spirit spake sometimes intemperately of the dealings of God with him, therefore Elihu charges him with symbolizing, or complying with men of wickedness.

As the works of darkness are unfruitful of any good, it must be dangerous to have fellowship with them. As we must not at all join with wicked men in spiritual communion or church fellowship, "What communion hath light with darkness," &c.? "Come out from among them," &c. so we should have as little civil fellowship with them as possible.

Some good men make but an ill use of their riches. You may see a display of vanity and extravagance in their furniture and apparel, and superfluity on their tables, as if they were making provision for the flesh, and when God sends afflictions they murmur and complain against God; what is this but to do like the wicked? Such conduct is calculated to injure a good man himself and all with whom he associates. Can two walk together except they are agreed?

*Ver. 9. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.* That is, a man shall have no advantage by it. He that delights in God hath sweet content and complacency in God. Delight is the rest of the soul. When we delight in God, and find every act of obedience our joy and song, then it may be said that we are holy indeed.

Job had said, chap. ix. 22. "God destroyeth the wicked and the righteous;" that is, he afflicts the good as well as the bad. His meaning was only this, that a man may want temporal present profit notwithstanding his delighting in God. Job should have been more employed in justifying God; but because he was so sparing in this point, and insisted so often upon the afflictions of the people of God. Elihu charges him with saying, "It profiteth a man," &c.

Job never thought it was no profit to serve God, but his words conveyed that meaning. As he who excuses or extenuates his faults, shews that he has a will to continue in them; so he who is so humbled for what he has done through ignorance or rashness that he is silent when reproved, discovers at once his sorrow for what he has done, and includes a resolution to do so no more.

Elihu now enters on the confutation of Job, or the vindication of the honour of God from what Job had said, with an inviting preface:

*Ver. 10. Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.* It is an encouragement to a speaker to have understanding hearers, and here Elihu tries to awaken their attention, *hearken unto me, &c.* Elihu stands up to vindicate the righteousness and justice of God against Job's complaints, *Far be it from God, &c.* We should reject all unworthy thoughts of God with indignation and detestation. What can be more unjust than to have so much as the shadow of a thought that God does any injustice? O how far is it from God that he should do wickedness!

Where strength and goodness centre in the same person, as he is able to do much good, so he has no will to do evil or injure any other; how then should the Almighty

commit iniquity? God will not, cannot commit iniquity, either by denying or delaying justice; either by not punishing or rewarding where there is cause, Heb. vi. 10. "God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love." It is a sufficient proof that a thing is right when we can prove that God hath done it.

Elihu speaks here of God under the notion of a judge, and it is an abomination for judges to do unjustly. Elihu having thus denied unrighteousness or any iniquity in God, proceeds to the proof of it.

*Ver. 11. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his way.* As if he had said, God doth every man right, therefore he is righteous.

*The work of a man* is here put for the reward, issue, or fruit of his work. Though the greatest good that ever was or can be done by a mere creature does not deserve, (by any intrinsic worth) the least good at the hand of God; yet it is said, Rev. xiv. 13. "And their works follow them;" not the works which they did, but that which is by promise bestowed on them for their works.

*Render* signifies a full retribution of all our own works; and we may make the evil works of others our own by consenting to, or approving of them, or by not reproving them when we have a call and opportunity to do so, hence the caution, 1 Tim. v. 22. "Neither be partakers of other men's sins." Some render the second clause, "And he will find every man in his way." God will make every man to find according to his way, both as to the matter or course of his actions, and also as to the scope and design of them. But how is it said that God renders to every man his work, and yet, that he justifies the ungodly? He does not justify an ungodly man in himself, but in the righteousness of another, even of Jesus Christ, who hath given full satisfaction to the justice of God with respect to the ungodly whom he justifies. Farther, God renders to him according to the present work of faith in closing with the promise, and the work of Christ's righteousness therein tendered to him. But no impenitent person shall ever have it to say that God has not dealt with him according to his sin. The full rendering to all men according to their works will be at the great day. As this is a dreadful doctrine to all wicked men, so it is quite the reverse to the godly, and an encouragement to them in the practice of every good word and work. As God will not render according to a man good ends when his work is evil; so God will not render according to good works if his end is bad. The best works of hypocrites will have an ill return, and good works trusted to are as dangerous as evil works persevered in.

A right end will not excuse us if our way be wrong. There is no pleading of meanings against commandments, nor will sincerity of intentions cover the deformity and irregularity of actions. Those good works that are done for base ends to serve men, or to compass a worldly interest, shall have no other reward from God but that which shall be upon every soul that sinneth and repenteth not,—anguish and tribulation.

Elihu proceeds in his proof with a strong asseveration.

*Ver. 12. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.* This is a truth beyond dispute, and which, if once admitted, will quickly determine all the questions which are depending between you and me. It is becoming and necessary to be confident about the truths of God, especially about the truth and justice of God. There is a full assurance of faith in believing, and of hope in waiting, so also of understanding, in apprehending the things of God.

This is almost a repetition of ver. 10. and the reason of the repetition may be, 1st, Because this truth is as it were the hinge upon which the whole controversy between Job and Elihu is turned. 2d, Because it cannot be too often repeated, nor too firmly believed, that God does always right, and so cannot wrong any man. Let this silence all our hard thoughts of God, and lead us out to a quiet submission to the divine disposal in all things, however bitter or unpleasant they are. The judgments of God are such as no man can fully comprehend, nor justly reprehend.

Elihu having asserted these things with a *yea, surely*, proceeds to prove by undeniable arguments that God will not do wickedly, &c.

*Ver. 13. Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world?* These questions contain a challenge, founded on the absolute power arising from and residing in God himself. His power is underived and universal. But how does it follow from this that God will always do what is right? Because as God is not only supreme in administering justice, but he is the sum or fulness of law and justice, and therefore cannot pervert it. Injustice is the breach of a law. But

how can he who is the source of all righteous laws be ever supposed to break it? He is alike mighty, as the sole Creator, and just, as the Supreme Moderator of the world.

Hence learn, that we should obey the commands of God without questioning or disputing, and we should readily submit to all the dispensations of his providence.

The Jews in captivity spake well, Lam. iii. 28. "Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good." That is, whatever the Lord has threatened to do, or has actually brought upon us, is morally good, and not evil, though it be penally evil and not good. To have the heart quiet "while the ears tingle," is pure submission, 1 Sam. iii. 18.; and every repining thought or murmuring speech against any of the dealings of God with us is rebellion against the sovereign authority of God. Since God is supreme, all our aims, ends, and designs in all that we do and say should centre in his honour. Let those who have power learn to use it for God, remembering that as they have received it from him, so they must give an account how they have used it. It is a matter of comfort to all good men, when injured and oppressed by the power of men, that God will see them righted in due time.

In the two following verses Elihu perfects the proof of what he asserted, *that God is just*; and the first argument from the absolute and universal dominion of God is opened, ver. 13. Here we have a second argument from the sweet temperament of his power and goodness. God doth not deal rigorously, much less unrighteously with man. He that does all men good beyond their deserts, will not punish any man beyond his demerits.

*Ver. 14. If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath.*

To *set the heart upon* any thing signifies to have deep and serious thoughts, yea, to think with affection and attention. Both love and hatred, hope and fear, are solicitous about their several objects. Some render, "If he set his heart against man." That is, to inquire strictly into his life and ways, and so resolve to proceed against him. He might soon make an end of him, as in the next verse. As the strongest, so the best and holiest of men are not able to stand before him. Thus the words are an answer to that frequent request of Job, that God would let him come near to judgment, and hear his cause argued and debated before him, even at his bar. But, saith Elihu, if God set his heart against man, if he inquire strictly into his condition and conversation, it will be sad with him. "All men must perish," Psal. cxxx. 3. We cannot stand in our righteousness before God, how then shall we stand in our iniquities? Now seeing God is clothed with absolute power, does not willingly grieve or afflict any of the children of men without cause, surely then God is righteous, he will not do wickedly. This is the import of the words, *If he set his heart upon or against men.*

It is probable that the apostle, 1 Thess. v. 23. by the *soul*, intends the inferior powers in man, or his affections, and by the *spirit* his higher powers of reason and understanding; yet the spirit is often put for that whole part of man which is contradistinct to the body. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." That is, my soul, not forgetting my body. The gathering of the spirit and breath of man unto God is but a circumlocution of death. As God can do what he will, and ask no man leave, so he can do what he will without any trouble to himself. Let us therefore fear and tremble at the remembrance of, and walk humbly with this God, who can either help or hurt, or bring salvation or destruction in a moment, Psal. xc. 3. When a man dieth he is gathered to God, to be judged and disposed of by him, to receive a sentence of life or death from him. Eccl. xii. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

*Ver. 15. All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn to his dust.* As soon as the spirit is gathered, the flesh consumes or perisheth. It is worthy of notice, that man was not called *flesh* till after the fall. It is said, "Man became a living soul." But as soon as he had sinned, he was called *flesh*, as if he had no soul. Because man since the fall does most for his flesh, and totally neglects his soul, till, by being reunited to the second Adam, he is delivered from that wretched condition into which he fell with the first Adam. And also because since the fall man is become weak and frail.

*Perish together.* That is, without exception, one as well as another shall be changed.

*And man shall return again unto dust.* Sin brought in death, and death brings us to the dust. Neither high titles, nor honours, strength, nor beauty, can give protection for a moment, when God gives a summons to depart. Happy, and only happy.

are they, who have an assurance of life after death. A serious meditation on our vileness and infirmities should provoke us to look heavenwards. To be thus earthly-minded is the way to be heavenly-minded. Many mind earthly things, but few keep in mind that themselves are earth. The due consideration of this would humble us, and prevent us from trusting in creatures.

Elihu now turns his speech particularly to Job.

*Ver. 16. If now thou hast understanding, hear this; hearken to the voice of my words.* As if Elihu had said, I have spoken and am about to speak such things as will exercise a sound, impartial, and spiritual understanding, to discern the import and depth of them. Thus he provokes him to attend not only with his ear, but with the best of his understanding, to the things he was to speak.

*Hear this.* I am not calling thee to hear an idle story, or a trivial matter. *Hear this.* There is an emphasis in the words, both as to the act and object.

Hence learn, 1st, That we should labour to understand what we hear, Col. iii. 16. and ii. 1, 2. "He opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures," Luke xxiv. That is, he opened their heart, as he did the heart of Lydia. 2d, That all that we hear is lost upon us if we do not understand it. The whole book of God is a sealed book unless we have a saving knowledge of the truths therein contained. 3d, That the beginning of true wisdom is to have a readiness to hear and to be willing to be taught. There is nothing that so much hinders the receiving of knowledge as an imagination or proud prepossession of it. Yet they who are most knowing in their own conceit, know least of that which is most worthy to be known, a knowledge of God and themselves.

What Elihu would have Job to hear and hearken to is contained in ver. 17. to 33. inclusive.

*Ver. 17. Shall then he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just.*

*Shall he.* He shall not, or at least ought not; for he that hateth right is most unfit to govern.

*Govern.* The word rendered to govern signifies most properly to bind up, and by a metaphor to heal. A ruler is also a binder and a healer. Magistrates bind the people by the laws. Laws bind either to obedience or to punishment. When any break the rule of the law, they fall under its penalty. Thus the word holds out the office and use of governors. They are or ought to be binders or healers of these. They have oppressed or wounded, by their evil manners or corruptions, and they should improve their power and authority for healing differences among their subjects. Isa. iii. "I will not be a healer." Margin, binder. That is, I will not be your governor. Your case is so desperate, and you are so obstinate in your way, that I dare not undertake your cure.

Elihu having said that an unjust person is unfit to rule, asserts that it is improper to censure or condemn a just governor. God is so far from hating, that he is ever promoting justice. And wilt thou, O Job, condemn him that is most just, or strongly just? And while he is so strong that he can do what he will, he is so just that he will do nothing but what is righteous. Not to hate evil is to love it, and not to love good is to hate it. "If any man come to me and hate not his father," &c. That which we can leave for Christ we hate in comparison of the love which we bear to him. So they may be said to hate the right who bear not a due proportion of love unto it. He that does not love right more than riches, will soon wrong others to enrich himself. Now he that upon any consideration whatever is drawn to pervert the right, is a hater of it. To be just imports the performance of promises. A man may choose whether he will make promises or not; but he has no choice whether he will perform what he has once promised, for his word binds him.

But did Job, or will any man condemn God? All do so when they complain of his doings, and do not acquiesce cheerfully in his will.

*Ver. 18. Is it fit to say to a king, thou art wicked? and to princes, ye are ungodly?* In this and the following verse, Elihu illustrates and confirms what he said in the close of verse 17.

Is it a comely thing, or will kings endure to be called *wicked*? The original word imports the most infamous among wicked men, a *Belial*, that is, a lawless person. It also imports a person altogether unprofitable, as if he came into the world to eat other men's labours, and not to labour that he might have to eat. No man is born for him-

self, nor ought any man to live to himself; he that lives only to profit himself lives to little purpose; to what purpose then does he live whose life is altogether unprofitable to himself?

Kings are set up for the most important purposes, even for the benefit of mankind. They should reckon it their chiefest honour to protect and advance the happiness of all their subjects. Therefore nothing can be said more dishonourable to a king than this, Thou art good for nothing, an unprofitable person. Magistrates are not to be reproached, and neither should they be flattered.

The word for *princes*, signifies munificent, bountiful, free, willing; so those who are open hearted and open handed are princes in truth as well as in title. The Holy Spirit is called a princely spirit, Psal. li. 12, and Psal. cx. 3, "In the day of thy power the people shall be willing," they shall be as princes, they shall serve thee as sons, not as slaves; they shall have a large heart to love and obey God, and to love and do good to their fellow-men. These two titles are sometimes taken for the same, and princes are but one remove from kings, and it is well when their titles remind them of and excite them to those duties that are the ornament both of their persons and titles. Kings are to be feared and prayed for, but not to be reviled, yet they may be prudently and humbly told of their faults, and faithfully remonstrated with when they act arbitrarily.

*Ver. 19. How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than poor? for they all are the work of his hands.* As if Elihu had said, the kings and princes of the earth expect that no man shall dare to censure them though they deal unjustly, how much more unfit is it to speak evil of God or to charge his government with injustice. To accept persons is to have more respect to the man than to the cause; but however common this is among men, it is always abominable before God.

God is infinitely more to be revered, and his vengeance dreaded, than that of any man, and yet how many who are afraid to offend a great man dare to offend and provoke the great God! God has no respect to princes in prejudice to truth, but he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, (be he never so poor), is accepted with him. It is the rich in faith that are chosen of God and heirs of his kingdom. Poor men are as much the work of God as the rich, and that he regards the one as much as the other is matter of comfort to the poor when they are despised by the rich just because they are poor.

Agur prayed, "give me neither poverty nor riches;" he knew that the one as well as the other was appointed by God; he that becomes rich by oppression or deceit, or sets his nest on high by flattery or fraud, cannot thank God for his riches or honours, and if he does he only attempts to make God a partner in his sins, by which he obtained them. The diligent hand maketh rich with the blessing of God, and when an indolent man becomes poor, it is at once the consequence of his sin and the curse of God upon him for it. The poor of God's special making are under his special keeping and blessing: as they have but little, so they want nothing, God himself is their portion.

*Ver. 20. In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away; and the mighty shall be taken away without hands.*

A moment is the least particle of time. The whole life of the longest liver in this world is but a moment compared to eternity.

*They shall die.* Who? Men of all ranks shall be cut off by some sudden stroke; death comes suddenly upon many, and may come suddenly upon all men. What a pity that any should live unprepared for that which may attack us every moment. Though in some respects a speedy death is desirable, yet it may not be so judgment-like to see it coming by degrees; and a lingering disease may have its advantages to such as can improve it.

*The people shall be troubled at midnight*, signifies the consternation of spirit which seizes a secure people when trouble comes upon them, when they imagine themselves out of the reach of danger; or it intimates their inability to help themselves.

Great troubles are called "wine of astonishment," because they make men say and do they scarce know what. They who have drowned their wits in cups of worldly pleasure may soon have them drowned in overflowing cups of worldly sorrow. If it would be called a trouble to do a service to a friend at midnight, Luke xi. O what will it be to be called to the judgment, or to be attacked with trouble and death at midnight! Therefore, let us be ready for all changes.

*And pass away.* Some explain this of being carried captive, others of passing into their graves, or rather, it is their doing what they can to secure themselves by outrunning the danger. God has a variety of ways to humble a sinful people. Here is death to many, trouble to all, and flight to some.

*And the mighty shall be taken away without hands.* The mighty and the meanest of men are on a level before God, and their sins equally expose them to judgment. They are taken away when deprived of their place and power, as well as when cut off by death, and they may be said to be taken away *without hands*, 1st, When they shall have no hands to help them. 2d, When it is done without the intervention of second causes. 3d, When it is done without any visible means at all, even by the immediate hand of God, then a work is said to be done without hands. The kingdom of Christ is called a *stone cut out without hands*; that is, without human power.

Could any of the mighty men of this world stand before the might of God then they might begin to boast; but it is an everlasting spring of comfort to his people that the Lord can do all things without hands; that he stands in no need of the help of creatures either to execute his threatenings against his enemies, or to accomplish his promises upon Zion.

Thus we have seen Elihu describing the righteous dealings of God both with people and princes who despise his counsels and provoke his wrath.

*Verse 21. For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.* As if he had said, God does not trouble nations, people, or princes, by an absolute and sovereign power, but he finds just cause to do it. Men's own doings are enough to justify God in all they suffer; God is a spirit, he clearly discerns and understands the ways of man.

*For his eyes are upon,* intimates not only a present but a continued and intent scrutiny of all the *ways of man*, both his good and evil ways, not only his external, but upon his thoughts, affections, purposes, and designs. John ii. 25, "He needeth not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man," that is, both the state of his heart and all the movings of it, and not only of this or that man, but of every man, and however secret; yet the Lord *seeth all his goings*, he has a discerning and trying eye. By him *actions are weighed*, he puts all into an even balance, and with the greatest ease does he inspect all our ways, and as exactly as they who run from place to place to see what is doing every where. Dan. xii. 4, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," that is, many shall be so graciously greedy of the knowledge of the truth that they will spare no labour to attain it.

Let us learn, 1st, The folly of thinking it sufficient that our actions pass in the balance of the world, and neglect to bring our persons and conduct to the balance of the sanctuary. 2d, That since the Lord's eyes are upon every man, his rewards and punishments must be right, as he proceeds upon certain knowledge of every man's case and condition. 3d, Since the eyes of the Lord are upon the ways of man, and he will call each one to give an account, how careful should we be to take heed to and examine our ways as in the presence of God!

It is indeed base in a servant to do his duty merely because his master's eye is upon him, but how great is the impudence of that servant who will not keep to his duty when his master's eye is upon him! so, merely to forbear doing evil because we hear God sees us is eye service, but how great is our wickedness when we will not forbear to do evil though we hear and know that God sees us! which Elihu farther confirms in the next words.

*Ver. 22. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*

*There is no darkness, &c.* The words seem to prevent an objection. It is true that God has extensive knowledge, but may we not sometimes hope to be under covert of such darkness that the Lord cannot see us. Men may indeed hide themselves and their evil deeds from men, and they do what they can to make themselves believe that they are hidden from God too, but there is no darkness, neither natural nor artificial, that can cover their ways from his eye. Sin in itself is a shadow of death, yea, death itself, and those who are dead in trespasses and sins, will do their best that their sins may be no more seen than the dead in the grave.

*Workers of iniquity*, are cunning, both at committing and hiding sin, yet they stand naked and open before God; they know not themselves, and are ignorant of the danger

to which they are exposed, and their work is to prepare darkness and the shadows of death to cover their dead works from God; but it is all in vain.

And seeing no sinner can hide himself from the wrath of God by any means of his own devising, let all sinners learn to hide themselves in Christ, by believing in him, confessing, and forsaking sin. When we attempt to hide ourselves any other way, we lose our labour, and do not hide ourselves from God, but God from ourselves, and thereby refuse the only way of enjoying the favour of God through Christ, and shut up ourselves in darkness. O that sinners would now seriously consider what they will do, for all must appear at the judgment, and it will be an inexpressible grief to appear and not be approved, to appear only to be condemned!

*Ver. 23. For he shall not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God.* That is, more than he hath deserved, or is equitable in his case. God makes no faulty decisions,—so Elihu seems to say, that God never gave any man any just cause to plead his cause over again with him, nor has he given thee, O Job, any cause to desire it of him. In this life, the greatest of our punishments are less than the least of our sins. As God has not given any man a liberty to complain, so he has not given any man just cause of complaint. If the burden be heavy, let him thank his own sin, no man has more than his due from God. We may be, and often are cruel to ourselves, but God is usually merciful, and never but just to us; however great our affliction, it is a mercy it is not greater. Instead of wishing to enter into judgment with God, we should beg that he would not enter into judgment with us, for we are not only unable to stand before him, but must certainly be broken in pieces before him. As it follows,

*Ver. 24. He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead.* As Job had often complained of his own troubles, so also sometimes of the prosperity of the wicked; we may suppose Elihu answering him in this comparison between the mighty and a potter's vessel, whom he not only strikes and wounds, but breaks in pieces, and that without number. He sweeps them away in a moment as if they were a swarm of flies. What mighty men were they that sat upon the throne of the four monarchies? they had the rule of the whole world, yet the Lord brake them in pieces. God breaks mighty men as easily as they break his commandments, and when he breaks great numbers of mighty men, he *sets others in their stead*, or He shall make others to stand; by which he shews his sovereignty and absolute power, not only in putting down and setting up whom and when he pleases, but in establishing those whom he raises up, however weak they are in themselves.

Hence learn, The vanity and uncertainty of all worldly greatness and power—God blasts and breaks as he pleases. The same man who was lately exalted, may quickly be cast down. There is no certainty of the best things here below, but only that we cannot be sure of them. O that this consideration would provoke us to look after and make sure of better things than any that are to be enjoyed here! Elihu's design in pointing out these things to Job, is to humble him, and that he and all others may be admonished, and give glory to God, by turning from sin that exposes us to every judgment. It is said, that it was written on Sennacherib's tent, "Let every one that heareth of me learn to fear God, and not to despise him as I have done." It is better to learn wisdom by the punishment of others, than by our own. Elihu having shewn what sad breaches God makes on mighty men, proceeds to another inference.

*Ver. 25. Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed.* As if he had said, these mighty men thought themselves under cover, their works were done in the dark, and they supposed the Lord could not pierce into them. But when we see him breaking the mighty men of this world, it is a proof that he was in their cabinet counsels, for he could never lay his judgments so exactly upon them as he does, if he did not know their works.

*So that they are destroyed.* That is, they shall be broken to purpose. There are great breakings upon the persons and estates of some men, that is only for correction, and not for utter destruction, as it is here. It is only the power of the Lord to curse effectually. All the Balaams in the world cannot effect a curse though they pronounce one. When Ephraim confessed, Jer. xxxi. 18. "Thou hast chastened me," &c. In a literal sense, it is, I found thy hand heavy upon me; in a spiritual sense, it is, my heart was humbled, and broken under thy chastisements; in either sense, we see the Lord's work effectual. And therefore Ephraim invited the Lord to another work, "Turn me," that is, if thou,

O Lord, wilt turn thy Spirit upon this hard heart of mine, I shall be effectually turned from sin to God. The counsels and reproofs of men have no proper effect, but if thou wilt speak the word thyself, I shall be turned. Thus the Lord carries his work home to conversion in his spiritual dealings with some, and to confusion in his temporal punishments upon others, as Isa. xxx. 15. that is, they shall be made utterly useless and unserviceable; and if God sometimes thus breaks his own professing people for their sins, how awfully will he destroy his professed enemies. O that God would bless both threatened and inflicted judgments, for turning all from the error and evil of their ways, and to love and serve himself!

*Ver. 26. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others.* That is, he punishes them in an exemplary way because they are wicked. Or, in the place of *seers*, which some expound as implying more than barely seeing what is done, namely, such as are delighted and pleased with what is done, as an act of justice from God.

As God strikes some so secretly that none can see it, so his judgments upon others are so visible that all may see it. The heads of the offenders at Baal Peor, were to be hanged up before the Lord, "against the sun," that all might see and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Now, the Lord executeth his judgments openly, as it were on a stage—that there may, 1st, Be a sufficient number of witnesses to attest what he has done. 2d, That they may have a proper effect upon those who are equally guilty, that they may be humbled and repent of what they have done, and that all may fear and avoid those sins that have brought such judgments upon others. Did we but mind and properly improve and follow up the design of God in punishing any openly, the striking of one might save multitudes from being stricken; but because men are so secure, and so slow to take warning by what God does to others, therefore they are called forth one after another to suffer in their own persons. 3d, God executes his threatened vengeance openly against wicked men, not only as an evidence of his own holiness, but as an encouragement and comfort to his own people. "The righteous shall be glad when he seeth the vengeance." Psal. lviii.

Elihu having noticed the awful and visible judgments of God upon the wicked, proceeds to mention the cause and equity of those dispensations.

*Ver. 27. Because they have turned back from him and would not consider any of his ways.* This turning back does not seem to refer only to apostates who have given up with a profession of obedience and subjection to God which they formerly made, but includes all unconverted persons whose whole lives is a turning from God, who are lovers of pleasures and of this present world more than God, whether under a profession of friendship or not. This is the reason why God strikes the mighty to destruction. "They have turned back from God." Where the life of grace is implanted, there must be a habitual drawing near to and following after God; but until the change is effected by the power of divine grace, all mankind are turning back from God. There is no serving God and mammon too.

Hence learn, That God punishes no man without a just cause, and all who despise the threatenings and promises of God, depart farther from him every day, and so expose themselves to tribulation without end.

*And would not consider any of his ways.* The word *consider*, signifies also to "understand or know." By consideration we become more knowing, but we cannot consider any thing till we have some knowledge of it. They would neither consider the laws of God, which are the ways wherein they should walk towards him; nor the works of God, which are the ways in which he walks toward them. It is not said "they did not," but "they would not," which shews it was an act of contempt and rebellion. Not to know, from being destitute of the means of knowledge, is a sad condition, but not to know, because wilfully set against the means of knowledge, is a miserable condition indeed. To neglect to consider the ways of God, is in itself a very great sin, for as they are all to be considered that we may keep them, so if we do not consider them we cannot keep them. Sin stupifies the soul and prevents men from considering that, at any time, which it is their interest as well as their duty to consider at all times.

That God takes notice of their evil ways is farther evident.

*Ver. 28. So that they cause the cry of the poor to come up to him and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.* Elihu now mentions more particularly what these ways of God were which they would not consider, and for which he was provoked to strike these mighty men,—their injustice and oppression of the poor caused them to complain



or cry to God ; Yet it may mean, that the wrongs or evils they suffered, cried to the judge of all the earth, rather than that they made any formal or direct cry to God.

The word for *poor*, properly signifies those who are exhausted and drawn dry, which being done by their mighty oppressors, it is no wonder that they cry out. One sin makes way for another. Turning back from God and neglecting to consider the work and ways of God, is followed by unrighteous deeds and oppression of the poor. The overthrow of a poor man by a mighty rich man may not be heard a mile from where it was done, yet it ascendeth up to heaven. To wrong a rich man is a sin which has a voice in it, but to oppress the poor has a loud cry, which God hears and will avenge. For

*He heareth the cry of the afflicted.* The word rendered *afflicted*, signifies, not only a man destitute of help, &c. but one who is of a submitting, patient spirit. The Lord hears the cry of such an afflicted man, he will grant him the thing he cries for.

Hence learn, That the faith of being heard is a great encouragement to prayer, and all oppressors should consider, that the cry of the oppressed brings vengeance on the oppressors. Their Redeemer is mighty. For though the poor cannot plead with thee, nor contend with thee at law, yet God will in his own time and way plead their cause effectually. Let this comfort the godly poor, and encourage them to wait on God, and neither faint nor weary.

*Ver. 29. When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation or against a man only.* This is a proof that God hears the cry of the poor, when he gives such quiet and peace, that their proud oppressors shall not be able to disturb.

*When he giveth quietness,* is but one word, and signifies the quietness of the dead, who have no sense of trouble ; so it applies to the living when they have no fear of being disturbed.

*Who can make trouble?* or, Who can vex those to whom God gives protection? The face of God signifies the favour of God ; so to hide the face, is to withdraw favour, which includes, 1st, A distaste either against persons or things, Isa. liv. 8. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee." 2d, A refusal to help those that are in straits, Psal. xiii. 1. "Why hidest thou thy face?" and 3d, A total slight, or a refusal of any care concerning us. We may expound Elihu saying, When he hides his face in all or any of these senses, and then it cannot but go and be ill enough with him ; for as it follows :

*Who then can behold him* either with confidence or with comfort? and this is applicable to whole nations as well as particular persons. This is a truth of universal concern, for that which any man, or all men are liable unto, should be attended to by every man.

*Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.* Some render *for*, instead of *against*, but the general truth is the same. The word and power of God in sending good or evil upon nations or persons, in acting for or against them, is irresistible. Many, or one, make a great difference with men in any matter, but God can deal with whole nations as easily as with a single person. The word, *giveth quietness*, primarily signifies such quietness as is opposite to war, sedition, and tumult in a nation.

Hence learn, That peace among nations, or in any nation, is the peculiar gift of God. And when he hides his face from a nation who have the outward profession of his name as a church, he does it slowly, he warns and waits, as he did the old world for one hundred and twenty years. And should not the dealings of God with them, awaken in us in this nation and church, a consideration of the wonderful patience of God in continuing our peace, notwithstanding all our provocations, lest at last he hide his face from us also, and then who can behold him? And, as he does not hide his face in an instant, but, as it were by steps, I shall mention some of them by which we may discern whether he is begun to depart from us as a nation and church, or if he is not greatly withdrawn already. When God begins to hide his face, He 1st, Lays aside his former care over them, Jer. xiv. 8. "Why art thou as a stranger," &c. 2d, He disregards their prayers, fasts, &c. Jer. xiv. 12. "When they fast, I will not hear their cry," and at ver. 11. He forbids the prophet to pray for them, 3d, He refuses to give them counsel, or to direct their way, Psal. lxxiv. 9. 4th, He gives them up to their own devices, Psal. lxxxi. 12. "So I gave them up," &c. 5th, God looks upon them as a burden that he wishes to be rid of, Isa. i. 24. "Ah, I will ease me of

mine adversaries." 6th, He takes away the light and power of his gospel, and leaves them only the outside forms of his worship, and they are presently overrun with error, superstition, and will-worship, and they are pleased to have it so, and then follows ignorance and profaneness. 7th, He will spoil them also in their civil enjoyments, and give them up to anarchy and confusion, and then who can bear his wrathful presence, when his face or favourable presence is hidden from them?

I shall only add on this point, that because those hidings of God's face are gradual, therefore they are little taken notice of, as the prophet complains of, Hos. vii. 9. "Gray hairs are here and there upon them, and they know it not," that is, they are in a declining condition, yet they lay it not to heart. The quietness or peace of any man is of the Lord. Christ gives his people inward peace, so they need not fear outward trouble. It is possible to have peace without joy, but there can be no joy till peace is attained, Psal. li. 12. Let us wait upon God for the restoration of peace and for its continuance. Since it is a perfect peace, Isa. xxvi. 3. it will not decay of itself, and God will neither injure nor suffer any to destroy it.

When a person draws nigh to God in the exercise of faith and love, and God lifts up the light of his countenance upon him, then he is, as it were, lifted from earth to heaven: but when, by sloth, formality, &c. he provokes God to hide his face, he loses not only his joy, but his peace, and he is filled with trouble.

Ver. 30. *That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.* These words are the conclusion of Elihu's discourse about the execution of divine justice; and in them we have, 1st, The character of the person upon whom the justice of God is executed,—the hypocrite. 2d, The judgment itself. It is a stop to his greatness that he reign not. 3d, We have the ground of this judgment, which is, 1st, His wicked purpose. If suffered he would lay snares for the people. 2d, God's gracious protection of the people. He will not have them ensnared. A hypocrite is a filthy profane person, under the disguise of holiness. Besides gross hypocrites, who know they have only the shew of religion, there is a simple hypocrite, who is fitly represented by the foolish virgins. They had lamps, and they had as much oil in them as to make a blaze of a profession, and attended to the outward duties of religion, and expected to be accepted of Christ. They did not know they had not the oil of grace in their hearts, and so neglected to obtain it till it was too late. The grand design of gross hypocrites is, 1st, Praise among all men. 2d, The gain of worldly riches. 3d, The attainment of power, sometimes even with a view to revenge. These are the wheels of Satan's chariot, in which he hurries thousands to the land of darkness, while they would be esteemed children of light. A designing hypocrite may be discovered, 1st, By his affectation to have himself and his deeds taken notice of. 2d, He is exceedingly rigid and censorious of others. 3d, By cooling in his profession when he has attained his worldly ends. As success discovers some hypocrites, so adversity discovers others. Covetousness, which is an inordinate desire of getting and keeping the things of this world, and ambition, are the two predominant lusts of hypocrites. Let the consideration that God abhors hypocrisy, that there is no hiding it, and that he will expose and punish hypocrites, stir all up to a careful examination of themselves, and beware of hypocrisy in every kind and degree of it. When hypocrites get into power, they either secretly ensnare, or openly oppress the people.

Some think that Elihu intends here to answer Job's questions, chap. xxi. 7. *Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?* That God gives power into the hands of evil men, because of the sins of the people. As if he had said, When at any time you see the wicked in great power and prosperity, it is an evidence that the people are very wicked, and therefore they are scourged by their rulers.

Elihu having stated the power of God to do what he pleases, and that he is just in whatever he pleases to do, proceeds to counsel Job. 1st, He counsels him to a due submission to the hand of God, in the first part of ver. 31. *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement.* 2d, He exhorts him to resolve to reform, at the close of ver. 31. *I will not offend any more;* and ver. 32. *If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* 3d, He counsels Job to pray for further discoveries, both of his sins and sinfulness, and also of his duty, ver. 32. *That which I see not, teach thou me.*

Ver. 31. *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more.* Elihu now counsels Job to a holy submission and thorough reformation. When God lays his hand upon us in any affliction, we ought to speak humbly, and take with us words of confession and submission, and so present ourselves

and our condition before the Lord; and while we say, take away all iniquity, we should pray also for the free Spirit of God, to preserve us from offending any more; and if we are really humbled for any one sin, we will be earnestly desirous of deliverance from every sin. Hos. iii. 5. "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness." That is, they shall fear to offend, because the Lord is so good and ready to pardon.

Many are chastened who cannot say they have *borne chastisement*. To bear chastisements is something more than merely to feel, and slight, despise, or faint under them, or to endure them because we cannot help it. But to bear a chastisement properly, is while tasting the bitter cup of sorrow, to say, "The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?" We never bear any chastisement from a gracious principle, till we say in humility of soul, and cheerful resignation to the divine will, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

Let all under affliction consider what God is doing, what they have been doing, or let them search and try their ways, and turn to the Lord. This is our duty at all times, especially in a day of adversity; and while we neglect to exercise ourselves in searching into our afflictions, in the nature, circumstances, time, and design of God in them, we may have, yea, we will get the smart and bitterness of our afflictions, but shall not profit by them.

*Ver. 32. That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.* When Elihu would have Job confess that *which I see not*, it may include, 1st, The sins which he did not see. 2d, Those favours and mercies which he did not see. 3d, Among the things not seen may be reckoned the aims and ends of God in chastening him. Our understandings are imperfect, as well as our will and affections. The deficiency of our knowledge must be confessed, as well as the opposition of our will to do good. Prov. xxx. 2. "I am more brutish than any man," &c. Every good man will, with Agur, confess his ignorance. For the more we know, the more we see our own ignorance, and so are the readier to confess it. Those that have but little knowledge are little troubled with their ignorance. And as there are many sins of ignorance, so ignorance itself is a sin, and therefore to be bewailed before God.

*Teach thou me.* We should stand always ready to receive instruction from the word or providences of God, or immediately from the Spirit; for by whatever means we receive instruction, it is God that gives it. A humbled soul is willing to see the worst of itself; and while he confesses to God the sins he knows, he earnestly solicits God to shew him those he does not know. A godly man has a gracious suspicion of himself. *If I have done iniquity*, or whatever iniquity I have done, I am desirous to leave it. If thou dost discover to me any iniquity, I will engage myself against that sin with all my might. *I will do no more.* I will not add, I will not persist. If a godly man might have his will, he would sin no more. A true penitent is resolute in a persevering opposition to all sin. Repentance for, and continuance in sin, is quite inconsistent, yea, impossible.

The scope of the three following verses is to humble Job, and provoke him to repentance, but on very different grounds from what his three friends had done. They moved him to repent on account of his former wicked life. But Elihu calls him to repent of his imprudent and rash speeches under his afflictions.

*Ver. 33. Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest.* Elihu points Job to his grand error, that he did not readily approve, nor quietly submit to the judgment of God in his own case, and so had not spoken reverently enough of God, nor humbly enough of himself.

The question which Elihu proposes respects the dispensations of God; so his meaning is, Should God cut out the works of his providence according to thy order? No; he will not do according to thy mind, but he will do according to his own. *He will recompense, or he will pay.* He will do as he pleases, which is always right. God proceeds purely from himself, and will recompense whether thou refuse or choose. It is God that lays all upon thee, and calls thee to submission, *and not I.*

Hence observe, that man would have every thing done according to his mind, both what he is to do for God, and what God does to him; and as this springs from pride, discontent, and impatience, it must be very sinful, absurd, and unreasonable, to desire to have things ordered as we would have them, and not desire that God would order all things. Is it seemly that a family should be managed according to the will of the children and servants? But how much more absurd is it for an erring creature to

desire to rule, or to censure Jehovah's procedure? There is no striving with God. Therefore let us yield up ourselves freely to God, to be ruled by him. God is our commander, but we must not be so much as his counsellor.

Elihu now calls upon Job to reply.

*Therefore speak what thou knowest.* If I have not spoken right, shew me my error, and spare not. Knowledge is the fountain of speech. We must not speak at a venture, but keep to rule, and take our aim.

In the following verse Elihu invites others to speak in Job's case.

*Ver. 34. Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken to me.* He was persuaded that all wise men either were, or upon hearing the matter would be of his mind. Let them give their judgment impartially concerning the whole matter in debate between Job and me.

Having called for speakers, in the next clause he calls for hearers.

*And let wise men, &c.* The word rendered *hearken* signifies to submit, to obey. He will vote with me, and declare himself to be of my mind.

Elihu having made a long discourse, appeals to wise men.

Hence observe, that he that believes he has spoken truth is desirous to have it examined by those who are best qualified to judge. Truth fears not to be tried. Those who understand and love truth, can do nothing against, but for it. There is a sameness of spirit in all wise and godly men; and if one carefully examine any truth, he will be able to state it in such a manner as that every wise and godly man will see it, and acquiesce in it. He dares say, Let wise men hearken unto me.

From Elihu making his appeal to wise men, learn, That many who are forward to give their opinion, are far from being competent judges of the truths of God.

Elihu proceeds to give his own views of Job's conduct.

*Ver. 35. Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom.* The Heb. is, "not in knowledge;" that is, ignorantly, foolishly; a very heavy charge against such a man as Job, which shews that the best of men are not perfect either in grace or knowledge. We may know much, and yet come short in what we ought to know. A man may speak some things well, and yet in others very wrong. God himself approves of what Job had said, and condemns his three friends, and yet Elihu speaks truth in reference to the special point he had in hand, and Job acknowledges as much, "I have spoken once, yea twice," &c. I will no more set my wisdom against the wisdom of God. The plain dealing of Elihu having convinced Job, he gave not a word of reply, much less an angry word.

Hence learn, That when a good man is faulty, he will bear reproof with patience. A good man will soon be angry with himself for speaking or doing amiss, and he takes a reproof well when he has done so. Grace is as eminently discovered by our patience when we are rebuked for doing evil, as by our zeal in doing good. When Nathan applied the parable to David, we hear nothing but words of sorrowful confession and humble submission. I know not whether Job's patience was greater in bearing the affliction that God laid on him, or in bearing Elihu's reproofs in silence. A good man will not only not rage, revile, nor threaten when he is reprehended, but will take it quietly, yea thankfully, and bless God for it. It is best for us not to do or speak any thing that deserves reproof; and it is next best to receive a reproof with meekness and gratitude when we have either done or spoken amiss.

In the two following verses Elihu winds up his second speech to Job, and in them we have, 1st, His motion in the beginning of ver. 36. 2d, We have the reasons of this motion in ver. 37. The last clause of ver. 36. is taken as the subject matter about which Elihu desires Job may be tried, that is, "Because of his answers for wicked men."

*Ver. 36. My desire is, that Job may be tried unto the end, because of his answers for wicked men.* But had not Job been long enough tried already? Why then does Elihu so earnestly importune that Job may be tried?

The word signifies a twofold trial, 1st, A trial by way of examination or argumentation; and, 2d, By affliction. We may understand Elihu in both or either of these senses. My desire is that Job may be tried, that what he hath said may be further examined, or that his afflictions may be continued till he is brought to a sight of his errors and mistakes; I would have him corrected till he submits to God as a conqueror, and recants his rash answers.

*Unto the end;* that is, fully and thoroughly tried. For if he be just and sincere, the severity and length of his trial will only refine and purge him from his remaining

dross ; but if he be unsound and naught, he will evaporate away into vain complaints and murmurings. I desire that God would try him to victory till he give glory to God, humbling himself and confessing his sin.

*Because of his answers for wicked men.* Let him be tried concerning those words which he hath spoken in common with, or after the manner of vain men. Every unregenerate man who may have a profession of religion, and perform all outward duties of it, but never felt its power on his heart, is the wicked man. Now a godly man may, through temptation and affliction, let such rash unbecoming speeches pass from him as these wicked ones, but the difference is, they accord with the state of the one, and they are the infirmity of the other, Isa. lv. 7. "Let the man of iniquity turn from his evil way ;" he means the worst of men, yet it is a truth, that every man in an unconverted state is a man of iniquity.

Elihu proceeds more fully to declare both the reason why he would have Job further tried, and likewise what he meant by his answers for wicked men.

*Ver. 37. For he addeth rebellion (or trespass) to his sin.* The least vain thought or idle word is a transgression of the law, and so is a sin ; but every sin is not rebellion. To rebel is to sin with a high hand and with a stiff neck. There are sins of several degrees. He that will sin rebels, and he who sins against light, reproof, and admonition, and who perseveres in sin notwithstanding of mercies and favours, is manifestly adding rebellion to sin. Job's former sins are aggravated by his complaining, as if God dealt unjustly with him. It is a mercy to be kept from adding rebellion to our sins, even by reproaches, troubles, disappointments, &c.

*He clappeth his hands amongst us, or maketh a noise, and so insults over us as if he had conquered.* And, indeed, to clap our hands when we have done or spoken evil, is worse than the evil itself.

*And multiplieth his words against God.* There is a speaking against God directly, which Job is not charged with ; but Elihu asserts that he had, or feared he might multiply words reflectively against God ; that is, speak such words as might cast dishonour upon God, such words as God might interpret as spoken against himself.

Hence observe, That those who speak unduly of the ways and proceedings of God with them in this world, speak against God himself. We may speak against God before we are aware, and when we may think we have not spoken one word against him. Aaron manifested both his humility and his faith in holding his peace when the Lord slew his two sons. And as to speak amiss in any matter is to sin against God ; so when we speak much of our sufferings, or of the severest providences of God to us, we are in danger of multiplying words against God ; O then let us speak but little unless in the praise of God ; and beware of repining or envious thoughts, for they are words in God's account !

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

This chapter contains the third speech of Elihu, in which he confutes and reproves three complaining assertions with which he charges Job. The first charge is in ver. 2, 3. and the answer from ver. 4—8. inclusive.

*Ver. 1, 2. Elihu spake moreover, and said, Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's ?* It is a strong way of conviction to put or refer a matter to his judgment and conscience, against whom we make opposition, as Moses, Deut. xxxii. 31. "Even our enemies themselves being judges ;" and Acts iv. 19. The Septuagint translates more mildly, "I shall be found righteous before, or in the sight of God ;" and so he says, (chap. xxiii. 10.) "When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold," or appear innocent before God. It was Job's failing that he was so confident that God would not find fault with him. We should beware of saying any thing that could be interpreted that we think our own righteousness any better than filthy rags.

Learn, That what we speak rashly may at any time be brought against us, and is so sometimes very uncharitably. It is usual with those who accuse or oppose one another to take things doubtful for certainties, their own conjectures for the assertions of their adversary. Had Elihu taken Job's words more favourably, he needed not to have put so much gall into his own. But over mild words may skin a sore before it is searched to the bottom, and so not only retard the cure but endanger the patient. Sharp re-

proofs are necessary. Who are you that you should presume to say, (so much as even by inference,) that your righteousness is more than God's, or that it is any thing compared with the righteousness of God?

*Ver. 3. For thou saidst what advantage will it be unto thee, and what profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin?* From what Job said, ch. ix. 22, 23, 28—30, Elihu might charge Job with saying, What profit is it, (as to my temporal good), that I am cleansed from spiritual evil, *my sin*? As for his eternal state that is not the matter controverted in this book. The sum of all is this, if I am cleansed from my sin, I may be as great a sufferer, and as hardly dealt with in this world as if I were altogether unclean, and hence it might be inferred, surely Job was more righteous than God, because while he laboured to please God, God was pleased to afflict him as he useth to do, and has threatened to do to the worst of men.

The Psalmist confesses that he was puzzled at the intricate dispensations of God, Psal. lxxiii. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end." The miserableness of wicked men, their slippery standing, &c. as described, ver. 18—20, and the blessedness of the godly as having God for his guide and portion, ver. 24—26. Then I understood what profit and advantage comes by cleansing ourselves from sin though it appear not, yea, though all appearances speak the contrary. To be cleansed from sin is profitable, for when cleansing work begins, the Lord usually makes an end of afflicting work, and there is more profit in being cleansed from sin than in being delivered from sufferings; and communion with God and peace from God can only be enjoyed in the way of being cleansed from sin, and so it is more profitable than all temporal enjoyments put together.

Elihu answers and refutes these sayings of Job as follows:

*Ver. 4. I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee.* Companions signifies any friends with whom we usually converse. His companions may mean his three friends, or all who were of his opinion. Elihu challenges all.

From hence note, that he who has truth on his side needs not fear the opposition of all men. It is common to cry up those that have the multitude on their side, and to boast that most men are of their opinion. A worthy man once said, "By my being alone, the word of truth, and the truth of the word, is not at all diminished." One man, and the truth, are strong enough to oppose a multitude in error and a multitude of errors. Elihu goes on to answer Job and his companions.

*Ver. 5. Look unto the heavens and see, and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. Look and see,* that is, take special notice of and contemplate the heavens. It is to give earnest attention to the thing looked upon.

*Behold the clouds* which are lowest, yet they are beyond thy reach, much more the heavens, most of all God who is higher than the highest heavens. Thou canst neither add to nor diminish or blemish the beauty of the heavens; thou canst not make a cloud better or worse; what then canst thou do to or against the God of heaven? To convince Job of this seems to have been Elihu's design in calling upon him to look to the heavens, &c.

Remember we are to *look*, and *see*, and *behold* the natural works of God, but how much more the spiritual mysteries of the gospel, the making of a heaven in man, or man heavenly minded! O how many are there who look transiently upon these works of God, who never see nor behold them, who never laboured to comprehend with all saints, (or as all saints ought to be), what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of them, and therefore attain not to that riches of the full assurance of understanding, &c. but are like children tossed to and fro!

The heavens are a divine glass wherein we may see much of God; they are a natural alphabet, the letters whereof being well placed and rightly put together, we may spell the name of God, his wisdom, power, and goodness.

*Ver. 6. If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him?* The sins of men are so far from hurting the God of heaven, that they glorify him among men on earth, while they behold him either turning the evil which is done into good, or punishing them for their evil doings; that which men speak or do against God, like an arrow shot up into the air, falls down upon their own heads.

These works of God, wherein we should take pleasure, Psal. cxi. are not only works of mercy to the godly, ver. 3, 4, 5, but of vengeance upon the wicked, ver. 6. "He hath showed his people the power of his work," &c.

The princes, Psal. ii. are described as doing all they could against the Lord, yet they were so far from being able to prejudice the Lord either in his person or in his interest, that he did but laugh at them for it.

Woe to those who say God is not hurt by our sins, why then should we trouble ourselves about them? Yes, the Lord will let all sinners know at last that they have injured his declarative glory, though they could not touch his essential glory. This is what Elihu holds out to Job. We may and do trouble ourselves and one another, with our sins, but we cannot at all trouble God. God punishes sin out of pure love to justice, and he afflicts the godly for their good.

*Ver. 7. If thou be righteous what givest thou him? and what receiveth he at thy hands?* That is, thou givest him nothing. Rom. xi. 35, "Who hath given unto him and it shall be recompensed unto him again;" as much as to say, no man hath given any thing unto God, he is above and beyond all the givings of the creature, for, 1st, All is due to him, whatever we do is a debt to him, we cannot make the payment of a debt a gift. 2d, For "God is not worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing, (Why?) for he giveth to all men life and breath and all things." Nothing can properly be said to be given to him who giveth all things, whatever we have we have it all from God. 3d, The Lord can receive nothing at our hands, because he is full already, therefore no creature is necessary to God; we are and ought to be his servants, but he does not need our service, none of them can profit him; yet he is pleased to say, Matt. v. 16, "That good works glorify him," which is the highest attainment of a creature, and the highest commendation of what we do.

Lest any should infer from what Elihu had said to Job, that it can be no great matter whether we be righteous or wicked, he shows in the next verse, that though sin cannot hurt God, yet it will do hurt, and though our righteousness adds nothing to God, yet it may do much good.

*Ver. 8. Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.* Sin does mischief all the world over; but it especially hurts the actor. Yet sin may be said to be an injury done to God, as it dishonours him, and diminishes the manifestation of his glory in the world. Our sins may and often do hurt our neighbour. Yet no man can hurt his neighbour but he hurts himself far more.

*A man as thou art.* That is, any man, because all men are in many things alike; they are all liable to receive hurt by the sins of others. Yet no man is hurt with the sin of another but in so far as he is pleased with or becomes a partaker with and follows their evil example. No man is hurt by temptations but in so far as he consents and yields to them. No man is hurt by the opposition and persecutions of others, until he become impatient under them. This was the object the devil had in view in all the assaults he made upon Job. It is an excellent paradox, that no man is hurt but by himself. While the martyrs were patient under their oppressions, and endured their sufferings for Christ's sake with joyfulness, nothing could really hurt them.

As evil example corrupts, so good example instructs. *Thy righteousness may profit.* And this is a universal loadstone; for where is any benefit to be had, how do men strive to trade there, as if heaven were to be found there. But though there is great advantages to be obtained by righteousness, yet beware of thinking that your best services deserve the least profit at the hand of God. The best will say, "we are unprofitable servants." Righteousness is profitable when kept in its proper place, and is applied to its proper uses. God inclines and enables to work, and then rewards it. Heb. vi. 10, "God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love," &c. Let us be found in our duty, counting all things but loss and dung that we may win Christ, and then in due time and place we shall find our profit, we shall at last see that while doing good to others, we have done good to ourselves also; righteousness is profitable unto all things and to all men.

*Ver. 9. By reason of the multitude of oppressions, they make the oppressed to cry, they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty.* This seems to be a second complaint or charge against Job which Elihu may have gathered from ch. xxiv. 12. "Men groan from out of the city," &c. as if he had said, the Lord takes little notice of the greatest afflictions and oppressions of the poor, though righteous men. Elihu grants that many poor men cry out because of the oppression of the mighty, yet he acquits God from any

such imputation as Job's words mean to insinuate, which will appear in the 10th and 11th verses.

Now, when a man is oppressed by calumny, his estate by wrongful seizure, and his person by violent restraint, then he not only complains, but cries out for ease, assistance, and deliverance. The 2d clause is a repetition of the former. "They cry out by reason of the arm," &c.

There is a secret oppression; "the balances of deceit are in his hand;" he loveth to oppress; to deceive, and defraud by craft, is oppression; (and under colour of law, how often are rules of justice turned into rules of oppression? and this is not the less criminal because it has the better cover;) besides the open violence of the mighty, who vex and oppress all who are unable to defend themselves against their tyranny.

Power is of great use to do good, and also gives opportunity to do evil. Magistrates are called the shields of the earth, implying that they are to use their power for a defence; they have a sword, but it is to cut off evil doers, and be a praise to them that do well. May it not be said, of rulers who exercise their power respecting any thing that they admit to be indifferent in itself, in such a way as they fear will vex and grieve any of their people, that they do not observe the apostle's rule, nor follow his example, and that they have their powers, not to edification, but for their own pleasure?

*Ver. 10. But none saith, where is God, my maker, who giveth songs in the night?* Some say this refers to oppressors who put away the thoughts of God when they do mischief. Others say, they mean the oppressed, and that Elihu produces them as a reason why they are not delivered, for though they cry out of this or that man, yet they do not humble themselves nor inquire after God. None, not one, or few or none, say, Where is God, my maker, who gave and continues my being?

It is easy to complain, but hard to pray in a day of trouble, yet it is good, yea, it is best for us to draw near to God and make our requests known to him, who hath our times, that is all the changes of our condition, in his hand. Let those who profess to be new creatures prove it by their patient submission to the divine will, and by their gratitude to God for his unspeakable gift. Since God is the maker of our cross, we should be quiet under it, and when all refuge fails us, let us flee to God for help. To give inward joy in time of outward sorrows, is to give songs in the night, by which God causes his people to rejoice in the midst of trouble.

When the Lord not only gives safety but sleep in the night, these mercies deserve and call for daily praises; O, what sweet songs have suffering saints sung in the darkest nights of their afflictions!

Thus it appears that God did not regard the cry of the oppressed, nor save them from the arm of the mighty, because they did not cry for help to God their maker. The next words give a fuller and more express answer to that complaint.

*Ver. 11. Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?* Elihu farther condemns oppressed persons for neglecting to cry to God from the consideration of the understanding which God has bestowed on them above the beasts and fowls, as if he had said, God teaches the inferior creatures somewhat, but he teaches man much more. God has bestowed those qualities which are shadows of wisdom and understanding upon beasts and birds, not only for their own preservation, but for the benefit of man, that they may be more useful to him, and fitter for his service. O what a reproach is it that rational intelligent men should lead no better, and in many instances much worse lives than beasts! The Lord convicts his people of rebellion by the conduct of the ox and ass, Isa. i. And he reproves them by the fowls of the air, Jer. viii. who observe the proper season of changing their situations. But whatever changes I bring upon you it produces no change in your course; but say or do what I will, you neither embrace offered mercy nor regard threatenings, so as to prevent those judgments, which are ready to drop down and overwhelm you. And after all this, will ye say, "we are wise," when the fowls of the air are wiser than you, and will ye say, "the law of the Lord is with us," as if ye boasted of it, while they guide themselves much better by their natural instinct than you have done though favoured with a written law. Will not this be a disgrace to all profane and hypocritical professors, and fill them with confusion of face for ever—That while boasting of the law they continued breakers of the law?

Elihu having thus shown the sin of those persons who acted below beasts, he proceeds to tell us what they do in their affliction.

*Ver. 12. There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men.*



Or, There they cry because of the pride of evil men, but none giveth answer, that is, they being oppressed by the pride of evil men, cry out of their insolencies and their own miseries, and yet, for the reasons given in the two former verses, got no answer. Others take it for the pride of the oppressed. *There they cry*, but they have no help when they cry, *because of the pride of evil men*, that is, because themselves are so proud; they are at once poor and proud; they are oppressed yet their pride continues unsubdued; they are fallen before men in misery, but they are not fallen before God in humility.

How miserable are they in their miseries, who cry much because they suffer evil, but not at all because they have done evil, yea, who are doing evil at the very time when they are crying out on account of the evils they are suffering! Hos. vii. 14. To cry for relief from pain but not for grace to repent; and to continue proud and impatient under affliction, is a sad condition indeed.

Neither oppression from man, nor affliction from God, can of themselves subdue the proud spirit of man. When judgments are inflicted, the wicked may seek God early, that is, earnestly and diligently, and not find him; but the reason of the refusal was, "they hated knowledge," &c. Prov. i. 27—29. He is far from all proud men, Psal. cxxxviii. 6, as to any complacency in their persons, and as to hearing their prayers. Isa. i. 15, "Though ye make many prayers I will not hear, your hands are full of blood." The once blind man saw this truth, when he said to the Pharisees, "We know that God heareth not sinners," which both answered and confuted them, for were he that cured me of my blindness such a sinner as you say he is, he could never have obtained power from God to cure me of my blindness. Let proud sinners repent and humble themselves, and then look for a gracious answer to their prayers.

*Ver. 13. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.* This is another reason why God will not hear their prayers. By vanity we are to understand vain men praying. The word signifies a lie, rashness, &c. as well as vanity. He that will not hear will much less regard vanity.

Hence observe, That the prayers of vain and evil persons are vain things. It does not say, their oaths, lies, and idle words are vain, but their cry, their cries in prayer to God are vain, yea, vanity. A man may pray often, and yet his prayers be empty and vain, and all prayers are so,—1st, That do not proceed from a pure heart in the exercise of faith in God. 2d, When we pray merely to obtain ease, without any design to glorify God, or any desire to have his blessing with our afflictions, that we may profit thereby. 3d, All prayers that are not presented in the name of Christ, and that are the peculiar work of the Spirit in the heart of a believer; for unless the Spirit make intercession for us in our hearts, as Christ makes intercession for us in heaven, we pray in vain. It is in vain to expect our prayers to be heard and regarded by God while we have no heart to hear and obey him. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer," that is, if he hold any the least compliance or secret correspondence with any sin, yea, if he hath not repented of and laboured to mortify every known sin. Even believing prayers are not always immediately answered, but they are never disregarded. There is more intended than expressed, when it is said, *God will not hear nor regard*, even that they are a burden and an abomination to him. And if they are not regarded when praying, what are they when oppressing and needlessly vexing their brethren? "But the Lord hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain," that is, Ye shall not seek me in vain. No, as your prayers are acceptable to me, so they shall be profitable and beneficial to you.

*Ver. 14. Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.* Some connect this with the former verse, *He heareth not vanity, neither doth the Almighty regard it*, and translate thus, Much less will he hear thee, if thou sayest thou dost not look to, or regard this; judge thyself, therefore, before him, and wait for him. Some others translate, In this also (thou hast sinned) that thou hast said, thou shalt not see him, judge therefore thyself before him, and look for him. This is the matter of his new charge,—it differs from ours in the latter part, from which I shall make some observations, 1st, That it is our duty to judge ourselves, which if we did, it would preserve us from rash judging of God's dealings with us. 2d, If we would carefully examine ourselves, it would lay us low in our own sight, and would thereby dispose us to trust in and wait upon God.

*Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him.* Elihu seems to charge Job with fearing that he should not see God in such a day and way of trial, as he had desired in

chap. xxiii. 8, 9. Or that God would never in this world clear up his case, so as to acquit him and attest his integrity. The word rendered *see*, refers to a person brought before a judge for trial, not with a heavy heart and a downcast look, but as a man conscious of his own innocence, with confident boldness.

*Yet judgment is before him.* This bears, that Elihu thought Job too hasty in his assertion. For God will certainly bring thee to a trial, and therefore I advise thee to remember, that God is present with, and presides over all that concerns thee. As it is most sweet to have the Holy Spirit witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, so it is very desirable to have our character cleared from every false aspersion, and our conduct vindicated before the world. In dark providences a good man sees nothing but God's displeasure, and he is ready to draw sad conclusions against himself, as well as to speak inadvertently against God. As God knows the rights of every man, so he will do right to every man. The ways of God are often secret, but never unjust. He is a just and righteous judge who will not neglect the cause of his people, therefore they should trust in and wait on him. Unbelief is in a haste, faith waits God's time. However pained and perplexed the people of God may be in this world, yet they shall know at last that it is not vain to trust God. We must wait upon God and trust in him, though we cannot see him, believing that judgment is before him; and whenever we are enabled to confess this, and thereby give glory to God, we will readily trust in him to order all things concerning us, whenever we can stay our minds on God.

Trust is not every body's due, but to trust God is every body's duty, and also their interest, for he is clothed with righteousness and justice, as much as with strength and power. Thus Elihu gave Job good counsel, which ought to have been embraced with open arms, and that Job had need of it, he shews in the following words, when he tells him, and as it was not so with him, yet as appears by the hand of God upon him, and his unbecoming behaviour under it.

*Ver. 15. But now, because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger; yet he knoweth it not in great extremity.* Some read, But know now that his anger hath visited thee but a little, neither hath he made any great inquisition; as if Elihu had said, God hath not dealt with thee as thy iniquity hath deserved, and yet thou complainest much of his severity, whereas, if he had strictly inquired into the multitude of thy sins, he would have afflicted thee much more.

Hence learn, That our sorest afflictions here are comparatively nothing to what they justly might be. Our own translation is, as if it had been said, Thou dost not trust in God as became thee, it is not so as I have exhorted and directed thee, therefore the Lord hath visited in anger, and when he does so, it is best to be patient under our sufferings, and patiently wait his time of relief. When our corruptions are not mortified, or our graces not exercised by afflictions, we may expect an increase of them.

Our not trusting in God must needs provoke him to anger; for distrust or unbelief questions all that God is, and all that he hath promised. It questions his truth and faithfulness, &c. which are the glory of God, and in all which the sons of men ought to glorify him. When the Lord is angry, what can comfort us but the turning away of his anger? And by the very act of turning away his anger he comforts us, though all the world should be angry with us.

*Yet he knoweth it not in great extremity.* While Elihu spoke thus, he seems to turn to the company, complaining of Job's insensibility. To know, is to be under a due sense of what we know; we may know a thing and consider it, and yet not have a proper feeling of it. The word for *great extremity*, signifies any kind of increase. Job's affliction was great at first in the loss of his estate, &c. and it increased by torment in his body, and then in grief and anguish of soul. As there is no outward evil for the matter, so none for the degree but a good man may be in it. Let us beware of judging any on account of the severity of their sufferings. It is the duty of all under affliction to inquire into the cause, and study to find out the end and design that God has in view. But until we heartily endeavour to remove the causes, and comply with or answer the ends which God calls us to in our afflictions, we may be said not to know the visitation of the Lord, though we are in great extremity. And if this be to know the visitation of God, surely many are perishing and sinking under the hand of his visitation, who yet know it not.

*Ver. 16. Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain, he multiplieth words without knowledge.* Job did not humble himself by a patient dependence upon God, nor did

he duly take notice of the purpose of God in visiting him. And he seems more zealous in defending his own credit than the honour of God. For these reasons it may be said, he *openeth his mouth in vain*, and when Elihu charges him with *multiplying words without knowledge*, it may imply, That he had too often requested to know the reason why he suffered, and he spake too much of his own integrity, and in aggravation of his afflictions. Job, no doubt, had given Elihu too much cause to check him, yet some allege that he did it with too much severity; yet he seems to charge him only with vanity and inadvertency, not with premeditated wickedness, as Eliphaz had done, chap. xxii. While we notice the candid manner and plainness of speech with which Elihu censured Job, let us admire and imitate that patient meekness with which Job received his sharpest censures, taking all in good part, and doubtless improving all to his spiritual profit.

Learn, That all our complaints and debates with God, and all apologies for our behaviour under affliction are fruitless, till we give glory to God by yielding to his sovereignty; and if we cannot praise God as we ought in the day of visitation, let us be still, and know that he is God.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

*Ver. 1. Elihu also proceeded, and said.* The Heb. is, Elihu added; that is, to his former discourses. In this he shews that God is righteous, by taking notice of the various works of God, especially those in the higher regions. He then by way of preface says,

*Ver. 2. Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf.* He calls Job's attention because he was to be short, but especially from the greatness of the person in whose name he was about to speak.

Observe, That he who speaks but a little, and that little for God, should be patiently heard. Brevity and perspicuity should go together.

*And I will shew thee.* I will make all plain to thee. Some read the last clause, *for God, or to God*; for the glory of, and to the honour of God, I will speak that which may both convince thee and justify God. The word *yet* intimates, that however much any man may have spoken for God, he must continue while he has a call.

*Ver. 3. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.* We have been arguing all this while about the dispensations here below, but now I will speak of those things which God does afar off, and which may be thought far from the point in hand, yet they contain principles or general grounds, by which that which Elihu engaged to maintain may be fully confirmed, that God is righteous in his dealings with Job. The knowledge of Jesus Christ cannot be too dear bought. It is a strange trade to be always buying and never selling; and that knowledge will quit the cost, though we have fetched it far, by which we have learned to ascribe righteousness to our Maker. He that forgets God as his Maker will never answer the ends for which he was made.

*My Maker.* He appropriates that common work of God to himself. A believer doth, as it were, engross God to himself, yet desires and endeavours that all as well as himself may have their part and portion in God. When the Lord takes, as well as when he gives, we must ascribe righteousness to him. He that made us cannot wrong us.

*Ver. 4. For truly my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.* That is, I will speak truth. The apostle protests, 2 Cor. xiii. 8. "We can do nothing against the truth;" O blessed impotency, but for the truth, O blest ability. We must speak nothing but truth even to obtain peace, which we cannot buy too dear unless we part with truth for it. There never was any true lover of truth who was not also a lover of peace; nor any true lover of peace who was not such a lover of truth that he could forego peace for it.

But how can it be said of Elihu, *He is perfect in knowledge*, for it seems to mean himself though he speaks in the third person. There is no man hath absolute perfection of knowledge; yet one man in comparison of another may be said to be perfect in knowledge. Elihu speaks not of any perfection of knowledge, but of being sincere in knowledge. If we have only one talent of knowledge, yet when we use it well we may be said to be perfect in knowledge. As he that slothfully hides his talent, so he who

either vain-gloriously shews it, or uses it deceitfully, shall be reckoned to have none, Matth. xxv. 29.

From Elihu speaking in a third person, learn that modesty is a great virtue, and the grace of every grace. Thus Elihu prepares his patient, Job, to receive his medicinal instructions.

*Ver. 5. Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any : he is mighty in strength and wisdom.* God is so mighty that he gives or takes away the power of creatures at his pleasure with the greatest ease. This is matter of comfort to his people, for what he has promised he is able also to perform ; he can do abundantly above all that faith can ask of him. It is also matter of terror to all who oppose him. The combined efforts of all the potentates of this world cannot stand one moment before him. When the apostle addresses those who venture to go to the table of devils, that is, who hold communion in the things of God with idolaters, he says, "Will ye provoke the Lord? are you stronger than he?" "Behold, God is mighty," which is a glorious sight, and yet behold a sight more glorious.

*He despiseth not any.* Thus he manifests his gracious condescension and moderation in the use of his power and authority, for it is added *in strength and wisdom* ; or, he is as wise as he is strong. The word *despise* signifies loathing with abhorrence. *Any* is a supplement ; some read, "God is mighty, and despiseth not the innocent person." A man of integrity the Lord will not despise ; such are often afflicted but never despised, Psal. xxii. 24. Thus the words reflect chiefly upon Job, who at least seemed to charge God that he did not consider him in his affliction.

Hence observe, Those that have great gifts are apt to despise all who are below them. This dead fly has corrupted many a box of precious ointment ; and unless the Lord, along with those other gifts, give that which is more excellent than all other gifts, an humble heart, this noxious weed will soon appear.

Since the Lord is mighty in strength of wisdom as well as of power, then do not find fault with any thing he doth ; and when you want wisdom to manage a prosperous estate, or to bear an afflicted one, then commit thy works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established. Many are masters of others who are not masters of themselves ; but the Lord is mighty of heart as to patience in bearing with those that are evil, and also in pardoning sinners who repent. O Lord thou mightest magnify the power of thine anger in punishing that rebellious people, but rather magnify the power of thy patience and long-suffering in sparing and pardoning them. He is strong indeed who is strong in patience against offenders, and as strong in mercy to pardon humble ones, as in power to punish those who are incorrigible. Those who possess true greatness of spirit will neither despise those that are below them, nor envy those that are above them, nor willingly oppose their equals.

*Ver. 6. He preserveth not the life of the wicked : but giveth right to the poor.* Elihu seems to allude to what Job had said about the prosperity of the wicked, chap. xxi. 7. But however many common favours he confers on them, he does not preserve them as he does those whom he loves and respects ; he is neither sun nor shield to them as he is to the godly. The Lord does not preserve the lives of the wicked by miraculous manifestations of his power and glory, as he did Daniel from the lions, and Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego from fire. If God preserve not the life of the wicked they cannot escape death and destruction ; they must perish whom God preserves not.

*But giveth right to the poor*, or to the afflicted, as well as to the rich, and he will especially give right to the poor in spirit. He means not the poor in purse, &c. for many such are both proud and wicked, but every word is considerable. 1st, *He giveth*, that is an act of bounty ; 2d, *He giveth right*, which is an act of equity ; 3d, *To the poor*, that is an act of pity and charity. It implies that he rights the poor freely, speedily, and seasonably.

*Ver. 7. He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous : but with kings are they on the throne ; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.* The eye of the Lord, as it denotes favour, is peculiar to the righteous, and always respects their privilege, benefit, and comfort. So the eye of God inspecting his people, intimates, that he directs, pities, provides for, and delights in them to do them good ; and even when he afflicts, he never ceases to love and care for his people ; hence see the security and happiness of all on whom the eyes of the Lord are fixed for good. He will not only protect them by the way, but place them safely on the throne of glory. Let us also learn our duty, never to withdraw the eye of faith, hope, and confidence from the

Lord. Some render the last clause, "He will establish them to victory;" that is, he will remove every thing that stands in the way of their exaltation and establishment.

As in this verse Elihu speaks of righteous men exalted and established; so in the following he speaks of righteous men cast down.

*Ver. 8. And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction.* As if he had said, if any of the righteous are at any time brought into straits and cast upon the dunghill, instead of being exalted with kings on the throne, it is not because God has cast them out of his favour or ceases to care for them, but for some wise and good purpose which God will manifest in due time.

*Fetters and cords* are emblems of slavery and captivity, and signify in general any trouble or calamity that befalls us here below, Psal. cvii. 10. "Being bound in affliction and iron;" that is, as fast bound by affliction as if they were in irons.

The same word signifies both affliction and poverty, because it is so great an affliction. All afflictions are grievous to the flesh, Heb. xii. 11. "No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous." Yet when the apostle compares the heaviest afflictions with the weight of glory, he calls them *light*. Every affliction is a kind of captivity, and even the righteous are often in these fetters, not only for the trial of their graces, but for discovering their iniquities as the cause of their corrections.

*Ver. 9. Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded.* He makes them to see, understand, and consider their work. He makes them review what they have done, and convinces them wherein they have done amiss. The Lord by means of afflictions lets men see that they have sinned exceedingly, which they do when they sin against light, against reproofs, against mercies received, and notwithstanding corrections and judgments formerly inflicted, and thereby leads them to acknowledge not only that they are sinners, but that they have exceeded in transgression. And then as it follows, to perfect the work of humiliation and repentance, in

*Ver. 10. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.* The opening of the *ear* is more than a shewing of sin, and imports a close and home discovery of a man's condition to himself. Instruction is for discipline, and discipline tends to instruction. It is often rendered chastisement, and signifies any severe course of education, whereby we are drawn off from evil unto good. The ear seldom opens freely till the Lord smites as well as speaks, and gives us both a word and a blow. Though we hear much, unless we submit and conform to what we hear, our *ear* may still be said to be shut.

Hence observe, that it is the special power of God accompanying either his word or rod, that can make us attend to or profit by them. When words do not prevail to open the ear, fetters and cords are applied, with the design that they may return from iniquity, which signifies a vain empty thing, from which we can reap no advantage; and so one would think a very little persuasion would serve to hasten our return. And yet God has to reinforce and renew his command to return, which he does by every new or increased affliction. O that they would answer the end as expressed, Hos. v. 15. "In their affliction they will seek me early!" It is mournful that we so often defeat the Lord's purpose in afflicting us. Isa. ix. 13. "The people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts."

How well it will be with those who obey, and how ill with all who disregard his admonitions, will appear further in the two following verses.

*Ver. 11. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasure.* Obeying and hearing are expressed by the same word, and so we hear no more than we obey. The same word is rendered to serve and to worship, and worshipping is expounded by serving, Matt. iv. 10. We serve God no farther than we obey him, and we worship him no farther than we serve him, and that heartily. It is possible to do the will of God, and yet not to serve him in doing it, which is always the case until all that we do is done because it is the will of God. To what purpose is it to hear the will of God without obeying him? for we may be said to hear no more than we obey. To serve God is to obey him from love, and to submit cheerfully to whatever he is pleased to do with us. To obey God, even when held with fetters and cords, must be a profitable service; for they spend or finish their days in prosperity and pleasure.

Hence observe, that as there is no condition so low but God can deliver out of it; so his presence and blessing can make the most forlorn situation not only bearable, but

comfortable. This will be the issue of the afflictions of all who obey and submit to God. The issue in the contrary case follows in

*Ver. 12. But if they obey not they shall perish by the sword, and die without knowledge.* Elihu is speaking of the righteous, and therefore cannot mean an obstinate rebellion when he says, *If they obey not*; but it seems to intimate a slothful indifference to the call of God for the amendment of some evil in their lives. I know every godly man hath a general bent to obey God and serve him; yet they often come short of that particular duty, which a special correction calls them unto; on which account the Lord proceeds to increase their afflictions, even to the taking them out of this world. So it is added, *They shall perish by the sword.* Isa. lvii. 1. "The righteous perish," &c. It may be by a violent as well as by a natural death.

The last clause may be read, "They shall die because they were without knowledge." Every good man knows himself a sinner, and that Jesus is a Saviour, &c.; so that he cannot be without knowledge. But he may be ignorant of the end and design of God in his afflictions. And not to consider nor duly observe the intimations of the mind of God in his providence, is very dangerous. Isa. v. 13. "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge."

*Ver. 13. But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath; they cry not when he bindeth them.* Elihu might intend this as a call to Job, to inquire whether under his afflictions he had not behaved too like an hypocrite, inasmuch as he was no more humbled under it, and his spirit so little subdued by it.

An hypocrite in heart knows himself to be an hypocrite; he does evil upon design, and good with a wicked mind. And what is the consequence? The more they are under the rod, the more they rebel. They *heap up wrath*, because they heap up sin. The wiles of hypocrites shall avail them nothing; for God sees, and is extremely angry with them.

*They cry not when he bindeth them.* He does not pray when God afflicts him. It is an aggravation of guilt not to humble ourselves under humbling providences. They are ready to find fault with God rather than with themselves in their affliction. They neither cry the cry of godly sorrow for their sin, nor confess their sins with a contrite heart. The woful misery of hypocrites in heart is set forth by what they suffer.

*Ver. 14. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.* This cannot mean that it is strictly and universally so; but as bloody, so deceitful men (such are hypocrites in heart) shall not live out half their days. Yet it may chiefly regard the unpreparedness of hypocrites for death. As a child may be said to die an hundred years old when he dies full of grace, so a man of an hundred years old may be said to die a child when he has no grace; for though he has been long in the world, yet he can hardly be said to have lived at all. Though hypocrites may pass for godly men while here, yet at death they shall go down among the unclean. It is desirable, if it were possible, that all the godly should be in one fellowship on earth, but it will only be attained in heaven.

*Ver. 15. He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ear in oppression.* In delivering the poor out of affliction, the Lord often uses creature helps; yet every deliverance must be ascribed to himself. He delivereth them in affliction, when he hath opened their ears in or by oppression. Few hear till they feel; and having by means of trouble opened their ears to hear, he brings them out of trouble. When we are truly humbled by an affliction, we are near deliverance from it. The plaister must be kept on till the wound be healed. The Lord will not leave off scourging his people till he brings them to a due submission, and so fits them for receiving the mercy of deliverance.

In the application of this doctrine Elihu brings it to Job's case.

*Ver. 16. Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should have been set on thy table should be full of fatness.* Thus Elihu informs Job what the issue would have been if he had submitted to the afflicting hand of God as he ought to have done. Then he would have given thee liberty and plenty, even to the utmost of thy desire.

By the *strait* we may understand any kind of trouble by which liberty is abridged. He is in a strait indeed who knows not what to do, especially when he is shut up to choose evil, like as David was, 2 Sam. xxiv. when the Lord gave him a choice of three evils.

A *broad place where no straitness is*, implies enlargement to the uttermost of desire.

There is no strait so perplexing but the Lord can remove us out of it, or it from us, at his pleasure, and also fill and furnish us with every comfort that he sees suitable for us. That man shuts the door of hope against himself who fears that either God will not or cannot help him in his greatest straits. But when we consider who it is that undertakes to bring his people out of their difficulties, and that his glory will be displayed in liberating them who have been long and straitly bound, it should quicken and increase faith, and not deaden and stagger it.

*Full of fatness* means the best of things, and even the best of spiritual things. Psal. xxxvi. 8. "They shall be abundantly satisfied," &c.

*Ver. 17. But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked; therefore judgment and justice shall take hold on thee.* Elihu charges Job with behaving under his affliction too like the wicked. Thou hast rendered thyself guilty of or obnoxious to that judgment, which God usually pronounces and executes upon wicked men. Or as he had not suffered so patiently as became a good man, which was in him a fulfilling the judgment of the wicked, he thereby exposed himself to the same outward calamities.

Hence learn, that when we do not submit to and humble ourselves under the afflicting hand of God, we act very sinfully, even like the wicked.

*Therefore justice and judgment take hold of thee.* That is, justice hath sent forth judgment upon thee, and now both take hold of thee. God hath marked thy sin in thy sad condition. If a Job do like wicked men he shall smart with them. 1 Tim. i. 9. It is said, "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient," &c. Yet when the righteous are found doing like the "lawless and disobedient, the law, that is, *justice and judgment, will take hold of them.*"

Observe, that while we hold sin and iniquity, nothing can deliver us from the sin-chastening hand of God. He has a righteousness that cannot be perverted, and his justice cannot be interrupted.

*Ver. 18. Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.* In this and the two following verses Elihu presses the application of the former doctrine upon Job by way of admonition and counsel. *Beware, because there is wrath,* and that so terrible, that nothing can deliver from it; no ransom, no power, nor can we deliver ourselves, by flight or by darkness. As God's love is revealed in promises, so is his wrath, in threatenings, and when he executes them in terrible judgments, he tells us he is angry. The wrath of God is a divine perfection; and Rom. i. 18. it is said to be "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." O then take heed that you do not provoke the wrath of God, and do your utmost to prevent it, which nothing can do but kissing the Son, Psal. ii. That is, do homage to Jesus Christ, and receive and submit to him as your prophet, priest, and king; for he that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him. Jesus Christ is the alone deliverer from wrath. "If his wrath be kindled but a little, blessed are they that put their trust in him." The Lord strikes his servants to take away their sin, but he destroys the wicked with a stroke. The blood of Christ is a sufficient ransom; yet no presumptuous, obstinate transgressor, nor any who trust in themselves, and expect to be able to purchase a ransom by their own deeds, shall ever have any benefit by this infinitely valuable ransom.

*Ver. 19. Will he esteem thy riches? no, not gold, nor all the forces of strength.* The question is a strong denial. He will not value thy riches. Or as some render, *thy nobleness or greatness.* Or as others, *will he regard thy crying?* So then when the Lord's wrath appears, neither riches, nor honour, nor prayers, nor tears, can give sinners any relief. The word rendered *gold* signifies defending; but although this metal may bribe men, it is no defence against God.

*Nor all the forces of strength.* That is, suppose thou art a mighty man, and hast strong forces, he will not esteem thee for all that. The very weakness of God is stronger than men. Neither power nor wealth can redeem or defend us against God. Jesus Christ alone can deliver from wrath; and he will protect all who turn from sin to God, in the exercise of repentance and self-humiliation.

Elihu proceeds to a third argument, to convince Job, that as he could neither be ransomed nor rescued, so neither can he be sheltered from the wrath of God.

*Ver. 20. Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place.* You need not desire the night, in hope of hiding thyself from the eye of God. So some think Elihu is here reproving Job for peevishly calling for death on account of the troubles he suffered.

*When people are cut off in their place.* Death cuts off the thread of life, and all from the comforts of this life, and many are cut off in judgment. When men die they are removed from the place where they formerly lived; and in this sense their place shall know them no more. Or thus, disquiet not thyself in the night, but rest in the will of God, when thou hearest of those great destructions which come upon persons or nations. In times of distress and trouble we are apt to make many strange wishes, and to express sinful requests, as Jeremiah, &c. They only dream of security by death who are unprepared for it. Death is good for none but those that are fitted for, and are by faith laying hold upon, eternal life.

*Ver. 21. Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.* We cannot be dutiful unless we are heedful. *Take heed*, 1st, To the inward motions of the soul, how and what you think. 2d, Of the affections, how and what you desire, love and hate. 3d, To the tongue, how, where, and what you speak. *Take heed* to the eye; the ear, &c. Watch that you *regard not iniquity*. The word rendered *regard* is to turn the face, to look upon any object. Turn not thy face to iniquity; that is, turn from it. Not only from gross sins in practice, but make conscience of an impatient thought, and order thy speech aright under thy rod. Indulge not thyself in complaining and impatience, for that is to regard iniquity, as Job is here charged with in the next words.

*For this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.* To choose denotes a very serious and exact work of the soul. But the bent of Job's spirit was far otherwise. Elihu seems to charge him with doing what might imply his choosing iniquity by his sinful wishes, &c. They choose very ill for themselves that choose sin; for it will deceive and disappoint. Its wages is death. Choose suffering rather than sin, because sin is worse than all affliction. It is the sting of affliction. And the greatest affliction that God inflicts, is to give men up to sin. Some choose sin through ignorance, others in the hopes of gain, and not a few to avoid evil. But whatever worldly good any gain, or danger they escape, by choosing iniquity, that choice brings them into greater danger, and subjects them to the loss of a greater good.

*Ver. 22. Behold God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?* The word to *exalt* signifies to establish, so as no power can molest. Those who trust in the Lord should neither fear nor trust in creatures. For all their power, whether of special favour or common providence, is but a stream from himself, which he overrules as he pleaseth.

*Who teacheth like him?* He teaches clearly, affectionately, and effectually. "Every one, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." There is not one that God undertakes to teach can miscarry; for he makes the heart of the rash to understand knowledge.

Hence see the folly of depending on the teaching even of the best of men. Wait on and submit to God, who can make even afflictions to profit. He not only empties and humbles, but transforms the soul into his own image, and establishes in the faith of every truth.

*Ver. 23. Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?* God is supreme in power, and he is righteous in the use of it; and therefore, O Job, thou hast forgotten thyself and the sovereignty of God, in making so many complaints about thy condition.

By the *way of God*, we may understand both what he does, and his reasons for what he does. God is the fountain of power. As none has authority, so none has ability to counsel him. Though the Lord has power to do what he will, yet he hath no will to do what is wrong. How few are there in power who do not oppress, grieve, and afflict those that have to do with them, either from ignorance or design, though their way is enjoined by God! We should not only sit down quietly under the darkest dispensations of providence, but exalt the righteousness of God, believing they are all mingled with mercy.

*Ver. 24. Remember that thou magnify his work which men behold.* 25. *Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off.* These verses contain the third exhortation to Job, to excite him to give glory to God in his dealings with him.

*Remember, &c.* As if he had said, Be thou duly and daily affected with it. The matter is weighty, consider it fully. To think and speak highly of God is to magnify his work. But to live holily and fruitfully is the best way to magnify God. We are very apt to forget our duty in giving God the glory of his works. But the works of



God will praise him whether men do so or not. We magnify the work of God when we acknowledge him alone, both in afflicting and exalting us, and when we pry into every circumstance of his works and ways towards us, so as to excite us to live circumspectly. Again, we magnify the afflicting works of God when we submit to them as just, much more when we embrace them as good, and so study to answer the end of God in all his dispensations. The chief end of all that God doth is the advancement of his glory. Many are lifted up with pride when God works for or by them, not minding that their chief object should be the glorifying of God, in and by what he has wrought, either by themselves or others. To excite men to trust in God, and that they be made better, is another end God has in view, in all the dispensations of his providence. Those who only speak of the works of God, as well as those who conceal them, and those who are impatient under them, are far from magnifying the work of God. We cannot expect that God will continue to work for them who refuse or neglect to pay him a tribute of praise and glory for what he has done. Christ "did not many mighty works there," &c.

*Ver. 26. Behold God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out.* Surely the great, incomprehensible, and eternal Jehovah, is most worthy of our attention and admiration. The lines of all excellency, glory, and perfection, centre in God. Let us look to him for a supply of all our needs, and submit to and acquiesce in all he does. For none knows God so fully and perfectly as to be qualified to judge his ways, so we must not presumptuously inquire the reason of what he does.

*Neither can the number of his years be searched out.* This is spoken after the manner of men; for God is far above any measure of life. The eternity of God which is here described diffuseth itself through all his attributes. He is eternal, not only without end or beginning, but without succession or mutation. He that inhabiteth eternity is the Lord of time. Psal. xxxi. 15. "My times are in thy hands." That is, my times, in all the changes of them, whether troublesome or comfortable, joyful or sorrowful, are ordered at thy will, by thy power and wisdom. Eternity triumphs over all difficulties. When our Lord said to John "Fear not," he added, "I am the first and the last," intimating, that all the wonderful things he had seen in visions would be completely fulfilled in due time. If, while we are enjoying this life, and are, as it were, dying every moment, we would often consider that the life to come will never die, it might tend to profit us.

*Ver. 27. For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof.* 28. *Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly.* Or he maketh the water fall in small drops, and though it be a common, yet it is a wonderful work of God. The great distance between God and man is pointed out by this similitude, Isa. xl. 15. The plentiful effusion of the Spirit is said to drop down new wine, Joel iii. 18. As God often stops or renders ineffectual the spiritual rain, so he also prohibits the natural rain. In case of disobedience to his divine law, the Lord threatens to make the heavens brass, and the earth iron. God sends or withholds rain, either for the benefit, the punishment, or instruction of man, at his pleasure; yet he seldom, if ever, except when provoked by the sin of man, withholds good things from them. Let us take heed of provoking the Lord, who can quickly stay our comforts. As the Lord hath not left himself without a witness (of his goodness) in sending rain and fruitful seasons, so he can quickly leave a witness of his just displeasure, by withholding rain, and of course a fruitful season.

*The clouds drop and distil.* This implies the manner in which the rain descends. *Upon man.* As the rain distils chiefly for the glory of God, so also for the relief and comfort of man. *Abundantly.* That is, in great plenty. When God bestows the natural rain in a seasonable manner, it should excite us to gratitude, and to every good work. But how much more should we abound in faith, hope, love, self-denial, and zeal for God, &c. while he continues to make the doctrine of his Holy Word drop as the rain, and promises the Holy Spirit to distil as the dew, and thereby mollifies, cleanses, and fructifies every one that receives it!

Elihu proceeds to speak of the clouds, in which the rain is carried through the world, for those services for which God has appointed it.

*Ver. 29. Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle?* However much men may know, or fancy they know, about the nature and uses of the clouds, yet they cannot understand the spreading of the clouds. There are

manifold natural uses of the clouds, as well as many spiritual things represented by them, as Isa. xlv. 22. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud," &c. Prov. xxv. 14. "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds without rain." Such, especially, are all false teachers, who either pretend to a gift which they have not, or that their gift is of Christ, which it is not; these are like clouds without rain, or, as Jude calls them, "Clouds without water, carried about of winds," that is, which ever way the wind of outward respects and advantages blows, they are carried.

Since natural things exceed the reach of man's understanding, how much more does spiritual things? and if natural things exceed our understanding, how much more does God himself who made them? Who can understand the infinity of God? &c. That is, the thing that Elihu chiefly aims at in all this discourse. While he questions Job and all men about the natural works of God, he would thereby convince them of their inability to comprehend the equity, &c. of his proceedings, in the darker ways of his providence. The clouds are God's tabernacle, Psal. xviii. 11. "He maketh the clouds his pavilion." The clouds are fit for God's use, either for terrifying and punishing the wicked, or for keeping them that fear him. Storms, of all things, seem least under command and order, yet they go not an hairs-breadth besides or beyond the commission which God giveth them, Psal. xiv. 8. "Stormy winds and tempests fulfil his will." Therefore, when we hear the noise of the wind and thunder, let us remember that it is his noise of the tabernacle.

*Ver. 30. Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it, and covereth the bottom of the sea.* The light of the sun is eminently called God's light, which he spreads upon the cloud spoken of in the former verse. When we have rain and storms, God can cause the light and heat of the sun to scatter the clouds; and by and by he makes it very dark by the gathering of thick clouds, even as dark as the bottom of the sea, whither the light cannot come; or dark to the bottom of the sea. Thus, it is matter of wonder to see such great and sudden changes in the air. God himself is light, and the Father of lights, not only of spiritual light, by which the things of God are discovered to us, but also of natural light. It is not in the power of man to make a foul or fair day,—calms and tempests are alike from God.

*Ver. 31. For by them judgeth he the people; he giveth meat in abundance.* That is, by the rain, winds, &c. *He judgeth the people.* To judge, is to rule or govern. To determine, or give sentence in a special case. To judge, is to punish and afflict; as in this case the Lord, from his tabernacle, or throne in the clouds, sends forth edicts, and signs his warrants for the punishment both of nations and persons, windy storms, rain, and thunder, going forth as executioners of his orders. God can make a scourge of any of the creatures. When God afflicts a people by the creatures, he judges them by the creatures. Let us take heed not to provoke God to turn these things which were given for our good, to our hurt and punishment. God is a liberal housekeeper, *he gives meat in abundance.* Our daily bread is the gift of God. It is the Lord who sends either plenty or scarcity, whether for soul or body, and he uses natural means to produce either. The Lord can make the same creature either beneficial or hurtful to us, the heavens nourish the earth, or else the earth would not afford any thing for our nourishment.

*Ver. 32. With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh between.* When the Lord pardons sin, he is said to cover it, because he will not suffer it to appear against the sinner; so clouds cover or intercept the light.

*Cometh between,* is from a root that signifies to meet with force, and by a metaphor, to intercede, an intercessor cometh between two parties, and intimates with what earnestness and fervency of spirit we ought to meet God in prayer, either for ourselves, or when we appear before him in behalf of others, whether persons, nations, or churches. There is no light but what a cloud may intercept it, even the light of the favour of God, Amos viii. 9. "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." It is not natural light, nor even prosperity in outward things, which the Lord doth often eclipse, when men have no more fear of it than they have that the sun will go down at noon day, but he intends to shew that a grievous judgment was hastening upon them; as to their spiritual enjoyments, that the light of divine knowledge, what to believe, and what to practise, was declining, and ready to go down upon them, though they thought it was but noon with them, and the day very clear. Sin is a cloud of our making, and God in judgment makes that as a cloud come in between us and our mercies, Jer. v. 25. "Your sins have with-

holden good things from you." This one cloud of our sins brings all the clouds of trouble between us and our mercies, and the Lord has always some cloud of trouble at hand to cover the light, that it shine not to us while we trouble and grieve him with the filthy clouds of our sins.

*Ver. 33. The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.* God by natural signs gives warning of a change in natural things. Christ reproves the Jews, that they could discern the face of the sky, and yet they did not discern the signs of the times; as if he had said, if ye were wise, ye might see the signs of ruin approaching to you and your city: and when a people grow weary of, and become more wicked under warnings, it is a sure sign that judgments are near to be poured out. It is said, 1 Chron. xii. 32. of the men of Issachar, "That they had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do." It is a great mercy to know what the times require, and what special duties we are called to by the dispensations of God, and if we are so stupid as not to know, and so obstinate as to refuse to comply with the calls of providence, we shall be found and judged more brutish than the beasts and fowls, who, before a storm seek shelter, and give warning concerning the vapour. They give notice when rain and storms are coming.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

*Ver. 1. At this also my heart trembled, and it moved out of its place.* What was it that thus affected Elihu? Some think that it was the appearance of the whirlwind, chap. xxxviii. 1. others, that it was at what he was about to speak of the dreadful power, &c. of God: and indeed, a due apprehension of the majesty of God may make the stoutest heart to tremble. The word to *tremble*, notes a disturbance both of soul and body, and to shew the exceeding greatness of this fear, it is added, *was moved out of its place*. The heart of man may well move out of its place, when he considers how dreadful God is in his place, and what wonders he doth and can do. To slight, or lightly pass by any thing that God does or speaks, shews our ignorance and folly. but the wise will lay both his word and works to heart, their hearts will tremble. Kings and judges of the earth are to serve the Lord with fear, and to rejoice with trembling, and all Christians are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Now, if we are to tremble in our daily service, how much more under dreadful providences! It is not courage, but stupidity, not to fear and tremble when we hear of the judgments of God. They who tremble graciously shall never tremble despairingly. To fear a flood is the best way to escape it, Heb. ii. 7. Habakkuk saw a day of trouble coming, that made him tremble in himself, but it is added, "that I might rest in the day of trouble." The more we tremble in ourselves, the more rest we have in God. Ezekiel was commanded to tremble as a sign of that penal fear and trembling which he was to send upon the people; and such was that awful threatening, Ezek. xxvi. 16. "Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and shall clothe themselves with tremblings."

Elihu having shewed how he was affected with a gracious fear, &c. labours to affect others also with the same fear.

*Ver. 2. Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth.* Elihu is here stirring up not so much the outward sense as the affections, with all the powers of the inner man, to attend and take notice of that which was then to be heard. Some read, Hear his voice with trembling.

*And the sound that goeth out of his mouth.* The word imports secret, silent meditation, as also an audible sound by words spoken. As the minds of honest men are known by the words that go out of their mouth, so God maketh himself known to the world by the noise and sound of thunder as well as by other methods; it is repeatedly called the voice of the Lord in the xxixth Psalm. Thunder may be called the voice of God, because it is a great and mighty voice, and because God puts it forth by his power as a man doth his voice.

From which learn to fear the God of thunder, and not think lightly of it as if it came by chance, or merely from natural causes; but let us not fear it as if it were a god. The Lord often thunders by the voice of his word. What are his terrible threatenings but like loud thunder, yet how few hear with attention and self-application?

There is an operation of the word which may be said to be proper and peculiar to

the elect, and that is, when the word heard is as the voice of harpers harping with their harps, Rev. xiv. 2. and then the word doth not only affect us with admiration, or strike the heart with astonishment and terror, like the sound of many waters and the voice of thunder, but also filleth it with sweet peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, when the word is like melodious music ravishing us with divine delights, and raising us up to a heavenly life while we are sojourning on this earth.

*Ver. 3. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth.* Elihu having shewed how much he was affected with what God was then doing, or with what himself was about to say, and having called upon others for due attention, proceeds to speak of thunder and lightning as the works of God.

*He directeth*, that is, God doth, as it were, by a straight line, level or take his aim when he dischargeth his thunder in the cloud.

Observe, That all the motions of creatures, even the most violent and irregular, are directed by and under the dominion of God. The man who drew a bow in his simplicity took no aim at Ahab, yet God directed it not only to the right man, but to the right place, the joint of his armour. The providence of God reacheth to all places, and he disposeth of all things not only for good, but for the best. And he directs the thunder-bolts of his word to accomplish what he pleases and has purposed, and it is matter of comfort to the people of God, that he is always, and in every place, ready to help them.

*Ver. 4. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard.* Some read, After him a voice roareth; that is, at his command. That is, as if Elihu had said, that neither lightning nor thunder stir till they receive a command from God. As lightning gives warning of thunder, so God warns his people in his word, and by his providence, of the approach of judgments; "Behold I have told you before;" but judgments always surprise the wicked though they have had frequent calls to prepare for them.

*Roareth*, signifies the roaring of a lion, or of the sea—a dreadful noise. The word for thunder signifies any great noise or cry, Psal. xcvi. 11. God works like himself; he makes his excellency and majesty to appear in the very works of nature as well as in providence and grace. When once God speaks the word there is no stopping his work; and as none can hinder by power, so none shall prevent him even by prayer. Let us therefore beware of provoking the Lord to give out the word of command to thunder and lightning, or any other of his judgments, as the executioners of his vengeance.

*Ver. 5. God thundereth marvellously with his voice: great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.* Thunder is often ascribed to God, to teach us that what we call works of nature are God's works. Now as there are many marvels wrought by natural thunder and lightning, so also by that which is spiritual. Psal. xxix. begins with an exhortation to give unto the Lord glory and strength,—“Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;” and after describing the effects of natural thunder, he applies it to the word of God, ver. 9. “And in his temple doth every one speak of his glory;” that is, by his word he convinces of sin, and of his wrath due to us for our sins, as with an horrible tempest; and then in the revelations of his grace he refreshes us with the pleasant sunshine of his favour by Jesus Christ. And, therefore, in respect both of the natural and spiritual thunder considered in the circumstances and consequences of it, Elihu might well conclude, saying, “Great things doth he which we cannot comprehend.”

God is able to do all things, and is always doing great things; let this comfort and support the people of God at all times. As it is our sin that we do not take more pains to know the great things that God does; so he does things so great that when we have done our best we cannot know them fully. How little doth man know of, or see into the reasons of the great things that God does. It is said, “The love of God passeth knowledge.” Though we labour to know it, (and it is our sin that we labour not more to know it,) yet we cannot, it surpasseth all our knowledge. And as that love of God which is the first mover of all the good and great things that he does for his people passeth our knowledge, so even the effects of that love are so great that they also pass knowledge; and where knowledge ends admiration should begin. Let us take heed of censuring the works of God; no man should censure that which he does not, and cannot know, nor fully understand.

Elihu proceeds to give other instances of divine power.

*Ver. 6. For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain,*

*and to the great rain of his strength.* This text represents God speaking to the snow and rain, as if they had an ear to hear and an understanding to mind a command from him. What more common than snow and rain, and yet they have wonders in them. In whatever degree or quantity they fall, it is by the special appointment of God. Neither the one nor the other will stir at the command of man, but at the command of God they haste away. How will this reprove and condemn thousands of the children of men to whom the Lord speaks again and again, yet they do not stir! The word represents all sorts of creatures below man, as well as angels above them, readily obeying the command of God to teach man his duty. God sends the refreshing shower to enrich the earth, and also the overflowing rain to destroy the fruits of the earth in his anger. These hosts go and stay at the pleasure of their commander till they perform his purpose. A shower may signify any kind or degree of judgment.

*Ver. 7. He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work.* Elihu now speaks of the effects of snow and rain.

The *hand* is the chief instrument of working, and therefore to say God shuts up or seals the hand is an elegant metaphor, signifying that God puts a stop or stay to, or that he takes men off from their work. As none can stop or seal the hand of God; so whose hand cannot God seal? How easily did he seal up the builders of Babel! God by extraordinary snows, or excessive and tempestuous rains, as well as by sickness, seals up the hand of every man and stops their work, that they may have time to know his work and consider their own ways. To neglect to study the works of God is a great sin; and it is true wisdom to answer the designs of God in all his providences whether of mercy or judgment. Let us remember that when God takes us off from our ordinary employments by whatever means, his gracious purpose is that we may know his work.

*Ver. 8. Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places.* Here we have another effect of the storm, the beasts driven to their dens.

*Dens* signifies a place of ambush, or lying in wait, Psal. x. 9. The wild beasts often go to their dens to watch for prey; here they are driven to them for shelter, and will not peep out till the storm is over. Those creatures that live only a life of sense act according to reason; they are sensible of what God does, though they know not why he does it. And is not this a great reproof to men who have a knowledge beyond brutes, yet use it no better, no, not so well as brutes, 2 Pet. ii. 12. "How can they avoid being taken and destroyed by the judgments of God, who do not regard the operation of his hand! As God has taught the beasts to run into their dens in a storm, so he warns and exhorts his people to come into chambers of safety, Isa. xxvi. 20. "The name of the Lord (that is, his power, faithfulness, and truth) is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and are safe." It is not any worldly refuge, but the shadow of the Lord's wings that can hide us in an evil day from the evil of the day. Those who by faith cleave to Christ need not fear any storm that can come upon them, Psal. lvii. 1. "Under the shadow of thy wings shall be my refuge," &c.

*Ver. 9. Out of the south cometh the whirlwind, and cold out of the north.* The word for south signifies a *chamber*, inner room, a secret place. Agur, describing the excellency of God, Prov. xxx. 4, saith, "He gathereth the wind in his fist," intimating that the winds are at the disposal of God, even as a man carrieth a thing in his hand, keepeth it there, or letting it out at pleasure.

God brings the wind out of his treasures either for mercy or judgment. The spiritual wind, the breathings of the Spirit draw forth fruit from the heart, and in the life of believers.

*And cold out of the north.* God brings cold out of his northern storehouse, and manifests his power and sovereignty in the changes of the wind, and in the various purposes which he accomplishes thereby.

Seasonable cold makes trees and plants more fruitful in their seasons; the cold of afflictions, (through the blessing of God), makes the souls of his people fruitful in every good word and work. We would have it always spring and sunshine, peace and safety, but these are reserved for heaven. While we are on earth, the cold of adversity is as advantageous to our spiritual condition as the coldness and changes of the air are to the fruits of the earth.

*Ver. 10. By the breath of God frost is given, and the breadth of the waters is straitened.* The Lord is said to breathe or blow, when he commands the wind to blow, and when he orders cold winds to come out of his treasure then frost appears. The

word which we render *frost* is often rendered *ice*, and comes from a root which signifies *to make bald*, as frost makes the surface of the earth smooth like a bald head. There is a continual dependence of all creatures in their motions and operations as well as in their beings, upon the will of God; it is by his word that frost is given. Living and natural creatures move no more without God than artificial and lifeless instruments, such as the axe or saw, can move themselves without the hand or help of man.

Some translate the latter part of the verse, "the waters are dissolved into their breadth," as if Elihu had said, the ice or frost being dissolved, the waters return to their former latitude.

Thawing as well as freezing is from God. The power of God is celebrated, Psal. cxlvii. 18, "He sendeth out his word and melteth them," that is, those waters which were bound up by the cold flow away by the heat.

*Ver. 11. Also, by watering, he wearieth the thick cloud, he scattereth his bright cloud.* Elihu speaks here of a thick cloud, yet upon the Lord's command to give showers, the cloud is quite spent and wearied; he empties the thick cloud upon the earth to render it fruitful. If but one of the clouds be wearied in watering the earth, we soon after discern the face of the earth refreshed and renewed by it. And shall God weary the dispensers of the word by watering men on earth, and yet they remain barren and unfruitful like the ground which drinketh in the rain yet beareth nothing but briars and thorns whose end is to be burned.

The second clause speaks of a *bright cloud*, which I think is here added to show that clouds of all sorts serve the purposes of God; the fullest cloud will soon drop away if the Lord forbear supplies. But why is it said that he scattereth his bright cloud? Possibly because he had no use of his bright cloud when he would water the earth; and, indeed, clouds which are only bright, but have no water, are of little use. Some have much light of knowledge but no water of instruction to drop upon others; such clouds God disperses and scatters. It is not an outward fair appearance that can bring us into acceptance with God.

Elihu proceeds to show the special uses which the Lord makes of all those motions in the air, and impressions upon the earth, with the inhabitants of it, whether in a way of judgment or mercy.

*Ver. 12. And it is turned round about by his counsel, that they may do whatsoever he commands them upon the face of the world in the earth.* The divine conduct of the clouds is very admirable. Elihu compares the clouds, to good servants who are ready to do what God requires them at the very time and place which he appoints. Every creature hath a service, hath somewhat to do, and therefore it will be ill with those whom God finds idle or doing nothing to any good purpose.

Since God commands the clouds, ascribe to him the praise of all the good you receive by their means; and when you receive outward damage from the clouds, winds, &c. be humbled under the hand of God, and adore his majesty and sovereignty. God will magnify the word of his command as well as his promise, above all his name, that is, his word is a glass wherein his holiness, faithfulness, justice, &c. are to be seen, and shall be seen in the exact accomplishment of all that he hath spoken, in due time; therefore, let us fear, adore, and obey the Almighty God.

*Ver. 13. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.* Heb. *He causeth the cloud to find*, that is, every place and every person concerning whom it hath received commission from God.

Here are three ends or purposes of God in sending forth the clouds; the first and the last concern man more especially; the second concerns all other creatures both plants and beasts. He causeth the cloud, with whatsoever is its burden, hail or rain, &c. to disburden itself for correction. Heb. for a rod, a rod or staff to strike with, Isa. x. 5. It signifies a rod to govern, hence it denotes the sceptre of a prince. Moses' rod intimated that he came not as a private person, but with a commission to treat with Pharaoh, and to scourge him with ten plagues. God can make a rod of any thing. How often are undutiful children made a rod to their parents, and they are usually so when parents have not duly corrected them! Here we have a rod made of a cloud. O what severe corrections hath God laid on the world by unreasonable and excessive rains, by which the fruits of the earth, for the sins of man, have been destroyed, and thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven by the clouds and floods lifting up their voice to tell the sons of men of their transgressions, and to reprove them for their sins.

*Or for his land.* All the world is God's land, so that wherever the rain falls it is upon his land, even on the wilderness where there is no man. God has an universal respect to and care over all his creatures.

*For mercy.* God dispenses mercy by the clouds. Mercy signifies a bountiful goodwill toward others, without respect to merit or any antecedent obligation.

The clouds come sometimes for correction, at other times for mercy, that by both we may be led to repentance. Even the rain from the clouds, and the fruits of the earth, are not given us because God owes us any thing, but as free and unmerited favours. God pays men wages in nothing but in punishment; when he sends clouds for correction we have what our sins have procured, and when he gives the common comforts of this life it is an undeserved mercy.

Thus you see the threefold message that God sends the clouds upon, either to correct men for their sin, or that the creatures in general may have subsistence, or for special favour to his peculiar people, and for those, above the rest of good men, who are merciful and ready to do good. The following verses contain an earnest exhortation to Job to consider and compare that great power and wisdom of God, which appear in these fore-mentioned works, with his own weakness and insufficiency; and his providential works are unsearchable, as well as those which are natural, and therefore Job should humble himself and not venture to contend with God any farther, and quietly submit to, and acquiesce in the sovereign will and pleasure of God as to his present condition. This seems to be the scope and design of Elihu all along, in reading Job this philosophical lecture, or in putting questions to him about the things of nature, and the government of God in them.

*Ver. 14. Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still and consider the wonderful works of God.* Patience is necessary in a good hearer. It is easy to hear things that please us, but that which crosses our spirits or our ways, tries our patience. The length of a sermon spoils the patience of some, but the strength and searching power of it spoils the patience of more. A sincere heart is willing to hear all, and is most pleased to hear that word which gives deepest wounds to any corruption of heart or transgression of life. Such words, though bitter, yet the more they make us smart, they are the more medicinal and healing. Elihu desires Job not only to hearken, but to stand still and consider. To *stand still*, implies both patience and reverence. We ought to have a quiet, sedate, composed spirit, both when we hear the word and providential works of God. The common and ordinary works of God are full of wonders, and worthy of the most serious consideration, as they shew forth the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, as they are calculated to bring man into a conformity to the will of God in holiness, and to render him grateful, Psal. cvii. 43. "Whoso is wise and will observe those things," &c. Yet alas, how few consider the works of God, either to the glory of God or their own profit!

*Ver. 15. Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine?* The word rendered *dispose*, signifies to order, direct, appoint, and determine. God did not only make the world and all the furniture of it, but he disposeth the motions of every creature in it. When Elihu says, "Dost thou know?" it was to humble Job, while he made him see and know his own ignorance; and did the most knowing man in the world know his own ignorance, it would make him very humble.

We should be thankful for the little we do know, and by duly improving it, we shall attain more knowledge, and thereby be ashamed that we know so little. Some say the light of his cloud is the rainbow, which indeed is the most beautiful and comfortable, as well as the most strange and wonderful of all the impressions visible in the air; it is a token of the good will of God to man, as it was given to confirm the truth of the promise, that the earth should no more be overwhelmed by a deluge, and though the whole creation has the benefit of it, yet the faithful only understand the mystery of it, and have their faith exercised upon it and strengthened by it. In Rev. x. 1. it is said, "I saw another mighty angel," that was Jesus Christ, "clothed with a cloud," that is, with dark dispensations, but for the comfort of his church, there was a rainbow on his head, there was light shining in this cloud, to bear up the spirits of his people, that the floods of persecution raised by the serpent and his seed, against the woman and her seed, should not prove their ruin, though it not only be for their trial, but for correction.

*Ver. 16. Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds, the wonderful works of him*

*that is perfect in knowledge?* The clouds, and every thing else are upheld and kept in an even balance by the wisdom and power of God. We need not name God when we speak of him that is perfect in knowledge. He knows all things, past, present, and future. He knows all things at once, and as they really are, he knows all things as perfectly as if he had but one thing to know. To him that is infinite, one and all, is all one; and from hence learn, 1st, That to know is to be like God, and the more perfect our knowledge is, the more like we are to God. 2d, If God be perfect in knowledge, no evil-doer hath any ground of hope that he can escape; nor shall the most secret good deed of any of his people be overlooked. 3d, Since God is perfect in knowledge, then he fully knows the need of all his people all the world over. Believers in Christ may rest assured, that he who has so perfect a knowledge along with perfect compassion, will in due time give them a perfect deliverance out of all their straits, and a perfect supply of all their wants. Dost thou know,

*Ver. 17. How thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south wind?* The word which we translate *garments*, comes from a root rendered deceit, falsehood, and a lie. Our garments are both a covering of our nakedness, and a testimony of our perfidiousness and falseness with the great God. It may be profitable for us to remember, that the Spirit of God hath expressed our garments by such a word as leads us to the original of them, our dealing falsely with God, and sinning against him. Moses saw that the people were naked when they had made the golden calf, not that they had no clothes on them, but by this new sin they had lost their former integrity, which was a better ornament than clothing, and also the protection of God, which is a better guard of defence than armour. How our garments warm us is a secret, and that they do warm us, as well as that our meat and drink nourish us, is by the blessing of God. As the north wind usually blows cold, so the south wind usually brings heat, Luke xii. 55. God is said to quiet the earth with the south wind, when we on the earth enjoy quiet, and are free from tempestuous weather.

As the gift of natural quietness is a mercy, so civil quietness is a great mercy; and quietness of heart and tranquillity of mind, especially in the midst of tribulations, is the greatest mercy of all, John xvi. 33. "These things have I spoken to you," &c. And as Elihu thus shews Job his incompetency to deal and debate with God on account of his ignorance about the warmth of his garments that covered him; so in the next verse, he convinceth him of weakness by calling him to consider the mighty power and self-sufficiency of God, who spread out the mighty garment of the sky.

*Ver. 18. Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass?* The word to *spread*, bears an allusion to metals, which are beaten out by a hammer into plates; the noun signifies the firmament, Gen. i. because it is an expansion, or thing spread out. The word for sky, is sometimes put for the air, sometimes for the clouds, as also for the heavens above the clouds and air. The Almighty by one act gave the sky both its being and form without any counsellor or coadjutor. And surely if the Lord had no assistant in the great work of creation, he needs none in the greatest works of providence. This is as if he had said, When the sky seems wrapt up in darkness, and wrapt up in thunder and storms, hast thou then with him cleared the air, making all strong or whole again. The sky is clear, strong, and durable in its nature, beyond any earthly thing, and in the heavens, as in a looking-glass, we may see that God is pure and holy, and in them we behold the power, wisdom, unchangeableness, and goodness of God, and in the same glass we see our own weakness and impurity, and are also instructed what we should be.

The church on earth is called heaven, Heb. xii. 26; Rev. xii. 7. She is a company of saints and faithful ones,—her birth is from heaven,—her trade is there—it is her inheritance, for her Head is in heaven,—here she is a stranger, and she will never be truly at home, till she come thither. Let us dress ourselves every day by this glass, and prepare for heavenly joys. Let it not satisfy us to look upon the heavens, that we may see and be taken with their own beauty and excellency, but let us see God and ourselves in this looking-glass of the heavens. We have never looked right in this glass till we are made better and more beautiful by looking in it.

*Ver. 19. Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.* Elihu seems here to prosecute what he formerly said:—"I desire to justify thee." I would gladly find out a way how to acquit of all those rash speeches and impatient complaints that proceed from thee; but as yet, for my part, I see not how to do it, and therefore if thou dost, pray shew me. What shall we say to God in



thy defence? we would do our utmost, if we knew how. Some desire others to teach them from a conviction of their own ignorance. But Elihu moves Job to teach them in such a manner as to tell them that he was not able to do it. The darkness here seems to be that remaining ignorance and imperfection of knowledge, which remains even in the most knowing.

Elihu seems to own that they were sensible of so much dimness and darkness, that we cannot order our speech before God, nor direct ourselves what to say for thee, as thou hast handled the matter. If ignorance be darkness, and if that is an uncertain, uncomfortable, and dangerous condition, then we should use all proper means for gaining a true knowledge in the things of God. Thou pretendest to have knowledge, but thy darkness is more than thy light, and thy ignorance more than thy knowledge; therefore I counsel thee to buy of me eye salve that thou mayest see, Rev. iii. 18.

Elihu saw himself encompass with much darkness, and who does not find much darkness abiding in him? We "see only through a glass darkly." Whatever our knowledge is, it is not half so much as that we know not. This should humble us.

Ignorance is a great hindrance in our approaches to God. They who come to God need a knowledge of his nature and perfections, of the excellency and sufficiency of Christ, and of the riches and freedom of grace through him, and a knowledge of their own condition, and of God's dispensations to them, and none can come but in the exercise of faith, Heb. xi. 6. and if we are destitute of the knowledge of these things, we can have no true faith in them, or rather in God concerning them.

The things of God are so mysterious, that we know not how to speak of them as we ought. As these things are altogether secret to us which God has not revealed to us, so some things are in a great degree secret to us, though God has revealed them, and if so, let us believe, even when we cannot understand. Faith is the evidence of those things that cannot be seen at all by the eye of sense, so it is the evidence of some things to us which are very little seen by the eye of the understanding. When the mother of our Lord was told that she should have a son, she could not understand it, yet she believed it. There is much darkness, even with those who have most knowledge; and therefore let us pray always for an increase of faith and light, and beware of censuring any of the works of God.

*Ver. 20. Shall it be told him that I speak? If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.* There is another reading. Is there any need that God should be told what I speak? No. For as he who is omnipotent needs no helper, so the Omniscent needs no informer. Shall it be told him that I intended to be thy advocate? Surely not. For neither I, nor any man of wisdom or discretion, will undertake to speak in this matter after thy manner. No man should ever venture on doing or saying any thing that may provoke God, or be displeasing to him.

*Swallowed up.* The word implies, that a man so speaking shall be ruined and brought to nought. That is, both he and his understanding shall be utterly confounded. This phrase is often used in scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 54. "Death is swallowed up in victory." That is, in and by the victory of Jesus Christ, he by dying not only got the better of it, but totally ruined it as to any power of hurting us. He quite overcame death. Mortality shall be swallowed up of life. Our mortality now by degrees swallows up our lives, but then life will put an end to our mortality. That is, our mortality shall be quite taken away by that life which Christ has purchased for his people by his own death. If a man speak to God without a mediator, he shall be swallowed up as a drop of water in the ocean. There is no standing for the creature before God in such a nearness of access but by faith in a Mediator.

Elihu saith, thus shall that man be swallowed up who over-boldly speaks to God about the great mysteries of providence; and therefore, O Job, thou hast not done well to speak so often of pleading with God; and surely if any after thy example speak complainingly of what God has done, or himself hath suffered at the hand of God, he is sure to be undone. *He shall be swallowed up.* God dwells in the light which no man can approach unto. Man is not able to bear the glory and majesty of God. Christ said, John xvi. 12. "that he had many things to say unto them, which they were not able to bear." If the disciples could not bear the deeper mysteries of the gospel spoken to them by Christ, clothed with frail flesh, how much less can any man bear God speaking to him in his majesty? If a man speaks to God questioning his dealings with him, or as calling God to account, or about any matter too high for him, or in a self-righteous manner, he shall be swallowed up. But the meanest be-

liever may come and speak boldly in the name of Jesus Christ, and thus he will be swallowed up with the love and favour of God. When once death is swallowed up in victory, he shall be able to bear that weight of glory which consists in knowing God as we are known. Therefore whatever the Lord do with us or ours in this world, let us be silent, humbly adoring his sovereignty and wisdom, and never question either his righteousness or goodness.

*Ver. 21. But now men see not the bright light which is in the cloud; but the wind passeth and cleanseth them.* God can make that which is most visible in itself invisible to us. The sun always shines, how dark soever the weather be. When clouds come between, the sun is darkened in the clear day. Sins are clouds which usually prevent the people of God from seeing that bright light which is always in his face to them, and sometimes he hides himself from them for the trial of their faith and patience. But at all times, and in every case, he is seated on a throne of grace, ready to bestow favours on his people who come to him, not with a presuming, but a believing boldness. In their darkest days his favour is towards them still, though it does not appear; and when the end and purpose of God is answered, these clouds will be dispersed, as in the next clause of the verse.

*But the wind passeth and cleanseth them.* It is said "the wind bloweth where it listeth," John iii. 8. But it is to be understood only in reference to man; for man can neither direct nor controul it. But as to God, the wind blows only when and where he pleaseth. By the wind the life of man is maintained; for though no man can live by air alone, yet he cannot live without air. The Hebrew word is indifferently translated soul, life, wind; and so the life of man is not only called wind because it speedily passes away, but because the continuance of it in the body is by taking in and sending out wind. The wind at one time gathers the clouds, and at another scatters or cleanseth them. In Jer. iv. 11. the Lord threatens to send "a high wind, but not to fan or cleanse," but rather to wither and blast the fruits of the earth. But the text in hand speaks comfort to the people of God. The wind blows away the clouds, which obstructs the passage of the light to them. Athanasius said, during the reign of Julian, it is but a little cloud, a wind will shortly cleanse it away. His meaning was, now we are compassed about with fear and trouble, but peace and prosperity will soon return. Though light is sown for the righteous, it does not always spring up for their present comfort. But what a mercy is it that God can quickly dispel every cloud by that secret yet effectual wind by which regeneration is wrought, and consolation is administered. No sin, however great—no lust, however strong—no ignorance nor unbelief, however deep rooted—can withstand the operation of the Holy Spirit.

*Ver. 22. Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty.* The word translated *Fair weather*, signifies gold, and fair weather in its season, is worth much gold. "Some take it for any precious thing, and the word *north* for any evil thing; that is, for any affliction, trouble, or sorrow, which we meet with in this world; and whether God tries us by prosperity or by adversity, yet if the Lord sit as the refiner, his people shall be made more precious by all the trials of their faith, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. This is the conclusion of Elihu's discourse concerning the works of God in nature, as if he had said, all these things God doth. Surely then, *in, or with God, is terrible majesty.* The word rendered *majesty*, comes from a root that signifies to confess, to celebrate. So the greatness and excellency of God ought to be commended, praised, and honoured by men and angels. However majestic, or even terrible kings may appear in their robes, buildings, feastings and attendants, what are they before Him who is terrible in his "doings towards the children of men, to the kings of the earth?" And as the Lord can appear terrible out of all places, so he is more terrible out of his holy place. That is, God sends terrible judgments upon all those who profane and abuse his holy things.

O the terribleness of God's majesty to all who do not tremble at his majesty! How sad is it for a man to have God and his own conscience terrible to him at once. When God sets their sins in order before them, then they are a terror to themselves, as Jer. xx. 3. "I will make thee a terror to thyself," thy own conscience shall be terrible to thee. When God is doing terrible things in the world, how miserable is their case to whom God also is a terror in that day, Isa. x. 3. "What will ye do in the day of visitation? to whom will ye flee for help?" As if he had said, What can be a comfort to you when God is a terror to you? And Jeremiah prays, "O Lord, be not thou a ter-

ror to me in the evil day!" How terrible is God to impenitent sinners (when awakened) in the day of death. To have the king of terrors, and the living God in terrible majesty, falling upon a poor creature at once, is terrible indeed. And what will sinners do at the judgment? When the apostle says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat;" he adds, "knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." That will be a most dreadful day to sinners. Only those who fear the Lord and take hold of his name by faith in his Son, shall be able to stand before his terrible majesty without dismay.

Some translate, "with God is praise." God is to be praised not only with joy and thankfulness, but with fear, reverence, and holy awe, remembering our distance, and afraid of dishonouring and grieving him. We should have a holy fear of and love to God upon our spirits when we engage in his praise, which fear I doubt not will remain in heaven for ever. Glorified saints will have a holy awe of the majesty of God upon their spirits in all their exercises. God is not only to be feared in his wrath in the execution of his justice, but he is to be feared in his mercy, and in the expressions of his favour towards us, &c. He is at once to be praised and feared.

*Ver. 23. Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict.* This verse contains four doctrines concerning God, 1st, Incomprehensible, "We cannot find him out." 2d, Of his power, "He is almighty and excellent in power." 3d, Of his righteousness, "He excels in judgment and plenty of justice." 4th, Of his mercy and tenderness, "He will not afflict." God is infinitely above man in power and in wisdom, but he never uses it either to oppress or wrong any man. He never afflicts without a just cause, and for the best of purposes; therefore good men do, and all men should fear him.

*We cannot find him out.* In his essence,—in the excellency of his attributes,—in the depth of his counsels,—in his works of providence, by which he brings forth his counsels into action,—in the dispensations of his free grace in the gospel; they are called "the unsearchable riches of his grace," Eph. iii. 8.

*He is excellent in power,* or of excelling power. The working power of God is so excellent that it exceeds the apprehension of man. This is matter of comfort to all the fearers of God, and of terror to all who oppose him.

*In judgment.* Though the Lord excel in power, yet he judges righteously. And therefore, O Job, be assured God hath done thee no wrong, nor ever will. "The Lord is a God of judgment;" that is, the Lord knows exactly not only what ought to be done, but how and when to do it, and "Blessed are they that wait for him." Jer. x. 24. "O Lord correct me, but with judgment;" that is, with due moderation. "The Lord (Isa. iv. 4.) will purge away the iniquity," &c. with "a spirit of judgment," &c. that is, with a reforming and a refining spirit. And Matth. xii. 20. "He will send forth judgment unto victory;" that is, he will do it thoroughly, he will overcome all the difficulties, and remove all the obstacles, which hinder the perfect reformation of things as well as of persons. Judgment also signifies those evils which God brings on impenitent sinners, and even upon his own people when they sin against him, 1 Pet. iv. 17. God is executing judgments upon wicked men, while he seems to spare them from judgment,—when he gives them up to vile affections—to strong delusions, &c.

*And in plenty of justice.* Justice in itself is to give every one his due; this God doth, for as he rewards the good, so he punishes the evil. He knows not only the matter of law, but the matter of fact, with the end and design of every man in all that he does, therefore he cannot err in his sentences, and so he has sufficient power to execute them; there are no sons of Zeruiah too hard for him. The next words are

*He will not afflict;* that is, willingly, and never without a just cause, and neither more nor longer than is necessary, and no more than we can bear, 1 Cor. x. 13. He will either support under, or give deliverance. Who can withstand the power of the great God? If he should mark iniquity, woe to the most innocent man alive. "But there is forgiveness with thee;" it is a continued act, and he forgives freely and abundantly; and what a mercy is it that it is a righteous thing for God, through the atonement of Christ, to forgive and accept of the greatest transgressors.

*Ver. 24. Men do therefore fear him; he respecteth not any that are wise in heart.* 1st, Men do fear him because of his great power; 2d, Because of his tenderness in the exercise of that great power, which Job did scarce acknowledge, as appeared by his murmurs and complaints about the dealings of God. To fear God aright is neither to murmur at nor despise any of his doings, and neither curiously to pry into nor ques-

tion him about what he does. Thus to fear God as faithful in all his works ; and to fear offending him in any of our works is the sum of godliness. Not to fear God, who gives us prosperity, discovers an ungrateful heart ; but not to fear God when he corrects us, shews still a worse frame of heart. If sparing mercy should excite us to fear God, then forgiving mercy should do it much more. Those who fear God from the due consideration either of his power or goodness find their hearts, 1st, Much enlarged in doing the work, and walking in the ways of God, Isa. lx. 5. 2d, It keeps the heart in close communion with God, Jer. xxxii. 32. True fear of God makes us cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart. 3d, It fills the heart with a high estimation of, and confidence in God in the worst of times, and even when he is pleased to lay the greatest troubles upon us. Let us consider whether we have these effects of a gracious fear working in our hearts upon the remembrance of the power and mercy of God.

*He respecteth not any that are wise in heart.* The word is, *seeth not.* God doth not see them with respect who do not see him with fear. The wise in heart whom God does not see with approbation, are such as are only wise in their own opinion, and have such high thoughts of their own wisdom that they despise men and fear not God. They that seem to themselves to be wise, are proud, and dispute the commands of God, and boldly censure his works ; all such wise men God detests and abhors. If men will not fear and honour him, he knows how to deal with them and recover his honour ; let no man therefore think that by his wisdom, policy, or subtilty, to keep himself out of the reach of God.

Taking the wise in heart for those who are truly wise, observe, That God will not forbear when he seeth cause to afflict the holiest of men.

Some say the chief design of writing this book of Job was to manifest this truth, that the most upright or godly must not expect exemption from the cross, nor complain when they are under it. No man can merit the least favour from God ; all good cometh to us through the Son of his love. As what we are or can do cannot preserve us from correction, neither by deeds of ours can we merit salvation nor procure any temporal favour.

Elihu having finished his discourse, leaves it with Job to meditate on and consider what he had said.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

*Ver. 1. Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.* No sooner had Elihu concluded his speech than the Lord began and answered Job. The Lord knows how at any time, and when it is the proper time, to relieve his servants. As he will not contend for ever, so he will not suffer others to contend too long, lest the spirit should fail before him and the souls which he hath made. This is a comfortable truth to the church in general, and to every believer.

The Lord may be said to answer Job as to his wish, as he had oftener than once requested that God would take his cause in hand, or that he would hear it. His friends also desired it, chap. xi. 5. "O that God would speak," &c. and now behold God appears possibly beyond their expectations, for it is likely they had not faith enough to believe that God would answer those wishes. Job had no rule for such a petition that he might presently have a trial at the tribunal of God ; yet God was so gracious as to answer him not only to his reproof but to his comfort. The Lord answered Job that he might humble and convince him, and then acquit and restore him, which he did most mercifully.

The work is never well done till God come, and then he teaches us effectually to know both him and ourselves. They shall be all taught of God, John vi. 45. and then it is added, "Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." The outward appearances of God are often very terrible, when he intends nothing but mercy and love to his people.

*Ver. 2. Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?* As God will not conceal the praises of his servants when they do well ; so he will not conceal their faults nor forbear to reprove them when they either do or speak amiss. See how God speaks to Job ; *Who is this ?* as if he had been a man scarce worth the naming or speaking to. Wherein he had spoken what was not right, appears in the next words :

*That darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge.* Job darkened his own coun-

sel, and the counsel of God too; he delivered his own mind and sentiments so darkly about the counsel of God, that he rather obscured both than cleared either. If Job, who had so great a measure of knowledge, darkened the counsel of God by words without knowledge, what will they do who, upon the matter, have no knowledge at all?

They that are not taught of God, nor have the light of God in them, cannot but darken the things and counsel of God, however much human learning they have. When it is said, *Who is this?* and *what is man?* it is either to abase the pride of man, or to convince him of his sin of fearing man, Isa. xxxi. 12. Why shouldst thou be unduly afraid of thy fellow-mortal, as if thou hadst not the immortal God for thy helper? They act below man who over-fear man, while they are in a way of duty to God. To have high thoughts of ourselves, or of any man, shews that we have too low thoughts of God. We should be cautious and not talk at random of the things of God.

God will not charge any man beyond his fault. He did not charge Job with hypocrisy or impiety, but with imbecility and obscurity. God does not only know what we say, but why, and with what aim, we say it.

*Ver. 3. Gird up now thy loins like a man; I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.* There is a girding for travel, 2 Kings iv. 29; for serving or waiting, Luke xii. 35; it notes preparation for any labour, whether of mind or body, Jer. i. 17; and preparation for war, Psal. xlv. 3, which is the girding in this text. Disputing is a kind of war; opponents and respondents are combatants. Some say girding may note the mortification of the sensual appetite. They who go about any business for God, or with God, had need to have their lusts subdued.

*Like a man.* That is, like a mighty man, not like a child, nor like a woman who girds herself for ornament and ostentation. Taking the words as an encouragement to Job, or as comforting words,

Observe, that God is ready to revive poor and afflicted souls in every distress, as here "Gird up your loins," or as Hebrews xii. "Lift up your hands," &c.

Take it as God calling Job to a great business, Gird up, prepare thyself. We need actual preparation for every duty. If the fire be not stirred up it grows dead, and gives little or no heat; so it is with our gifts and graces; it is not enough to have a habit of grace unless we bestir ourselves for duty. Isaiah complains, ch. lxiv. 7, "There is none that calls upon thy name." What, none at all? He explains, "There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee."

To do any thing with vigour and expedition, is the work of a man who is neither retarded by difficulty, nor tired with labour, nor frightened with danger. We must lay aside every weight, and run, &c.

Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, &c. that is, you can never act faith or hope to purpose without stirring up these graces.

When God questioned Job, he behaved like a child, yet he never carried it so like a godly man as when like a child he had not a word to say; God will make man see what a nothing he is even when girt and prepared for any service for God, without the present assistance of God. What then must he be when he is to contend and plead with God?

In the following verse, God begins to put questions to Job, and calls for his answer, the scope and design of which, in this whole discourse, is to convince and humble Job, 1st, By comparing the eternity of God with Job's time, who was but of yesterday. 2d, He sets before Job his own omniscience, and thereby convinceth Job of his ignorance. 3d, He sets before him his own omnipotency, together with Job's impotency, and that he could contribute nothing either to the creation or government of the world; from and upon all these considerations, the Lord calls upon Job to acknowledge that it must needs be extreme rashness in him to find fault with any of his dispensations, or plead with him about them.

From all which we may learn, that he is worthy to be blamed that finds fault or complains about any thing in the government of God, or who ventures to debate with him about what he doth, and hereby we are taught the true use of philosophy, even to raise our minds to contemplate the eternity, power, and wisdom of God, and our own weakness and nothingness, and so cheerfully submit to and acquiesce in every dispensation of his providence.

*Ver. 4. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth.* The foundations of the earth are not formal but metaphorical foundations; it is set fast and firm; it is an unanswerable proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ, John i. 1, "By him all

things were made." The eternal God is the fountain of all being, and has given a being to all things. This can only be known by faith in the divine testimony, Heb. xi. 3. The power and will of God are the only foundations of the earth, and he made and governs it, and man who inhabits it. Let us rejoice, that he who made, rules the world. Surely he who is the maker has a right to dispose of all things, and therefore, we ought to be satisfied in his disposal of them. Let us remember that the earthly portions we have are the Lord's, and we are but his stewards and tenants-at-will; let us therefore honour the Lord with what he gives us.

When the Lord invites his people to ask him things to come, Isa. xlv. 11, He gives encouragement to do so, by adding, "I have made the earth, and created man upon it. Though earth and heaven shake, our help is in the name of the Lord, Psal. cxxiv. We should praise the Lord for forming and adorning the earth so richly, but especially for the invisible world, the city that hath foundations which God has prepared for all who love him. Before the Lord proceeds, he calls for Job's answer.

*Declare if thou hast understanding.* No man knoweth any thing but by the help of his understanding; the understanding is the master-wheel in that noble engine, the soul of man, and when rightly informed and enlightened, all the other wheels of the soul move aright unless overpoised by passions and self-ends. A man must see into a matter by the eye of his mind, before he can duly declare his sense of it. "A fool's bolt is soon shot," his tongue runs before his wit; but a wise man will not declare; no man can declare well before he understands. Some works of God are such, and so high, that no man has understanding enough to reach or declare them.

*Ver. 5. Who hath laid the measures thereof.* The word rendered *laid*, implies a laying with art, care, and diligence, in all keeping, a due proportion. There is a great appearance of the wisdom of God in setting every thing in its proper place. This laying the measures notes not only the exactness but the greatness of the work. Little things are scarce worth measuring.

*If thou knowest.* Some read, *for thou knowest*, ironically. Job might easily have answered, that God laid them. So the question is supposed, not so much who laid, as how they were laid.

*Or who hath stretched the line upon it.* The stretching forth the line is an exercise of power; to make preparation for building, Zech. i. 16; for destruction and pulling down, 2 Kings xxi. 13.

The Lord is infinitely above the use of measure or line, yet, in this great work, formed in short time, and without instruments, there is a beauty of uniformity and compactness in the structure, as if it had been done by measure and line. Many profess godliness, but do they appear as God's workmanship, as if he had stretched his line and laid the measure of the new spiritual creation upon them? Believers are the workmanship of God, and so they should appear as created in Christ Jesus, unto good works. Let us take heed that we be not found walking beside that line and rule which God hath given us. If this world is expressed by a word in the Greek signifying beauty, comeliness, decency, what will that world be which is to come?

The next verse holds out the strength and firmness of the building.

*Ver. 6. Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who hath laid the corner stone thereof?* The word for *foundations* is often in Scripture rendered *sockets*. The will and power of God are the pillars, or bases, and sockets, upon which the earth is fastened and made sure. As large buildings must have a sure foundation to support the whole, so they must have corner-stones to hold the parts together.

Some translate, Isa. xxviii. 16, a corner-stone founded upon a foundation, implying that Christ is the lowest, the chiefest, and firmest foundation-stone, as well as a tried precious corner-stone.

If God alone perfected this work by his power and wisdom, shall man find fault with any of the works of God? Doth not he who put the world into this beautiful frame carry on all his works in beauty and order, though we see it not? Is there not a measure laid in all his providences, and a line stretched out upon all his dealings with the children of men? As his covenant is ordered in all things and sure, so are his providences, for they are the issues and accomplishment of his promises, ordered as to means, and sure as to the end.

To convince Job from the works of creation that he ought not only to acquiesce in, but rejoice in the works of God in providence, the Lord tells him in the next verse,

that there was shouting for joy when the foundations of the earth were fastened, and the corner-stone laid.

*Ver. 7. When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.* Some interpret this whole verse concerning the stars or heavenly bodies, as giving praise to God for the work of creation; others expound the whole verse of the angels and not of the stars; a third sort take the first part of the verse properly for the stars and the latter part for the angels.

Stars may be said to sing the high praises of God by their shining, their brightness, motion, and influence, for all which God is to be praised and glorified. If not only irrational but inanimate creatures sing the praises of God, at least, by giving occasion for his praise, then how much more should men show forth his praise? and how much more should godly men be provoked by them to sing his praise? Psal. cxlv. 10, "All thy works praise thee, O Lord," and then it is added, "Thy saints shall bless thee," &c.

The church, for the lustre of her graces, is said to "look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun," and so may the angels as the stars. The seven stars are the seven angels, Rev. i. 20. This shows that angels and stars have a very great similitude, so that as there in one sense, so here in another, the stars may signify the angels.

*And all the sons of God shouted for joy.* All the sons of God are united; they joy in one thing. How sad is it to see those who call themselves the sons of God divided in their work and ways, when one rejoiceth in that which to another is cause of mourning. All the sons of God on earth rejoice in and magnify him for his mercy. They who have not an habitual principle in them to praise God in and for his works, are not worthy to be reckoned sons of God. Praise is the most spiritual work and requires the most spiritual frame of heart, and, therefore, the chief of that work is reserved to an estate wherein not only our souls but our bodies too shall be altogether spiritual. Our first thoughts should be of God, and with God; as soon as we awake we should set open the door of our hearts by meditation, to let God in, and by prayer, knock, that we may be received into fellowship, and enjoy communion with God. Is it our sin and shame that we are so seldom engaged in admiring and praising God as manifested in the work of creation?

Angels are called the sons of God because they imitate Him; O let us strive to be like the angels in our minds now, as we hope to have our bodies like angels hereafter. It shows a good spirit to rejoice and be pleased with that which is beneficial to others, and glorifying to God, though it be no benefit to us.

The Lord having questioned Job about the fabric of the earth, and showed the triumph and acclamation of angels at it, he next leads him to the sea, there to consider his works of wonder. In allusion to an infant breaking forth out of the womb, he says,

*Ver. 8. Or, who hath shut up the sea with doors when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb.* The Lord, by this query put to Job, would have him and us to know that it was himself alone that bridled the sea.

Some render, *who anointed the doors of the sea, &c.* and so it means here the doors by which it was let out or had its birth; and the doors, in ver. 10, are those by which the sea is kept within its bounds; and the word for *break forth*, in other places of Scripture, signifies the breaking forth of a child in the birth noting a kind of violence. The bowels of the earth were the womb out of which the sea issued by the word of the Lord, Psal. xxxiii. 7.

The sea is a representation of God himself in the unsearchableness of his wisdom and goodness, Psal. xxxvi. 6; Rom. xi. 33. As the sea is an emblem of the living God in whom we live, so of the world in which we live, in its turbulence, inconstancy, and brackish taste; those who drink in worldly things as if they could drink up the whole world yet drink but salt and unsavoury water. The heart of man hath waves in it full of pride, like the sea. Who is there among the sons of men but finds those proud waves of his heart lifting him up beyond his sphere and condition?

*Ver. 9. When I made the clouds the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it.* When the Lord separated the sea from the earth, he made the clouds to cover it as garments do a child that comes naked into the world, and the cloud is a fit garment for the sea; as the matter of its garment is a cloud, so its swaddling-band is a thick cloud.

The Lord can make weak and improbable means to effect the greatest things; he

can as easily rule and bind the sea as a mother or nurse can bind an infant in swaddling-bands.

*Ver. 10. And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors.* When the Lord said, "let the waters be gathered together into one place;" he prepared a place to receive the waters. As some, still following the allusion to an infant, say, That vast concave into which the waters are put, is somewhat like a cradle; and what can more significantly express the greatness of God than these similitudes? who keeps in the sea by his power, and leads it forth into a multitude of creeks for the benefit of navigation, and represses its fury and violence by the sands and shores, which indeed may be said to be bars and doors by which the sea is shut in, yet the great bar is the word of command from God, as appears full in

*Ver. 11. And said, hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.*

*And said*—Expressing the firmness of what was done; *He said*, and it was as soon done as said, which shews the infinite sovereignty and power of God, that by a word speaking, that raging creature, the sea, was and is obedient. As if the Lord had said, I have drawn a line, and set a mark, I have given thee a bound how far to go.

*But no further.* Thou shalt not go beyond the bound to destroy the earth. The word rendered *waves*, properly signifies a heap, because waves roll in heaps one upon the neck of another. They lift up their heads as proud men do, and therefore are called *proud waves*. In Psal. civ. 9. it is implied, that the waters would turn again to cover the earth, if not restrained by God. The divine pillar of this *no further* stands inviolable. If the sea break its bounds at any time, God has given it a special commission to do so for the punishment of men. Although God will never destroy the world by a deluge, how sinful soever, yet history and experience have told us of many particular inundations of the sea breaking its anciently known bounds; yet it never did, nor ever shall break the bar of this word, *Hitherto shalt thou come, &c.* It is proof enough of our Lord's divinity that he rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. As Canute said, "none deserve the name of king, but he that keeps heaven, earth, and sea, in obedience."

Let us learn of the disciples, in every distress to say to Christ, "Master, save us, we perish!" In Jer. v. 22, 23. it is as if the Lord had said, The sea does not disobey my command, but this people doth. God sets bounds to the metaphorical sea of man's wrath,—of the devil's rage; to the sea of affliction, 1 Cor. x. 13.; to the sea of profaneness and of error, and false doctrine. We have reason to pour out floods of tears for the two last.

*Ver. 12. Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the day-spring to know his place.* The word of command is most proper unto God, Psal. xxxiii. 9. it puts things into act, his calling them to work makes them to work. Hast thou O Job, such a word of command upon any creature for producing any effect, motion, or action? The course of nature in all its turns and changes, is moved by, and obedient to the command of God. This is a reproof to man for disregarding the commands of God, though to obey them is as much our interest and privilege, as it is our duty. There is nothing in nature more comfortable nor admirable than light. The comeliness of it lessens our esteem of it; yet it must be confessed it is a wonderful creature, if we consider, 1st, Its original light came, as it were, out of the womb of darkness, 2 Cor. iv. 6. 2d, Light is wonderful in its operation, in that it so suddenly chases away darkness. When we behold the morning light coming forth by the command of God,—let us consider the excellency, majesty, and purity, of God, "who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all." "Let us cast off the works of darkness," remembering, "that he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness."

Let us be thankful for the light of the morning, and for the light of the eye, but especially for the light of the gospel, as revealing Christ as "the bright and morning star, as the sun of righteousness." O what a mercy is it, that he who is the true light hath risen upon us both to scatter the darkness of sin and ignorance, and to cheer our souls with the sweet beams of his healing rays.

*And caused the day-spring to know his place.* That is, when and where it should break forth and appear every morning. The *day-spring*, is a different word in the original from the morning light, it means the first of the morning, or the twilight. The Lord speaks of the *day-spring*, as if it were a rational creature, which daily re-



ceived instruction. As every thing, so every person is most useful in his proper place and season.

*Ver. 13. That it may take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked may be shaken out of it.* Some of these Rabbins refer the words to Job, as if the Lord had said, Canst thou O Job, make the day to know its place, that thou mightest take hold of the ends of the earth as I do, and shake the wicked out of it? The sun is a universal, and therefore the most excellent outward benefit. We say of every good thing, by how much the more common, communicative, and extensive it is, so much the better,—as the further evil spreads, so much the worse. When the “day-spring from on high” visited our world, how speedily and extensively did the gospel spread, as it was foretold, Psal. xxii. “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord.” Surely it was the light of the gospel that caused the ends of the earth to remember God and themselves, they saw their danger and their duty, and so turned to God. As the sun gives light to every creature, so the apostles’ commission is, to carry their light to every creature. The scripture speaks of the morning light, with respect to its sudden motion, as if it were a feathered fowl, spreading its rays, and removing the darkness in an instant. We have a special use of the “day-spring,” &c. in the next clause.

*That the wicked may be shaken out of it.* This may refer to shaking a garment or sieve to separate the chaff. As wild beasts may be said to be shaken out of the earth when light appears, Psal. civ. and so are wicked beast-like men, John iii. 20. “Every one that doth evil hateth the light.” There is nothing more displeasing to a man that resolves to live in sin, than the light of divine truth; and those who spend their nights in folly, when the day begins to break, may say, our enemy is coming. Common day-light, much more divine light, (both are great blessings) are counted an evil by evil ones. “What communion hath light with darkness?” And as they who are light, ought not to have any complying communion with darkness, so they who are darkness, cannot have or hold any pleasing communion with light. And as the natural light makes things manifest, much more does the light of law and gospel. By the power of that light wicked men are shaken and driven out of their sins—by that light they see, judge, and condemn themselves, and thus the wicked are indeed shaken out of the earth, that is, out of their earthly state of sin and unbelief. David said, Psal. ci. “I will early, or in the morning, destroy all the wicked of the land.” As soon as the light appears, if I can, I will take hold of evil doers; that is, I will not delay, much less stop the course of justice against them that do wickedly.

*Ver. 14. It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment.* The approach of light makes a great change on the appearance of the face of the earth, even as if it had received a fresh impression as clay does from a seal. This also is true of spiritual life, with this difference, the natural light only manifests what is already impressed upon the earth. But where the sunshine of the gospel comes, it changes the people in their manners and conversation, yea, through the mighty power of the Spirit accompanying that light, they are turned as clay to the seal, they are indeed made new creatures.

*And they stand as a garment.* That is, the things of the earth, they stand to look on as a garment. Not only vegetables that grow out of it, and animals that feed upon it, Psal. lxxv. “The pastures are clothed with flocks,” &c. But artificial things may also be said to be the earth’s garment. When the sun riseth, then they appear in their beauty. As light itself is like a golden robe which the earth puts off every night and puts on again every morning, so light discovers all those goodly things with which it is “clothed as with a garment.”

*Ver. 15. And from the wicked the light is withdrawn, and the high arm shall be broken.* Wicked men forfeit, and so are deprived of the good things which God gave them. They cannot long, and they shall not always enjoy the good things of this world. When wicked men abuse the light, and resolve to walk on in the darkness of their minds, then the light of comfort and prosperity departs from them, and in a little they will be removed to the greatest distance, even out of the reach of light. They sin with a high hand who sin against light, or in the face of counsel and reproof. Wicked men may grow high, and have a very high and strong arm. As all men by nature are altogether wicked in their state, so some of them are extremely wicked in their lives. The wicked shall not only be deprived of the light; but their arm of strength in which they boasted, and by which they oppressed others, shall be broken;

and to be broken, is to be utterly spoiled. A broken and a contrite heart is a great mercy, but a broken arm denotes great misery.

*Ver. 16. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?* After a short digression, the cause of which was the mentioning the wicked who did not improve, but abuse his works, the Lord returns to interrogate Job about the depth, the unsearchable depth of the sea. Job, nor no other person can locally enter into the springs of the sea, and neither can any make a perfect intellectual entrance thither. Some translate, "Hast thou entered into the perplexities or intricacies of the sea?" Both tend to shew Job his utter inability for it. Both parts of the verse are of the same import—*The springs of the sea, and the search of the depth.* The sea is called the *deep*, that is, very deep,—and the depth that is unsearchable. Doubtless it was the depth of his own divine judgments that God intended to lead Job too, when he spake of the depth of the sea. When the apostle was, as it were, dipping his feet into the sea of the counsels and judgments of God, he cries out, "O the depths!" &c. Rom. xi. 33. As if he had said, I dare not enter into the springs of this sea. The Lord often walks as upon the sea, where no man can see his paths. The sea is a clear emblem of all obscure and unknown things, especially of those ways of God which are too deep for our discovery. What we cannot attain either by sense or reason, we may attain by faith, Heb. xi. 3.

Surely then, (which is the scope of this chapter) we should be satisfied, though we know not nor can perceive the reason of God's conduct, either to particular persons or his church in general. Will any wise or sober man vex or disquiet himself because he cannot know all the secrets of the earth and sea? Why then should we be impatient because the strange ebbings and flowings of things in the sea of this world is hidden from us?

*Ver. 17. Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?* The gates of death may point out any secret or hidden thing, and any great danger or distress. "I have the keys of hell and death,"—Jesus can deliver unto, or from death at his pleasure. God only knows how, when, and in what manner, we shall die. Man knows no more than God is pleased to reveal to him, and whatever he sees meet to hide from us, we should be content not to know. It is enough for us that God has set before us the mystery of eternal salvation, although he is pleased to conceal from us the mystery of his temporal dispensations. God has not straitened us in any needful point of knowledge.

*Ver. 18. Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all.* To shew that here the breadth contains all dimensions, the word is *breadths*; that is, the whole compass of it, and so, how large the earth is.

There are many that know some things, and some that know many things, yet none that know all, nor one thing perfectly. We may desire perfect knowledge, but we must wait for the enjoyment of it till our affections be set on right objects, and upon them in a right measure, and our wills shall choose only that which is good, and our understanding shall discern truth clearly,—when all clouds of ignorance shall be dispelled never to collect again,—when we shall see "face to face," and not "through a glass darkly."

*Ver. 19. Where is the way where light dwelleth, and as for darkness, where is the place thereof?* Here are two great contraries, which cannot agree nor dwell together in any one subject, yet met together in this verse, *light and darkness*; and there is not a little darkness in this question about the light. Only the wisdom and power of God hath put light and darkness in constant succession, and given them their certain seasons.

*Ver. 20. That thou shouldest take it.* The word signifies taking a thing in one's hand.

*To the bound thereof.* The word signifies a limit or utmost point.

*That thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?* Natural light and darkness have their special places assigned them by God, and darkness is the departure and absence of light. Ignorance is spiritual darkness, and that dwells in the heart of every man by nature, and continues there till God, who commanded the light, &c. 2 Cor. iv. give the light of the knowledge of himself. And as the work of God is wonderful in disposing of natural light and darkness, so it is much more wonderful in the disposing of civil, spiritual, and eternal light and darkness; these the "Lord taketh to their bound, and knoweth the paths to their house. I form the light and create darkness; I also appoint and direct them whither to go." As the Lord gives the knowledge of

the gospel to, or takes it away from nations as he pleases, so also of light or darkness to every soul. Job was in darkness, his body was pained, his soul was grieved, anguish filled his spirit, and God would have him see, know, and acknowledge his hand in all. Did we see the hand of God as our loving Father, we should sit down quietly in our darkest nights as to impatience, even while we are most earnestly praying for the return of light. "Christ is the way, the truth, and the life," John xiv. 6. He is the true, the only way to life, to both spiritual and eternal light and life. Light and darkness are not more interchangeable in the air than joy and sorrow are in the condition of men. All our changes proceed from the unchangeable God. Let us adore his wisdom and submit to him in all things.

*Ver. 21. Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great?* As if the Lord had said, Wast thou born when I disposed of these things? Is the number of thy days so great that thou art able to reach such knowledge? Surely no; therefore leave off vexing thyself, and rest in, and submit to my will, for thou art not able to understand my secret counsels.

If the best improvers of time know but little, those who mis-spend and trifle away the inch of time that they have in this world, will go out of it knowing as little to any good purpose as when they came into it. As our past days are few and evil, so those that remain cannot be many. The shortness and uncertainty of our time here should humble us, and not only keep us awake but watchful. It is God who orders and disposes of the life even of a silly bird, Matth. x. 29. and by him "the very hairs of our head are numbered." Surely then the days of your lives, and all the changes of them, are ordered and numbered by him; and if so, let us only be careful of that duty we are called unto, and leave the burden of our cares to him who calls for them, Psal. lv. and would have us rest assured that he cares for us, 1 Pet. v. 7. Light and darkness are disposed of without any of our care, and all our care can neither create light nor remove any darkness that is upon us.

*Ver. 22. Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow; or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?* The clouds are the storehouses of snow and hail. When God is said either to bring good for the use and comfort of man, or evil for his hurt and punishment, this word is used, Deut. xxviii. 12. "The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasures;" James v. 3. "Ye have heaped treasures together for the last days."

*Treasures* imply secrecy, safety, and great quantities. Snow may well be called a treasure in all these respects. God has abundance of snow ready at his command, and he can as easily pour down abundance of it as if he had an infinite store of it kept always by him, and he no sooner speaks the word but the face of the earth is covered with it. We may be assured God is never at a loss for any kind of means or instruments to carry on his service, and to effect any purpose, whether in wrath against the wicked, or to favour such as fear him.

*Ver. 23. Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?* The ordinary use of snow and hail is for some good, but here it is spoken of only for the hurt and punishment of bad men.

*The time of trouble, or straits.* Great trouble reduces us to great straits, and compels us to say, "We know not what to do." As mercy moves the Lord speedily to receive repenting sinners; so it makes him very slow in sending judgments on the impenitent. "My times are in thy hand," Psal. xxxi. that is, my times of peace and trouble; joy and sorrow are at thy disposal. Present impunity is no assurance of future indemnity. Let sinners remember the instruments of divine vengeance are only reserved. As God sometimes defers mercies to his people, though he never denies them; so he often defers his judgments on the wicked, but never acquits them; "their sin (their punishment) will find them out."

Did not men make war upon God by sin, he would never make war upon them by sending evil; it is best, therefore, never to begin the war, and the next best is speedily to sue for peace. There is often trouble when there is no war, but where war is there cannot but be trouble.

Now since snow and hail, &c. are at once the Lord's shot and arms by which he fights against the wicked, we may infer, 1st, That God does not need to borrow help from man when he would be avenged on his enemies. 2d, Take heed of provoking God who has such arms and armies always at command. It is dangerous meddling with a prepared enemy. 3d, Let us beware of giving God cause to complain against us, as Haggai ii. 17. "I smite you with blasting, &c. yet have ye not turned unto me."

But under every token of his displeasure, let us humble ourselves, confessing our sins, and turn to him with our whole heart in faith of acceptance in Christ.

In this world God is still saying to the worst of sinners, Let him take hold of my strength, that is, of my grace ; or of my Son, which is my strength, to save sinners, that he may make peace with me ; and I assure all who come in this way he shall make peace with me.

*Ver. 24. By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth.* Man is much in the dark about the light, and how God distributes and disposes of it. Those things that are clear to our sense are often very obscure to our understanding. Nothing is more clear to sense than that the light is parted, yet what is more obscure than the way it is done ?

The main purpose of the Lord in putting these questions is, to shew that as the light, take it either for the lightning or for the light of the sun, is in the hands of God ; so also that the wind, even the east wind, is at his disposal. Whatever natural causes there are of the winds, we must look beyond them all at the power of God, as the reigning power over all other causes. Christ treating of the new birth, to shew how free an agent the Spirit of God is in it, compares it to the wind, "The wind bloweth where it listeth ;" that is, for any thing that man can say or do to it ; yet it blows not absolutely where itself, but where God listeth. The light is a most sweet and pleasant thing to behold, and God manages it and the wind in a most wonderful and sovereign way ; yet his sending the light of the gospel where and when he pleases, is still more wonderful, all of which discovers a divine providence, and man's weakness and ignorance.

*Ver. 25. Who hath divided a water-course for the overflowing of waters ; or a way for the lightning of thunder.* The division here intended is of the waters above, there the Lord makes a division for the waters and gives them their courses. As men make artificial pipes to convey water, so the Lord hath his pipes or channels in the clouds. As God hath divided the earth to the sons of men, and determined their times and the bounds of their habitation ; so he has also divided the waters for the earth and proportions them according to his own will, Amos iv. 7. "I caused it to rain upon one city." The rain falls not by chance, its course is appointed by the Lord as certainly as if he had it in a cistern, and drew out by pipes a portion for every one, where, when, and in such quantities as he pleases.

Lightning is very fierce and subtle ; thunder is very violent and furious, yet the Lord has a way for them as well as for the gentlest shower of rain. They accomplish the purpose for which God sends them and never miss the mark.

*Ver. 26. To cause it to rain on the earth where no man is ; on the wilderness where there is no man.* Rain is the usual concomitant of thunder and lightning, they give warning that rain is at hand ; here the cargo or lading of the clouds is consigned to places uninhabited by man. The latter clause is a repetition of the former, to signify the certainty of the thing, that God gives rain even where no man is. Seeing God provides for the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the earth, where there is no man to take any care of them, will he not much more provide for his own children, Matt. vi. 25. Some nations live in a wilderness, and they are themselves a desert, and we have a promise of spiritual rain to fall upon this wilderness, Isa. xxxv. 1, 2, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them." For whom ? For the church and for the sending forth of the gospel by them. It shall be fertile and fruitful in spirituals. The 6th and 7th verse contains a promise of sending the gospel, and with that the Holy Spirit, to those who are as a barren wilderness.

*Ver. 27. To satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth.* Here is the reason of sending rain upon the wilderness. It is to satisfy the ground that it may satisfy all sorts of vegetables, and that they may satisfy all kinds of animals living upon the ground. Such a gradation we have, Hosca ii. 21, 22, the meaning of which we may run up backward : When my people are pressed with hunger and famine, cry to the corn, &c. for food, they shall hear them ; and when the corn, &c. call to the earth for moisture to feed them, they shall hear ; and when the earth calls to the heavens for rain, they shall hear ; and when the heavens calls for an order from God to carry rain, he will hear them ; God makes the earth fruitful for the use of man ; and, where there is no man, for the sake of beasts he satisfies the waste ground. The earth seems to know when it has enough ; and is not this a reproof to many men, who are never satisfied ?

Some render, that he may fill the desolate and waste ground, and that which is filled, is, or should be satisfied.

*To be full of days*, is to be satisfied with them; a man may live many days and yet not be full of days, while he still desires more. *Ergo*, to be filled and satisfied imports the same thing, Psal. xci.

God does not withhold rain from any place because he is scarce of it, but to punish man for his abuse of or ingratitude for former bounties. Thus Christ threatens to take the rain of the gospel from an unthankful and unfruitful people. Have we not reason to fear, that since we are so like the earth, Heb. vi. which drinketh in the rain, and yet bears briars and thorns, that we are near some curse, or that God is about to carry away the rain to others who will bring forth fruit; and will not that reprove our barrenness? Has the Lord divided the water-course of the gospel, and caused it to rain so long on us, and shall we satisfy ourselves with the mere leaves of a profession, without bringing forth the fruits of faith and repentance, superlative love to God, genuine humility, and evidencing by acts of holy obedience and love to our neighbours, that they are produced in us by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, that he may come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.

*Ver. 28. Hath the rain a father? or, who hath begotten the drops of dew?* These and the following questions were to convince Job, and may convince us all, that since we cannot comprehend the cause, much less are we able to produce these things, but must receive them at the pleasure and appointment of God; therefore, we should refer all our concerns to him, and rest satisfied whether he send us a sweet and refreshing rain and dew, or a grievous and afflictive season of ice and frost.

The cause of rain is a great secret, because the rain hath a father whose ways and works, as in the constitution of nature, so, in the daily motions of it, far exceed our knowledge. The sun may shine, the moon may change, and the winds blow, and turn long enough, yet no rain come till the Lord give the word.

So then, though there are natural causes of rain, yet God is the first cause, and it is at his pleasure whether those natural causes produce their effects or not. It is no small part of our duty to eye God in those common things, and it is atheism, or a disowning of God to ascribe them to natural or second causes. If God feeds all his creatures, how much more will he protect and provide his redeemed ones who bear his image in holiness!

The latter part of the verse is of the same meaning with the former. The clouds are God's vessels, in which he retains, or causes them to distil upon the earth: "By his knowledge the clouds drop down dew, and I will be as the dew unto Israel." This intimates how plenteous in mercy, (chiefly spiritual mercies), he would be to his people. Love and unity among brethren are like dew; they refresh and make fruitful, Psal. cxxxiii.

*Ver. 29. Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven who hath gendered it?* The word rendered *ice* comes from a root which signifies to make bald, because frost quickly pulls off leaves from the tree, it makes all bare.

This manner of speech signifies that frost and ice are brought forth by the power of God, and whether they prove a scourge or a benefit God must be acknowledged as the author; and as they are the effects of his power and declarations of his glory, he calls on them to praise him, Psal. cxlvii.

*Ver. 30. The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.* When extreme cold freezes the waters they are not seen, but are, as it were, paved over with a stone.

What is more fluid than water, yet the Lord can make it as hard as a rock. He that turns water into stone, can, and has "turned the rock into a standing water," Psal. cxiv. The turning of a visible rock into water is a glorious display of the power of God; but his turning the invisible rock of an impenitent sinner's heart into the waters of godly sorrow, working repentance never to be repented of, is more glorious.

Ice and frost resemble all human things in slipperiness and uncertainty; they who build their hopes on any person or thing in this world, are no wiser than those who build on the frozen deep. All things here below are uncertain, they must soon melt and pass away from us or we from them.

As warm sunshine resembles a state of prosperity, so cold and frost a state of adversity; as it is pinching and unpleasant, yet it is beneficial, and does not last always. As the cold of the air will not hurt us, neither will any affliction, if our love to God

and one another do not wax cold. We have reason to fear that the cold of the latter days is begun. Matt. xxiv. 12. "The love of many shall wax cold." Those are the frosts which we have greatest cause to fear, for it is so hurtful, and also discovers a want of those things which peculiarly distinguish the children of God; indifference to what concerns the glory of God, and want of affection to one another, among professors, are but too evident in the present day.

*Ver. 31. Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?* That is, canst thou stop their rising or prevent their natural effects.

*Sweet influences*, signifies delights, and the Garden of Eden is so named from this word, that is, a place of delight—paradise.

From the question, *canst thou bind?* I infer, that none can bind the influences of the stars, that much less can any hinder the influences of the Spirit, when he is pleased to work upon the heart of man, 1st, To give the light of the knowledge of his own glory in the face of Christ. 2d, To convert, to work faith and repentance, with love, humility, &c. 3d, To refresh and comfort. The greatest evils of this life can neither shut up nor shut out these influences of the Spirit, nor hinder joy in believing.

What is man that God should be mindful of him, that for his use, and for sweetening his passage through this troublesome world, he should bless the earth with the sweet influences of heaven. It has been said, Let him look to the stars of heaven, who denies or doubts that there is a God in heaven. At every sight of the stars we should admire the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, "who has given the moon and stars to rule by night."

The original word for *Orion* signifies to be inconstant, vexatious, &c. because under the dominion of this star the air is usually troublesome and unquiet.

*Canst thou loose*, &c. The word imports what is fast shut, or loosing what is fast bound. When the heart hath no heat of zeal for the glory of God, nor for the good of men, it is bound indeed. Take heed of cold hearts; it will hinder you from holy activity. He that is only lukewarm will do God little service, and can do none that is acceptable unto him.

The Lord puts the questions about his works to Job, that he might see his own weakness and utter inability to undo what God does. Christ said to his disciples about church censures rightly laid, and church approbation duly given, Matt. xviii. 18. "Whatsoever ye bind on earth," &c. Where men bind in God's way, God binds too; and where man looses in God's way, God looses too. But neither in natural nor spiritual things can man bind or loose where God does not. "Consider the work of God; for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked." Not that there is any crookedness or injustice in the ways of God. It means that which is troublesome and grievous. Sometimes he gives prosperity and sometimes adversity; and no man can say what will be next. Therefore let companions in tribulation say to one another as Hos. vi. 1. "Come and let us return unto the Lord," &c. These negatives upon man become affirmatives as to God. "He can bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, he can loose the bands of Orion."

Hence note, that God can stop the ordinary course of our comforts, and deliver us from our troubles when he pleases. And glory is due to God in all the changes we meet with in this world.

*Ver. 32. Canst thou bring forth Mazzeroth in his season? canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons.* The word rendered to *bring forth* is applied to the birth of children, Gen. xv. 4.; to the earth's bringing forth flowers and fruits, Judges xiii. 14.; to the rising of the sun or stars, Gen. xix. 23. Canst thou bring forward that constellation in its proper time? Thou canst not. The stars come forth by special order, and they keep their time punctually. Therefore let us perform every duty in its season, or Mazzeroth will be a witness against us.

*Canst thou guide?* The word signifies to conduct gently, as a shepherd guides his flock.

*Arcturus* is a constellation situate in the northern pole, very conspicuous to us in a clear night. 'Tis the seaman's mark or guide. There is one principal star, and the others as children about their father, and so called his sons. The stars are spoken of as God's host, and of the Lord as general of an army, knowing their number, nature, place, and office, ordering them out upon service as he pleases, and there is neither a sick, unfaithful, nor fearful one among them; "not one faileth."

*Ver. 33. Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominions thereof in the earth?* The word rendered *ordinances* is often in the Psalms, statutes,

laws, decrees. The heavens are under a law as to their motion, their influences, and as to their effects and operations upon the creatures, whether for good or for evil. There are some ordinances of heaven which are easily known, such as the changes of the seasons, of night and day, &c. There are also secret orders given to the heavens, according to which they produce unexpected and extraordinary effects on the earth, as drought, and the consequent of it, famine, &c. If man knows not those things that are commonly seen and felt among us, how much less is he able to understand the secret counsels of Heaven?

The word which we read *dominion* signifies an inferior dominion, or power under a power. The heavens have not a supreme command over the earth, but a dominion so far as to execute that which God, the Supreme Judge, orders both concerning persons and things. It is generally agreed that the moon causes the ebbing and flowing of the sea. Let us rest assured, that whatever rule the heavens hath in the earth, that God overrules the heavens. We need not go to the stars to inquire what is to befall us. Let us consult the promises, and they will tell us what good we shall receive if we believe and obey; and the threatenings say what will be the portion of the unbelieving and disobedient. The word of God exhibits what blessings we may expect through his free favour to us in Christ, while we in faith obey and submit to him.

*Ver. 34. Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou do it effectually? No.* It is in vain for any man to command the clouds, for they will not obey him. But if by faith he lift up his praying voice to the clouds, that is, to God, in whose hand the clouds are, he may get abundance of waters to cover him. Zech. x. 1. "Ask ye of the Lord rain," &c. It is a vain thing for us to lift up a voice to the clouds, in our own name to command them to give us rain in the season of it. And as this is true of the clouds and rain, so of all creatures—their powers and influences are not at our command. But if we wait upon God in believing prayer, he can command them all to give out their virtues to serve our necessities, and to supply all our needs.

*Ver. 35. Canst thou send lightnings that they may go and say unto thee here we are?* While the Lord shews Job and all mankind their own impotency, he asserts his own omnipotency. All creatures are fully under the command of God. He can have whom and what he will to serve his purpose. If he call for famine, 2 Kings viii. 1. or for drought, Hag. i. 11. the ordinary forerunner of famine, they say, here we are. Or if he call for an army to punish a people for their sin, they come sword in hand to do his pleasure. Whatever the Lord calls for, cannot but come, Lam. i. 15. "The Lord called an assembly against me."

Hence learn, how readily men should obey the Lord's call. As Abraham, Gen. xii. 1. "Get thee out of thy country," &c. He never disputed nor even inquired where he was to go, but as Heb. xi. 8. "Obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he went." And when commanded to offer up his son, his only son Isaac whom he loved, every word was enough to wound his heart, and the last deepest. To part with a son is hard, with an only son is harder, with a son dearly and deservedly beloved is hardest of all, especially when his own hand must give the parting blow. Yet Abraham, when called to this hard and hot service, readily obeyed. This should be the temper of all true believers, and in some measure will be so, though they may have, and, to their sorrow, find reluctance to say, "Here I am," at the call of God. They must not think, what will the world say? They who from such questions neglect to obey the call of God, will be blamed as foolish and unwise. The conduct of soldiers, Matt. viii. 9. and even the lightning, will rise up in judgment against them.

*Ver. 36. Who hath put wisdom into the inward parts? and who hath given understanding to the heart?* Some give the sense thus, "Who hath made man a reasonable creature?" Natural reason is the gift of God, and it is a very great gift. It is the ground or soil which, when duly improved, brings forth these excellent fruits of wisdom. James i. 17. "The good gift" may be taken for natural wisdom, and "the perfect gift" for wisdom in spiritual things, which "is from above," &c. Since it is God alone who puts wisdom into man, then he can make a fool a wise man, and turn the wisdom of the wisest into foolishness. As all wisdom is given by the Lord, then let none be proud of their wisdom, but be duly thankful for it, and diligently use it in the service of God, and keep always in mind that he is accountable to God for the use he makes of it. They are wise indeed who duly consider from whom they had their wisdom, and before whom they must soon give an account what they have done with it.

The latter part of the verse is of the same sense with the former. *Understanding in the heart* is the same thing with *wisdom in the inward parts*. The same word signifies *the heart* and *a cock*. As the heart foresees and looks upon things afar off, so the cock foresees and foretells the approach of day, and so his name from his foresight. He that employs his wisdom to any evil purpose, employs it against God; and woe to him that doth so. It had been better for that man that he had been a brute, than that he had been so brutish as to employ his understanding and reason against God.

*Ver. 37. Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven?* The word rendered *number* signifies both to number things arithmetically and to demonstrate them logically. We may as well number the waves of the sea, or the stars, as the clouds. Taking the word to demonstrate, or to declare, the question imports, that none can clearly and perfectly set forth the nature of the clouds, nor the various effects and services which they perform. The least and lowest works of God are above man's reach, how much more his greatest works!

From this word, translated to *number*, to declare or demonstrate, that precious stone the sapphire hath its name. God can make bright clouds as fair and pleasant to behold as a precious sapphire. The clouds are like bottles, and they pour down rain when God unstops them, and none can prevent it. The same word signifies a bottle and a musical instrument, and so is read, "Who can stay the music of heaven?" which makes no audible sound, but points out the concord which all the heavenly orbs constantly and harmoniously observe in their several courses, without the least jar or discord. What a blessed harmony would it make to see every one doing his duty in its proper time and place!

*Ver. 38. When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together.* God can stay any of our mercies (as here the rain) when we have most need of them. Amos iv. 7, "I have withholden the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest;" and manifests his sovereignty, "I caused it to rain upon one city," &c. The earth is soon made dust by drought. The Lord threatens his people, in case of disobedience, Deut. xxviii. "to make the rain of their land powder and dust;" that is, they should have dust instead of water.

Learn, what a great mercy is seasonable rain. When God intends to punish man for unthankfulness for or abuse of the fruits of the earth, he can easily do it, either by drought, excessive rain, or some other means. When the Lord, to punish men for their ingratitude for or abuse of the gospel, withdraws the influences of the Holy Spirit, they soon become like the mountains, upon which neither rain nor dew falls—fruitless and barren of every good word and work.

*Ver. 39. Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion, or fill the appetite of the young lions?* From the questions put to Job respecting beasts, birds, &c. we may conclude, that if the Lord hath such a care of these irrational creatures, then much more hath he a care of man, and among men of good men, and of them most of all in their afflictions and troubles; and is as if the Lord had said to Job, How comes it about that thou shouldst so much as doubt whether I take care of thee or not, when I look after these creatures?

As the *lion* is an emblem of earthly kings, so also of the King of kings. To shew his supereminent excellency, he is called a *lion*, Rev. v. 5. Jesus Christ is compared to a *lion*, 1st, Because of his supremacy. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. 2d, For his clemency towards those who yield unto him. 3d, In respect of his watchfulness over his church. 4th, For his invincible courage and strength, always ready to defend his people, and even enables them to oppose and overcome the devil, the world, and all their enemies.

Oppressors are compared to *lions*, in cruelty, subtilty, and treachery, Psal. x. The lion in some things resembles the devil himself, 1 Pet. v. 8. He is also an emblem of a righteous man. 1st, In his boldness and confidence in a good cause, Prov. xxviii. 1. 2d, In gratefulness to those who have done him good. We may take the text in general for old and young lions, whether able or unable to catch prey for themselves. All the lion's care is for his belly, and in this wicked men are like them all, for catching the prey. The oppressing power of Nineveh is described, Nah. ii. 12. by a lion tearing in pieces enough for his whelps, &c.

God not only feeds sheep and lambs, but lions. This note gives us the chief scope of the whole context, which is to shew the care of God over all. It is a strange expression, Psal. civ. 21. that young lions, when they roar after their prey, should be



said "to seek their meat from God," which implies, that neither their own strength nor craft could procure food for them without help from God. As they who fear God are fed by his special providence, so all creatures are fed by a general providence. Jeremiah gives a check to all, chap. ix. 23. which is as if he had said, neither a wise man by his wisdom, nor a mighty man by his might, can bring any work to an effectual issue. Though men have suitable qualities and abilities for attaining their ends, yet they cannot, without the power and presence of God, in some kind and degree or other. The strong lions would starve did not the Lord help them to hunt their prey. There is a special providence of God over them that have special need. He that fills the young lions, will fill the appetite of his servants with spiritual food. Psal. xxxvi. 6. "They shall be abundantly satisfied," &c. He who fills the appetites of wild beasts, will not send hungry souls away empty.

*Canst thou fill the appetite of the young lions?* When we read "greedy dogs," Isa. lvi. 11. we put in the margin, "strong of appetite," implying, that the persons intended under that disgraceful denomination, "greedy dogs," were such who, though they had little appetite or stomach to their work, yet had an insatiable desire after their wages or reward.

*Ver. 40. When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait.*

*They couch.* As if they were asleep; as if they minded nothing but their ease. Yet even then they are busily minding how to catch their prey.

*Covert* signifies a tent. But dens and coverts may signify the same thing, at least in both places. Lions do the same thing, they *lie in wait*. It is said of the Lord himself, Jer. xxv. "He hath forsaken his covert as a lion." This shews the Lord's purpose to come forth and tear and rend his enemies by some sore judgment. At ver. 34. we read of the "howling of the shepherds," that is, of the rulers and governors; and of the cry of "the principal of the flock," that is, of the wealthiest of the people. "When the lion came forth of his covert there was a cry made." Why so? The lion came forth to destroy both sheep and shepherds. Thus the Lord comes forth even as a young lion full of wrath and fury to destroy the wicked.

*To lie in wait* may allude to fowlers and hunters, or to soldiers who lie in ambush to surprise their enemy. There are creatures of little strength which have much craft; others have little craft but much strength; in some both meet together, and among them we may number the lion; he is both crafty and strong; he hath his covert; there he waits for his prey. Thus the subtle practices of wicked men are compared to a lion. Psal. x. "He lieth in wait secretly, as a lion in his den; and in Psal. xvii. he is said to be as a "lion that is greedy of his prey." The devil is always strong and subtle like a lion; he goeth about like a roaring lion; but he is too crafty always to roar; he often fawns, and flatters, and decoys into his snares.

It is said, when the sun riseth the wild beasts go to their dens, and men go in safety to their labour. When lions come forth in the day, it is usually to execute the judgments of God, 1 Kings xiii. 24. 2 Kings xvii. And such is the mighty power of God, that he can shut the mouths of hungry lions, as Dan. vi.

Christ advises all his disciples to join the wisdom of the serpent with the innocency of the dove, and these work well together. But where there is the strength and craft of the lion without a dove-like integrity, what sad work do men make! But when good men have the strength of the lion joined with the harmlessness of the dove and the wisdom of the serpent, what good may they not do!

*Ver. 41. Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.* As the lion is a devourer among beasts, so is the raven among birds.

The Hebrew word rendered *provideth*, signifies, 1st, To establish, which intimates that the Lord gives a necessary and constant diet. 2d, It notes the suitableness of their food to their nature and appetite. What makes sin, which is abominable to God and good men, pleasant to carnal men, but the suitableness of it to their nature? And what is the reason that the law and ways of God are so pleasant to a godly man? is not because his heart is made suitable to them? He that gives life to all creatures, feeds and supports them. Since God feeds the raven, who neither sows nor reaps, surely if men would be diligent in the use of means, not only that they may provide for themselves and families, but that they may have to give to him that needeth, and trusting in and crying to God, who can and will satisfy his own children, even in the days of famine, there would be little danger of any being in extreme want. He made

ravens feed a prophet. God has a great household, and the meanest of his creatures have food convenient for them. No irrational creature can properly be said to cry unto God; and there is none, even among rational creatures, that really cry to God, but such as pray in faith. How shall they call on him on whom they have not believed? Extreme want or necessity will cause mere nature to cry to God. The worst of men, yea, beasts, pray after their manner. When the hungry raven cries, God takes it as a prayer to himself; and if he hear the croaking of young ravens, who have no intention of praying to him, how much more will he hear the believing cry of saints, who set themselves purposely to pray unto him, and seek his face day and night? The lions and the ravens who cry unto God, and are said to seek their meat from God, will condemn those who in their distresses do not come to God, but run to broken cisterns. It was the sin of Asa, 2 Chron. xvi. that in his disease he sought not to God, but to the physicians. But we cannot suppose that so good a man would not seek unto God at all, but that he was very cold and negligent in calling upon God for help, and over-confident of help from his physicians. When those whose duty it is to take care of us prove unfaithful and unkind, let us commit ourselves to God, who will provide for and comfort us in such a manner as he sees best for us.

### CHAPTER XXXIX.

*Ver. 1. Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?* The word rendered *time* signifies the fit, the appointed time. The Heb. word for wild goats signifies ascending or clambering. They ascend the steepest rocks with ease, and there they bring forth their young (Heb.) with pain and sorrow.

As the wild goats seek both food and refuge in rocks, so the church, and every true believer, are built upon the Rock Christ, and there they find refuge and refreshing. As the high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, so, Psal. cxxi. "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills," which explained ver. 2. "My help cometh from the Lord." As the affections of a godly man are set upon things above, so his confidence is upon God, not on man here below. As these wild goats are very active creatures, so a godly man resolves to run in the ways of God's commandments, and so prays that God would enlarge his heart and quicken him for running those ways. As goats are pursued by hunters, so the best of men are often disturbed and persecuted in this world. But those that draw out the sword against the godly have a fearful end, for their sword shall enter into their own heart.

*Canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?* The word *mark* imports the most strict and heedful mark, and is often used to shew that the commands of God should be kept with the greatest strictness, care, and observation.

Hinds are strong, though timorous and fearful creatures, and very swift of foot, by which they escape from their pursuers. The hind is a wild beast often spoken of in scripture; the male we call a stag or hart. The hind in the text is the female, and is spoken of in allusion to Christ, "Behold he cometh leaping," &c. which points out his cheerfully and speedily coming to the help of his church. "My beloved is like a roe or young hart." "The lame shall leap as a hart" or hind, Isa. xxxv. "As the hart panteth," &c. which shews the ardency of the desire of believers after Christ, and their activity in his service.

Note, There is a special providence of God towards these creatures for the production of their young, the voice of the Lord makes the hinds to calve.

*Ver. 2—4. Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them.* The question is not to be understood as if the months which they fulfil were so many that they could not be numbered, but of the uncertainty of the time when those months are fulfilled, as Psal. xxxix. 4. "Lord shew me the number of my days;" not as if the number of his days were so many, but being so uncertain, he needed instruction from the Lord how to count the number of them spiritually. The sin of man has brought sorrow upon the whole world, even upon sinless creatures.

The Lord has taught the brute creatures to provide for their young till they are

able to help themselves. So children who have been provided for, and taught how to get a living in the world, are to beware of laziness and idleness as if they were to live always upon their parents. Let them go forth and not return but to shew kindness and thankfulness to their parents for their care and cost bestowed on them while under their inspection; yea let them learn, as 1 Tim. v. 4. to shew piety or kindness at home, and requite their parents. He who is unable to give an account of the state of those poor creatures, must not pretend to pry into the great and unsearchable works of God in his mysterious providences to the children of men.

*Ver. 5. Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?* That some creatures are free from, and others bound to service, is of God's own appointment. And we must not say unto God, Why hast thou made some to serve and others to rule? why are some held in cords of affliction all their days, while others are comparatively free from trouble and enjoy prosperity? We must resolve all these questions into the sovereign will of God. In this question, God intimates to us as well as unto Job, that he has a right in himself which no man ought to question, to free some men from the bonds of service, and to bind others, Job xxi. 23—25.

It is said, 1 Cor. vii. 21. "Art thou called being a servant? care not for it;" that is, be not troubled that thou art a servant. Service to man is not inconsistent with the service of God.

To bear Christ's yoke is our honour; woe to those who seek to be loosed from it. Christ makes all his people free from the slavery of sin, John viii. 36.; from the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 13.; from the old legal ceremonies, Gal. v. 1. These are great privileges peculiar to believers.

*Ver. 6. Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings.* God provides a dwelling-place for the meanest creatures, and that suitable to their nature. Where the wild ass shall dwell is by a divine appointment, how much more hath God appointed dwelling-places for the children of men! God has not only made men to dwell on all the face of the earth, but hath also appointed "the bounds of their habitation, Acts xvii. 26.; that is, God has not only made the whole earth habitable for mankind, but by his providence he has disposed every man to his special habitation in this or that part of the earth.

And as the Lord hath provided suitable habitations for beasts, wild and tame, for good and bad men here on earth, so he hath appointed hell for all who are disobedient and unbelieving, and heaven for their dwelling-place for ever who believe and obey him. As now all godly men dwell in God by faith, so they shall dwell always with him by fruition.

Nature is content with little. They have always enough who desire no more. A cottage is as good as a palace, and a barren land as good as a fruitful one, to a contented mind. As some lands are naturally barren, so others by a curse from God; thus he turns a fruitful land into barrenness for the sins of those that dwell therein. Psal. cvii.

*Ver. 7. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver.* No society pleaseth but that which is suitable. What cares the wild ass for the society and enjoyments of a city? Bad men, who are like wild beasts, scorn the company of good men; and it is painful to a good man to be obliged to be in the company of bad men. The comfort of our lives depend much on our harmony with, and similarity to those with whom we converse.

Liberty is more agreeable than plenty; and a wilderness with poor fare than a city where there is oppression. It is better sometimes to be in a starving, than always in a fearing condition. I grant many use their liberty, or rather abuse it, and turn it into wantonness; these are indeed no better than wild asses, and though they disregard the cry of the driver, yet they need it. The compulsion that our Lord intended seems to be only that of exhortation and persuasion when he said, "Compel them to come in."

*Ver. 8. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing.* Some read, "Chosen places on the mountains are for his pasture;" that is, though he be wild yet he is prudent, he takes not what comes next, but chooses what is most agreeable to him. He makes a very diligent search after every green thing.

God provides food for all creatures suitable to their nature; he gives grass to the beasts of the field, and feeds man with the finest of the wheat, and he has also provided spiritual green pastures for the souls of his children, Psal. xxiii. He makes them to lie down in the promises, commandments, prophecies, and histories of his written word,

all which are given for our instruction, that through patience and comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. For though they are a bare common to unbelievers, yet to believers they are fat pastures, suitable to their taste and nourishing to their souls.

Wild asses take pains for their living; if it be not near, they will travel for and seek after it. Hunger makes every living creature industrious, and ought not spiritual need make us much more industrious in seeking and receiving the food provided by God for our souls.

*Ver. 9. Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib?* Here the Lord questions Job about the unicorn, and sets forth his liberty in opposition to the servile labour of the ox. The unicorn's liberty is described in the first clause, he will do no work; and in the second clause, he will receive no reward from man.

The word translated *unicorn* denotes an animal high and stately. It comes from a root which signifies to be exalted or lifted up. Hence Psal. xcii. David expresses his assurance that God would lift him up out of his troubles, saying, "My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn;" that is, I shall have new and sufficient supplies of grace.

The word *unicorn* imports a beast with one horn. But the Hebrew word *reem* imports only the highness or nobleness of that animal. Some say, that by the word *reem* is meant the wild bull rather than the unicorn. The vulgar Latin reads the *rhinoceros*; and Isa. xiv. 7. the word unicorn is in the text, and *rhinoceros* on the margin, which imports a beast with a horn on the nose or snout. It is said to be a proud, imperious animal, that will not be subject to man. Upon the whole, the word *reem* signifies a wild beast, very fierce and furious, commonly called a unicorn. Like the unicorn, man has no will to serve God. Some serve by constraint, for fear of loss, or for filthy lucre, until the word comes in the power of the Spirit, then they obey willingly, Psal. cx. No service is accepted of God unless it be done with the will. Conversion is a change of our nature, and then of our ways. Good education and human instructions may change a man's way; but nothing less than the power of God can change his nature. Man cannot change the course of the unicorn, because he cannot change his nature; and if God could not change man's nature, he could never really change his course. We may see our own rebellion against God by the rebellion of the creatures against us; and unless man had departed from God by sin, none of the creatures would have renounced their subjection to man.

A gracious spirit is willing to serve his neighbour, as well as, or with himself, Matt. xvi. 24. "Let him deny himself." That is, not serve, or seek himself, either contrary to, or with a neglect of the good of others; therefore, they who live unto themselves, and care not whether others sink or swim, are liker unicorns or wild asses, than the disciples of Christ. God would not give any creature a being in the world that does not one way or other shew forth his praise in the world; there is much of God shining in the world by those creatures which are of no service to man. "Praise him ye dragons," they raise up a revenue of glory to him. A crib is that in which an ox or an ass feeds. As the unicorn will do no work, so he looks for no reward from man. This is a reproof to those who are unwilling to serve others yet are very willing to abide by their crib. Take this in a spiritual sense,—the wicked will not serve God nor abide by his crib, they will not come to hear and receive sound doctrine, directing them both what to believe and how to practise.

*Ver. 10. Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee?* Neither reason nor religion will bind beasts to their work, therefore cords must. But thou hast no bands that will hold the unicorn to work for thee. In Isa. xxviii. we have a description of the work of the husbandman, which shews how God breaks the heart by affliction, and making it thereby fit to receive the seed of the word. When the seed of the word is sown, the heart must be harrowed by meditation and prayer. By meditation, we hide the word in our hearts, and by prayer, we obtain a blessing upon it from God. Ploughing and harrowing for our daily bread, teaches us what course the Lord expects we should take for our souls, that we may bring forth fruit and answer the end of receiving his word. The unicorn's refusal to plough or harrow, is aggravated by the ability which he has for both. Labour was imposed upon man as a duty before the fall, but since as a penalty. The apostle tells us, 1 Cor. iii. 9. "That we are God's husbandry." As if he had said, great pains hath been, or must be bestowed upon you, that your souls may be saved, and that ye may bring forth fruits of righteousness unto eternal life.

*Ver. 11. Wilt thou trust him because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour unto him?* Strength is often ascribed to the unicorn, Num. xxiii. "He hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn," implying, that he is a creature of such great strength that he could not find a stronger. Great strength is a great advantage for service. Let those who have strength of body and vigour of mind consider what use they make of them. Some have a will to do more than they have strength to do, and many have strength to do more than they have a will to do, and others have both strength and will, but want opportunity. But creature-strength is not to be depended upon, for some are so lazy, and others so proud and stubborn that they scorn to work. The word *trust*, notes confidence and rest of the mind, as Isa. xii. 2. Confidence upon a good ground, leads to a full as well as a good security. It is foolish to leave our work to such as we cannot trust. We trust those much to whom we leave our business, and it is requisite not only that they have strength and ability for it, but that they be subject and obedient to us, and especially that they be faithful. Where there is a mind to work, though we have but a little strength we may do great things. This was the high commendation of the church of Philadelphia, Rev. iii. 8.

*Ver. 12. Wilt thou believe him that he will bring home thy seed and gather it into thy barn?* The root word signifies, that faith by which the just live upon God for justification and eternal life, for support under, and deliverance from any trouble. This is as if God had said, suppose thou could get a promise from the unicorn that he would bring home thy seed, would thou believe him that he will bring home thy corn at harvest? Surely no, for if thou dost, he will deceive thy credulity. When the seed is cast into the ground, it appears as if cast away. But by the labour of the ox, the industry of the husbandman, and the blessing of God upon all, the seed will come home again. Our actions, good or bad, are as seed sown which will certainly come again, they will not be lost. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall," &c. What we give to the poor from proper principles, especially to the godly poor, is sowing good seed, which will bring forth abundantly in due time.

And when there has been a ploughing up of the heart by the power and grace of God, there will be a free sowing in every good work. And though we are not to do good merely with a view to a return, yet we may consider the harvest while we are diligent in sowing, yea, to make us more diligent in sowing. There are many allusions to the unicorn in scripture, as Psal. xcii. a prosperous condition is expressed; and, Psal. xxii. the persecutors of our Lord are set forth by the horns of the unicorn, and all who will not submit to Christ's yoke may be said to be like the stubborn unicorn.

*Ver. 13. Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?* The word translated *peacocks*, comes from a root which signifies to cry or to make a loud noise. He is a loud-voiced shrieking bird, as it were triumphing in his wings and feathers. God will be owned even in bestowing feathers upon the birds, and therefore says to Job, *Gavest thou, &c.* Since God is so kind as to cloth the fowls with feathers, let his children trust in him for all the necessities of life. Some fowls have plain feathers to fly with and to keep them from the cold, but the peacock and some others have gay feathers. And thus God deals with men and women, they have not all gay clothing and changes of raiment. Fine feathers are said to make proud birds, and no wonder if it be so with silly birds, for even wise men are not only apt to be elated with the gifts bestowed on them, but despise their fellows from whom God in sovereignty has withheld them. We are in danger of being proud even of some things of which we ought to be ashamed. If a man be proud of his knowledge, or any internal endowment, they become vain to him, being hindered by the present prevailing of pride from doing that which is one of the most proper works, the keeping him humble, empty, and nothing in his own eyes. Whatever a man is proud of, is no better to him than a peacock's feather. Ostriches are the greatest of birds, taller than a horse and his rider, and exceed the horse in swiftness. As in the peacock we had a representation of a proud person, so in the ostrich, the image of an hypocrite. The ostrich is a kind of middle creature, like a bird that flies, and a beast that runs. So the hypocrite has a profession, but not the power of godliness; he is something between a good and a bad man, in appearance very good, but in reality stark naught. Like the ostrich, without natural affection, he seems to soar aloft, yet he always has some carnal aim in his best services. Like the ostrich, he can digest the hardest things, he can sin without any trouble to his conscience, if it is in secret. If

birds with mean feathers are satisfied though they have not the gay feathers of the ostrich, should not we learn to be thankful for the portion we enjoy of this world, though it be scanty and coarse in comparison of many others. Many professors have a fine outside like the ostrich, but all that follows shews her base disposition.

*Ver. 14. Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust.* The eggs of the ostrich are great and the shell very hard, they are used for drinking cups. She leaves her eggs in the earth, and takes no farther care of them—and *warmeth them in the dust*, which, if she did designedly, it would discover discretion; but God himself hath given us the true reason of their stupidity; as,

*Ver. 15. And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them.* The folly of this bird is manifest by her leaving her eggs without doing any thing to protect them from danger. It is a great piece of wisdom to foresee danger, and a greater to provide well against it, Prov. xxii. 3. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; and Noah, "moved with fear," &c. he both feared God and the danger. We ought not to leave any thing, much less our lives, least of all our souls, or the souls of others, in danger. How will ministers, parents, &c. account for leaving those under their charge exposed to the snares and temptations of this present evil world, without warning them, and carefully watching for their souls?

As the Lord will not forget his church, so whatever is exposed to danger, whether by any unreasonable creature, as here in the text, or by undutiful and foolish men, or when the wisest of men with all their care and power cannot secure from danger, then the wakeful eye of Providence will watch over and protect in all these cases, especially the last. For when men have done to their utmost, they must cast all their cares on him who is able and ready to help. As the ostrich is careless of her eggs, so she neglects her young ones.

*Ver. 16. She is hardened against her young ones as if they were not hers; her labour is in vain without fear.* Some read, *she hardeneth her young ones*, that is, by hardening herself against them she becometh to them as if she had no relation to them.

The apostle, 2 Tim. ii. exhorts "to endure hardship." It is both their duty and wisdom to harden themselves, who are like to find the world hardened against them. Jacob had a tender respect to the young, Gen. xxxiii. 13; and Isa. xl. 11. the good shepherd is said to gather the lambs with his arm, &c. Christ, speaking of the world, says, "The world loves its own;" they are more unnatural than the world who are hardened against their relations; their sin is great who will not do what good they ought and can for their own.

Jeremiah, speaking of the women of Jerusalem, in that extremity of famine, Lam. iv. 3, contrasts the sea-monster with the ostrich, and says, "The daughters of my people are become cruel like the ostriches of the wilderness;" though their cruelty to their young ones did not proceed so much from the hardness of their hearts as from the hardness of the times.

*Her labour is in vain without fear.* Labour is in vain when it turns to small account, or produces an effect contrary to what is intended. The labour of the ostrich is said to be in vain, not because she has little fruit or contrary to her intent, but because if God did not take more care of her eggs and young ones than she does, her labour would be altogether in vain. It is as great a virtue to preserve what we have attained by labour, as to labour for it, and however much we labour to obtain any thing, unless we labour for the preservation of it both labours are in vain.

There is a fear that distracts and a fear that urges to activity; the ostrich is a fearless creature of any danger, and so a careless creature as to the use of any means to prevent danger.

A due fear puts us upon the use of means. The apostle, Phil. ii. 13, calls upon all believers to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. If we have no fear about our salvation we shall never work out our salvation; holy assurance is so far from making us careless, that we are then most careful in working, knowing that the Lord has joined the end and means together. Thus we may profitably meditate upon the providence of this creature, and learn wisdom from her folly, to make us more provident.

*Ver. 17. Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.* This does not mean that God had taken that wisdom from her which she once had, but that he had not given her wisdom; the latter part of the verse explains the former.

That natural affection and foresight of beasts and birds in providing for and bringing up their young ones is their wisdom; of this wisdom God hath deprived the ostrich.

Note, That whatever looks like wisdom in beasts or birds is the gift of God; he has not given a like portion of strength, swiftness, foresight, &c. to all beasts and birds.

God gives some men a large share of wisdom, and others so little that it may be said of them as of the ostrich, that God has deprived them of, or not bestowed it on them. Some men have so little that they cannot rule their own families nor even manage their personal affairs with discretion, while others have political wisdom enough to rule kingdoms; but while they continue in a natural state they have no spiritual understanding.

Let all who are convinced of their lost and undone condition, and are taught to know a God in Christ, and enjoy fellowship with them, bless God, who alone hath made them to differ from others, and from what they themselves were.

*Ver. 18. What time she lifteth up herself on high she scorneth the horse and his rider.* The same creature may want wisdom in one thing, and yet have it in another. We have seen the folly of the ostrich, and now we hear of her confidence and activity. But though she be a heavy body, and extremely foolish in other things, yet she understands how to shift for herself in time of danger. She raiseth up herself and fluttereth with her wings, runs so swiftly that she is not afraid of being taken, and so scorns the horse and his rider.

We may be ready to think that the wings of the ostrich are given to no purpose, because she cannot fly aloft, yet they help her much in running though little in flying.

When a believing soul is persuaded that neither death nor life, &c. shall be able to separate him from the love of God, he may well scorn all dangers, for he is more than a conqueror through him that loves him, and none can separate him from that love that Christ bears to him, nor draw him off from the love he bears to Christ.

*Ver. 19. Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder.* As God in questioning Job about the ostrich, teaches him and us to trust in his providence when in the greatest straits, so in this description of the horse he shows his own power, wisdom, and greatness, in making him to convince us of our own weakness, even in comparison of the creatures he has made.

The horse in this verse is spoken of in general, but in the following description it is confined to the war-horse.

The power and goodness of God is manifest in making a creature so strong subject to and serviceable to man. The Lord gives the horse strength, but he delights not in it, nor in the legs of a man, and he tells us so, Psal. cxlvii. 10, to teach us that we should not delight in them;—nor put confidence in them, for a horse is a vain thing for safety, Psal. xxxiii. 17. When the Lord promised to deliver his people, Hos. i. 7, he says, not by bow, nor by horses, &c. as if he had said, Do not look to creature-strength, for I can save you effectually without horses. When the people of God are beaten off from all dependence on outward help, then they say as Hos. xiv. 3, "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses," &c. While some trust in horses, happy they who in all their distresses remember the name of the Lord their God.

*Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?* Some say the original word signifies the horse's mane; others render, Hast thou learned him to neigh courageously.

To be clothed with this or that is a very common Scripture phrase, which is to have much of it, as to be clothed with shame, is to be exceedingly ashamed; and with humility, to be exceedingly humble; or to be clothed with any thing that is good notes it to be very becoming and ornamental, and if it is bad, that it is very disgraceful and detrimental to us.

*Ver. 20. Canst thou make him afraid as the grasshopper; the glory of his nostrils is terrible.* Others read, Canst thou make him move, leap, or skip like the grasshopper, to which he is compared for swiftness, but chiefly for his bounding and leaping. The grasshopper is a weak and easily frightened creature, so this seems to be a dissimilitude between the horse and grasshopper.

The horse glorieth in his strength, the courage and fierceness appearing in his nostrils are his glory; somewhat like Saul, Acts ix. 1, who breathed out terror out of his mouth against the people of God.

That which any creature excels in is said to be its glory; when a man excels in knowledge, courage, holiness, &c. it is his glory; yea, men who excel in evil count that their glory, Phil. iii. 19. So to vex, terrify, and put others in fear, is the greatest glory that some men possess.

*Ver. 21. He paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength ; he goeth on to meet the armed men.* These words give a farther proof of the courage of the horse. The word for *paw* signifies also to dig. The pawing of the horse is a kind of digging in the valley, because horse battles used to be fought there. We may take it in a spiritual sense ; a soul that hath a desire to do good, or to have communion with God, is troubled at being hindered ; or like Paul, " I desire to depart," I would fain be out of this world. Why am I thus wind-bound in the harbour ?

He *rejoiceth* or *exulteth* in his *strength*, seems to imply that he knoweth his own powers, which is the great scope of the whole description given of him in the whole context. The gospel way of rejoicing is neither in graces, wisdom, nor righteousness, but in the Lord ; and in them, and in every thing else, only as they flow from God. He presently answers the Lord's call to any duty who hath a heart for it, then with zeal, courage, and perseverance, cheerfully obeys.

*Ver. 22. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the sword.* It is usual in Scripture to express things greatly to be feared, by fear. Whatever is or may be matter of fear, that the horse mocks or laughs at ; that is, he counts no more of it than we do of those things we laugh at.

The word rendered *affrighted* imports the greatest consternation of mind. That which is not feared is usually derided ; and what is more common than to mock at those things we should be most afraid of ? As there is a noble courage in some men, so there is a stupidity in others that make a mock at fear, like Lot's sons-in-law, Gen. xxxix. There are some fears that it is our honour to mock at, but there are others that is our shame and will be our ruin to mock at. Those who mock when fearful things are threatened, the Lord will mock at their fear when fearful evils fall upon them. The account given of the people, 2 Chron. xxxvi. when wrath was breaking out upon them without remedy, was, they mocked the messengers of God. Let us take heed we be not like the horse, mocking at fear.

The *sword* is one of the most terrible things which the Lord threatens against a sinful people ; it is an easy matter to slight danger when only talked of, but when the battle begins, then not to turn back is courage indeed. " If any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x.

*Ver. 23. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield.* It is a piece of valour in the horse not to be troubled with or at the rattling of the quiver.

The Lord says he would totally take away the spirit of courage from his own people, for their sins, who had been so valiant to sin against him, and would run upon sin, notwithstanding the rattling of his quiver—his threatenings denounced against them, Lev. xxvi. 36, " I will carry you into the land of your enemies." What then ? " I will send a faintness into your hearts, and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase you." As it is extreme cowardice to shake and run at the shaking of a leaf, so to stand firm when there is a clashing and rattling of arms that even shakes the earth, shows a mighty courage.

*Ver. 24. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage, neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.* Some translate, " He diggeth the earth with fierceness and rage, neither standeth he still at the sound of the trumpet ;" or, He no more regards it than men do a report which they do not believe. It is said, We easily believe that which we desire to have ; yet sometimes we hardly believe reports which we would wish to be true. Gen. xlv. It is said, " Jacob's heart fainted for he believed them not."

When Christ appeared to the disciples, Luke xxi. it is said, " They believed not for joy ;" they were so glad they could not believe their own eyes. As a man will not do that for which he hath an opportunity when he has no mind to do it ; so when he has a mind to do any thing, he will embrace the first opportunity to do it. He that is slack to do good when he has an opportunity and ability, declares plainly that he is not heartily willing to do good.

*Ver. 25. He saith among the trumpets, ha, ha ! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.* Or, at the full sound of the trumpet, and the address of the captains, with the acclamation of the soldiers, he perceives that the battle is at hand, and shows his joy by neighing, which may be called his ha, ha !

There is a time when we do not believe that the gospel sounds mercy to us, that sin is pardoned through the atonement of Christ ; but whenever our unbelief is fully over-



come by the gospel coming in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, then the soul triumphs, and fears neither danger nor difficulty.

I shall now show how this description of the horse represents two very different sorts of men : 1st, The horse, as here described, is the emblem of a bold and hardened sinner. This is expressly pointed out, Jer. viii. 6, "No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course," (what course?) his sinful course. How? "As the horse rusheth into the battle." As the horse mocks at fear and will not turn back from the sword, nor be affrighted at the rattling of the quiver; so some rush on though you tell them there is a deadly danger in it, and that the sword of the word points directly at them, and will cut them off; he runs upon the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler, that is, his word of command, his awful threatenings. The horse is also an emblem of a bold saint, a holy martyr, who receives all his strength and courage from God, though they in themselves are weak and accounted as sheep for the slaughter; yet the Lord makes them his goodly horse in the battle. The church, and every individual believer, obtains a victory over the devil by resisting, and over the world by suffering.

The Lord now proceeds to give a farther demonstration of his power and wisdom appearing in the fowls of the air, and his purpose in speaking of these birds of prey rather than of the dove, &c. which may be to show that as his providence disposes of and watches over those fowls which are so able to shift for themselves, and are in their kind so little useful to man, that surely he will not neglect man nor any creature that is of use to man.

*Ver. 26. Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch out her wings towards the south?* The hawk is numbered among the unclean birds in the law of Moses. The Lord knowing that man is apt to exceed set limits to his appetite, he forbade the use of several creatures, for which we can give no reason but his own sovereign pleasure. The hawk might be excepted, because she is a bird of prey. Some say there are ten sorts of hawks, others sixteen. Among the Egyptians, the hawk was a hieroglyphic of the winds, because of her wonderful swiftness, she continues her flight with great perseverance. How vain is that man who takes pleasure in sin, or who sins in taking his pleasure in hawking and hunting! He makes his short pleasure time, a seed time (without repentance) of his everlasting sorrows. Since the wisdom of the Lord orders the flying of a bird in the air, surely then he orders both the course and discourse of man when he pleases; he can take wisdom from the wisest and make even judges fools, so that they shall not be able to see the things that belong to their own peace, or that of others. God has given some fowls a knowledge of what is meet for their convenience.

The hawk, when changing her feathers, flies to the south, because she finds it best for her; and the stork and swallow know the time of their coming, they know when it is best for them to be in one country, and when in another; and yet man often does not know the judgments of the Lord; that is, what God would have him to do, or what course to take in such a time and season. The creatures will rise up in judgment against us if we do not comply with his invitation in time of danger, (Isa. xxvi. 20. "Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers," &c.) or do not come under his wings for safety. Wicked men resemble the hawk; 1st, As they love to destroy and live upon the spoil of others. 2d, They prey most upon the innocent and helpless. 3d, Because, however much they may be esteemed while they live, they are despised when dead.

*Ver. 27. Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?* What means this discourse about the hawk and eagle, but to make us mount up our hearts to God, and acknowledge him in the motion of every creature? Does not the eagle mount up on high by a natural instinct? She does; yet because that natural instinct is of God, we are therefore to understand the motion of all the creatures as consequential of a command from God. Psal. cxlviii. 8. "Fire and hail," &c. fulfilling his word or command. The eagle does not mount up at the teaching or command of man, but at the command of God, acting her natural instinct in doing so. Though true believers have lowly spirits, yet they have the highest and noblest aims, not grovelling on or bowing to the earth, but like an eagle mounting up on high in contemplation of divine things, longing after the enjoyment and possession of the things above, and this he does in the strength, as well as at the command of God. The eagle does not only mount on high, but makes her nest on high. O how many talk as high as the eagle mounts, yet their nest is as low as the ostrich! The nest of the rich man's soul in the gospel, was in his full barns!

*Ver. 28. She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place.* As the eagle flieth very high, so she abideth on high places. The word *abideth*, properly signifies, tarrying for a night, but the eagle dwells on the rock, except when she mounts up for her pleasure, or flies off to seek her prey.

*Upon the crag;* that is, upon the tooth or edge of the rock. She chooses that part of a rock for her habitation, which is most inaccessible.

*And the strong place*, which signifies a place of defence, or a fortress; she dwells on the rock as on her castle or tower. God has put such an instinct into the nature of all creatures, as to provide for their own safety, and according to their state and condition. Such is the provision they make for their safety, Psal. civ. "The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the stony rock for the coney." So the Lord teaches his people to seek and hasten to a refuge, both for their spiritual and temporal safety; and it will be as much their wisdom to learn of the eagle to provide against danger, as to learn of the ant to provide against hunger.

*Ver. 29. From thence she seeks her prey, and her eyes behold afar off.* From the rock, her dwelling place, she seeks as if she were digging for prey. Diligent seeking or searching, is signified by digging, in the Hebrew. What is her prey? The eagle has a strong stomach, and the word here used, signifies any thing eatable; she seeks her prey wherever it is to be had, whether moving in the air, or upon the land, or in the water; and if it is to be had, she will have it. Whither will not the eagle dig to satisfy her appetite? We say hunger breaks through stone walls. The eagle seeks and finds, but, Amos viii. 11. it is said, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it, because they were unthankful for it, and did not profit by it. It is a sad hunger to be pinched with a want of the word; but it is a blessed hunger which arises from a true and strong desire after the word or spiritual food. True believers have a great desire and hunger after spiritual food, even when there is plenty of it, and the more they are satisfied with it, the more they would have of it; they are hungry, yet satisfied,—and satisfied, yet hungry, and therefore they are always seeking their spiritual prey. It is a sore judgment, when those who have had much of this spiritual food and have not had an appetite for it, are cut short and deprived of it. There are almost incredible things related as to the acuteness of the eagle's sight. All are agreed that the eagle sees very exactly and afar off, and in this exceeds every other creature. So a godly man hath a spiritual eye-sight beyond all other men, the eye-sight of faith, by which he not only sees things afar off, but things invisible.

*Ver. 30. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.* The Septuagint says, her young ones are sprinkled with blood; as they that feed upon raw flesh, especially when newly killed, are sprinkled with blood. It is said, that young eagles are so used to blood, that they delight in it all their days. Prov. xxii. 6. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." It is usually so, or probably it will be so. This text is alluded to by Christ, Matt. xxiv. 28; Luke xvii. 37, and some say it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, (whose ensign was the eagle) and threatens universal and unavoidable destruction. Others say, it may refer to sinners gathering or coming to Christ every day by faith, in consequence of Christ exhibited as crucified and slain; and believers resorting to him from every quarter at his glorious appearance, may also be included. The Lord is said to have borne the Jewish church as on eagle's wings, and his people are said to have their youth renewed as the eagles'. And two wings of a great eagle are said to be given to the Christian church that she might fly into the wilderness; which shews the care of God over his church, and how safely he protects them in every danger, and how kindly he will comfort and support them while in the wilderness, till he bring them safely to the Canaan above. The general scope of all the questions proposed in these two chapters is, to convince Job, and all men, both of their own nothingness, and of the all-sufficiency, wisdom, care, and power of God over all the creatures that he has made; and therefore man, who has received more from God than all of them, especially those whom he has redeemed by the blood of his Son, and brought into his family by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, should cheerfully submit to the disposal of their heavenly Father, without disputing, much more without murmuring at or complaining of any of the dispensations of his providence, however painful in their nature, however long-continued, or however singular in their circumstances, so that they may have reason to say, "is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?"

## CHAPTER XL.

*Ver. 1. Moreover, the Lord answered Job, and said.* It appears that the Lord gave Job some little respite to recollect himself, but finding him still silent, He proceeds to urge him yet further for an answer,—and is as he had said, *Hadst thou, O Job, diligently considered that I govern the whole world, surely thou would not have complained of my proceedings with thee, but must have been convinced, how unable thou art to enter into the secrets of my counsel! and reprehends Job.*

*Ver. 2. Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.* There is a twofold contending; by force and strength of arm, and by argument or reasoning—and this was the way that Job contended with God. There is a contending with the word of God. A natural man submits not to what God would either have him to believe or practise, Rom. viii. “The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law;” &c. but the contending here is about the work of God. All the debate which Job had with God was about his dealing with him. For though Job was very patient, yet under his pressures he often broke out into impatient speeches.

*Shall he instruct him?* that is, can he direct God to do and order things better than they are done? No, he cannot. Thus the Lord derides the folly of Job, who would attempt to teach him who is perfect in knowledge. In Psal. li. David makes confession of his sin, and adds, “that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest,” that is, when thou correctest me; and these words are applied by the apostle, Rom. iii. 4. to vindicate the honour of God against all aspersions whatever in his proceedings with man. Some may say, Surely there are none so bold as to contend with God, yet there are some who do it very openly and presumptuously, as Isa. viii. 21.; Rev. xvi. 9. Any secret rising of heart against any thing that God does, is striving with God; yea, our being not fully satisfied with God, is in some sense a contending with Him, and who can say, but at one time or other he hath contended with God. Seeing then there is a spirit in man to contend with God, let us watch and suppress every motion of discontent, for he is a Sovereign that can do nothing wrong. All his ways are judgment, not as opposed to mercies, but to injustice. He is infinite in wisdom, and all he does will work for good to them that love him.

At the same time that we ought to beware of contending with God, yet let us wrestle earnestly with God by prayer and supplication when he lays his hand upon us. When the providence of God was gracious to Jacob, it is said he wrestled with the angel, and Hosea tells us, it was by “weeping and making supplication.” It is our duty to receive instruction from God, and no man hath more need of it than he who thinks he can give instruction to God; and it is a sufficient proof of our ignorance and folly to think we could instruct Him who is perfect in knowledge.

*He that reproveth God,* or he that argueth or pleadeth with God. Contending with God, is indeed a reproving of God, these two acts expound each other.

*Let him answer it;* that is, let him answer the former question, whether he be able to instruct God or not? or, let him answer all those questions; or it may mean, let him bear his punishment.

Learn, That it is dangerous, it is at our peril to find fault with God. It is our duty to reprove others when we have an opportunity and a call to it, Lev. xix. 17. Gal. vi. 1. and what answer shall we give for suffering sin upon a brother by neglecting to reprove him? It is also our duty to examine and reprove ourselves for all our faults and failings, as well as wisely to reprove others for what is amiss in them. It is both a great duty and a sign of true grace, faithfully, and in love, to reprove others, and meekly to receive and improve by a reproof from others.

Here we see the Lord’s gentleness and mildness in speaking to Job. He does not thunder against him, but says, come let me see what you can answer, you are at liberty to speak for yourself.

*Ver. 3. Then Job answered the Lord, and said.* Job seems greatly appalled by the Lord’s appearance to him, and being urged to answer, he is puzzled, yea nonplussed, with the intricate questions that God had put to him; and the answer he gave in general was, that he could not answer; and therefore he submits at once, acknowledging that he had done amiss in speaking unadvisedly, and resolving that he would do so no more.

*Ver. 4. Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.*

*Behold.* Job does neither conceal nor extenuate, but says, Let all men behold what now I see myself, that *I am vile*. The root from which this word is taken, signifies to be light, to be contemned, and as we translate, to be vile. Man at his best estate is vile and altogether vanity, if we consider his body as formed of the dust. The apostle calls it a vile body; but man is especially vile through the sinfulness of his nature and life. Sin has degraded man and laid him low, even viler than the dust of which he was made.

All the dealings of God with his people are designed to bring man off from, and out of himself, and till this is effected neither ordinances nor providences have their due effect upon him. We must come to Job's acknowledgment that we are vile, that we are nothing, and that God is all to us in Christ before we are Christians indeed. The Lord never left off battering Job with afflictions, and following him with questions, till he brought him to this confession.

The light of God shews us our darkness, the power of God our weakness, his wisdom our folly, his purity and majesty our vileness, his all-sufficiency our nothingness. The reason why many retire from ordinances as proud as ever, is because they have little or no communion with God by faith in them, or God doth not manifest himself to them by his blessed Spirit. And it is in vain to look for deliverance till we renounce our pride, and the lower we become in our own eyes we are the nearer a lifting up.

*What shall I answer thee.* It is the happiness of humbled sinners that they have Christ to answer for them, seeing in that case no sinner can answer for himself. When God appears to any poor creature in his majesty and glory, it not only takes away all matter of dispute, but leaves him speechless; as in the next words,

*I will lay my hand upon my mouth.* As if he had said, That all may see that I know not what to answer, I will impose silence upon myself. The tongue, if left at liberty, will be making answers when it can answer nothing to the purpose. The tongue even of a good man needs a bridle, and the better any man is, the more he bridles his tongue.

Hence learn, That we should be very watchful over whatever has been an instrument or occasion of sin, and that it is necessary sometimes to abridge ourselves in what we may do, lest we should do what we may not. This is a holy revenge, and is one of those seven effects of godly sorrow which works repentance not to be repented of, 2 Cor. vii. It is seldom that the tongue is left loose but it speaks what is cause of regret, as it is occasion of offence either to God or man, if not to both. This godly fear, as well as a gracious shame for what he had spoken amiss before, caused Job to resolve to be silent, which he confirms.

*Ver. 5. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.* The expression *once, yea, twice*, implies that he had spoken often, but Heb. "I will not add," I will no more apologise for myself, nor stand in my own defence, but lay myself low in the presence of God. And as I myself purpose so, I humbly beg leave of thee that I may be silent. I grant all that thou hast said of thy own greatness and of my vileness, and I bewail my overdaring rashness; I will not defend what I have said unadvisedly; and to make sure of that, I am resolved to say no more. A good man will not give himself liberty to sin; he resolves not to sin, but in the strength of Christ says, I will proceed no farther. The voice of true repentance is this, I will sin no more. Though I deny not, that he who hath truly repented of a particular sin, and sincerely purposed not to commit it any more, may be overtaken with the same sin again, by being overpowered with temptation and corruption.

Hence observe, That when sins and failings are heartily confessed, they are not persevered in. True confession of sin is always followed with forsaking of it, Prov. xxviii. 13. and xxx. 32. "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth;" that is, do not speak a word in defence of it. That man is not a confessor of sin, but a mocker of God, who pretends to confess a sin, and yet takes no care to keep himself pure, not only from that, but from every sin. The apostle John doth not only say, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, but he cannot commit sin because he is born of God." Not that he hath not a natural power to sin, but he sins not with the full consent of his will, or he hath a sincere bent of his will against all sin. The will of a wicked man is wholly for sin; the will of a godly man, as such, is wholly against sin, so that when he sins he may be said to sin against his own will as well as against God, and therefore, when convinced that he hath sinned either in passion or by impatient words, (as was Job's case) he joins with Job saying, "I will proceed no farther."

Job was so far humbled that he could make no further reply to God; but God has much more to say to Job. Thus we see when the Lord begins to humble a soul, he will never give it over till he bring him to the dust indeed.

*Ver. 6. Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said.*

*Then;* that is, when Job could not answer, and owned that he was vile, even *then* the Lord answered him.

*Out of the whirlwind.* God hath terrible ways of revealing himself. The whirlwind, and speaking out of it, notes a legal dispensation, or a ministration of terror. When he threatens in the law he speaks dreadfully, sometimes by his providences and judgments; and he speaks terribly to us in our own personal afflictions and by sad dispensations, 1 Pet. i. 6. "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations;" that is, afflictions and trials; there is need that the holiest in this world be sometimes in heaviness. As we need daily bread, so most days we need a rod to bring us into a deeper sense of our own vileness, and thereby to humble and lay us low under a sense of the sovereignty, holiness, and righteousness of God. It is to teach us to know more of God and ourselves, that he speaks to us in whirlwinds of terrible dispensations.

As the word that goeth out of the Lord's mouth shall not return to him void, so he will continue or increase the afflictions of his people till he accomplish his purpose by them. We are too ready to think that when we are humbled, and confess that we are vile, and that the Lord is righteous, that we should obtain immediate relief. But it is not enough that we are truly humbled, it must be sufficiently deep and abiding. When Job said, "I am vile," he did not dissemble with God, he was hearty and sincere; but it appears his spirit was not yet low enough in the sight of God, therefore he must be awakened and still more deeply humbled with another whirlwind, that he might give further glory to God in his own abasement.

Hence infer, That if the Lord spake thus to Job, and may speak thus terribly to any good man once and again, what then will become of the wicked and ungodly who continue to despise his overtures of peace, when he calls them to appear before him at the judgment? They will then be hurried away into everlasting darkness.

*Ver. 7. Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.* At chap. xxxviii. 3. we had these words almost word for word. Some look upon this as an irony, or as a challenge from God; others say it is given as a counsel to Job, or for his comfort and encouragement. It imports the necessity of preparation for every duty; when we read or hear the word of God, we have need to gird up the loins of our minds that we may duly attend, meditate on, and practise what is enjoined upon us. And when we engage in the duty of prayer, how can we expect to prevail with God to grant our requests while our garments hang loose? that is, our affections are set on worldly things, and are not set wholly and entirely on things that are above.

Isaiah complains, chap. lxiv. "There is none that calleth upon thy name;" doubtless many called upon God in those days, but he adds, "that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." They did not wrestle and strive with God by faith in Christ, and therefore it is reckoned as if they had not prayed at all.

The Lord would have us play the man when we have anything to do with, or for him, and not behave like children; much less should we play the fool, as if we thought that bodily service was all that God required. We should especially stand waiting for the coming of the Lord, with loins girt and lamps burning. When Christ comes, all must appear before him, but none shall be able to stand but those who are looking and hastening, (or are duly preparing) for the coming of the day of God.

Taking the words as for comfort and encouragement, observe, that when God intends to humble his people most, he would not have them despair in the least. God loves to see his people humbled, but not to see them dejected.

*Ver. 8. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment; wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?* Here the Lord begins to chide and expostulate with Job.

To *disannul*, is to make void, to frustrate, &c.; it is the same word, Psal. cxix. 126. "They have made void thy law." It is so to break the commands as if we would rescind and repeal them. The word is applied to great sinning, Ezra ix. 13.

*My judgment*, which in this place is the course of God's administration in this world, in which he always proceeds upon the highest reason, and executes judgment or punishment upon persons or nations. This question is a reproof to Job, who in justifying himself had censured God's dealings with him; but it is impossible to reverse the

judgments of God. And since the sentence which God has declared against sinners cannot be disannulled, what reason have we to bless God for Christ, who endured that judgment in his own person which could not be disannulled nor made void? God reckons his judgments disannulled when we do not submit to them, nor humble ourselves under them as we ought; then we may be said to disannul and make void his judgments as much as in our power. Let us often remember this, and beware of saying under the afflictions that God appoints for us, "we could bear any affliction but this; it has continued so long, and there is no prospect of deliverance; if they were not so numerous nor to such a severe degree, then I could endure it." If in these ways we may be said to disannul the judgments of God ere ever we are aware, what shall we say of those who murmur and rage against God under their afflictions? We may pray earnestly and importunately, and humbly expostulate with God about our afflictions, yet still quietly submit; and the more quietly we submit to them, the fitter we are to pray and wrestle with God about them, that he in his own time and way would remove them.

*Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?* These words may be taken as an exposition of the former. As if the Lord had said, Either I must be condemned, or thou must; and while thou insistest so much upon thine own innocence, thou appearest to cast blame upon my justice.

Job had no intention to condemn God. But by speaking of God afflicting the righteous and prospering the wicked, and in defence of his own righteousness before men, he appeared to derogate from the righteousness of God. If we would have honour to ourselves, it must be by humbling ourselves before God, and not by contending with him, much less by condemning him.

*Ver. 9. Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?* To humble Job, and to bring down his spirit more and more, the Lord condescends to shew the disparity between himself and Job as to power.

*Hast thou an arm like God?* As the arm is put for the power of man, so by a figure for the power of God, Psal. xcvi. 1. We read of the finger, the hand, and the arm of God, which signifies the fulness of the power of God, by which he protects his people, Isa. lxiii. 12. He delivers them from and destroys their enemies, Deut. xxxiii. 27. and by an assisting strengthening arm, he enables his people to perform every duty which he calls them unto, Isa. liii. 1; that is, who hath received power to believe and obey God? The arm of God works powerfully in convicting and saving souls, Psal. cx. 3. The Lord can, and will do whatsoever he has promised; and he assures his people, that he will do whatsoever they ask in faith, and he often does more than they ask. Now, as the Lord arrests poor sinners, and brings them out of their natural state unasked, so after they are made his children, they receive many mercies unasked, Isa. lxxv. 1. The Lord expects his people to pray for every thing he has promised, when he had made large and gracious promises, Ezek. xxxvi. he immediately adds, ver. 37. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." We should extend our prayers to the utmost line of the word, both to prophecies and promises. Prayer helps them all to the birth, and they seldom bring forth alone; and indeed prayer is nothing else in the matter of it, but turns the promises into petitions. It is the will of God to make good all his predictions and promises.

Infer, 1. Since the Lord has such a mighty arm, let us beware of provoking him to turn his arm against us. 1 Cor. x. 22. "Do we provoke," &c. 2. Since God has such a mighty arm, then let us trust in him, and labour to attain an assurance of our interest in him. When we really trust in him, we renounce our confidence in any thing else. We cannot trust creatures too little, (as to success), nor can we trust God too much. 3. Since the Lord is infinite in power, let us, under a sense of our weakness, either for duty or trial, pray to God, as Isa. li. 9. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord."

They who never trust unduly in man, will not fear man, but according to duty. We have cause to fear man when we do that which is evil. Our Lord, Luke xii. gave but a single prohibition of our fear of man, gave a double charge to fear God, knowing that to be the best remedy against any undue or sinful fear of man. "Be still, and know that I am God," Psal. xlv. We never truly know that God is, nor what he is, till we are still, that is, composed into a deep, silent consideration of his eternal power and Godhead, or that he is God.

*Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?* The voice of God in the thunder ex-

ceeds the voices of all men. But when it is taken improperly, it signifies any mighty speaking, or speaking with mighty effect. The xxixth Psalm is true of natural thunder, yet it is chiefly to be understood of the spiritual thunder, the power that goeth forth with the word of God. Let us seriously consider whether God hath spoken to us effectually or not. Have we experienced the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon us along with the word? If the voice has not reached our hearts, and reformed our lives, we have not heard the thunder of God's voice, but only a sound in the air, beating the outward ear. We ought diligently to inquire whether we have found, and do we at present find, the commanding, the promising, threatening, instructing, and comforting voices of God operating effectually upon our hearts. Blessed are they who have been thus thunderstruck, who are driven entirely out of themselves, to prize, love, and confide wholly and only in Christ.

*Ver. 10. Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency, and array thyself with glory and beauty.* God having interrogated Job as to his power, seems now ironically to call upon him to *deck* or adorn himself *with majesty and excellency*. Both words signify highness, exaltation, and are often used to signify pride, because they who are highly exalted are usually proud, or at least are under a temptation to be so. Then follows two other ornamental expressions, *glory* and *beauty*, which are often joined together, Psal. xxi. 5. xlv. 3. and we render them honour and majesty. We may take the one for that which appears outwardly, in vestures, gestures, &c. and the other as importing that reverence and veneration which is given to those who appear in splendour and dignity. Thus the Lord uses many words to the same purpose, to intimate how highly decked they must be who attempt to contend with God, who is infinite in every perfection. Since God is clothed with majesty, let us tremble before him; that is, approach him with awe and reverence; and the more we have truly tasted of the goodness and mercy of God in Christ, the more shall we tremble at his majesty.

As we should tremble at the majesty of the Lord, so we should admire his *excellency*. "Who is a God like unto thee?"

Seeing the Lord is clothed with *glory*, we should glorify him in his essential glory, and in the glory of all his operations, especially for the greatness of his grace, mercy, power, and holiness. Exod. xv. 11. "Let us love and adore the Lord in the beauty of his holiness; for he is arrayed with the perfection of beauty." Since men are so ambitious to serve those who are decked with worldly splendour, let the people of God ascribe praise, glory, majesty, dominion, and power, to Him who is able to support and protect them in all their services, and reward them for them. They can lose nothing by him, though they should lose all for him, even life itself. Did we truly know the Lord in the discoveries he hath made of himself, we would neither think nor speak of God, but with a gracious awe upon our spirits. The glory and beauty of God is spiritual, and the beauty that he must be served with is above all the inward beauty of faith, and love, and holy fear of him in our hearts.

The Lord's Prayer, by which we are to form, or unto which we should conform all our prayers, concludes thus: "thine is the kingdom, power, and glory;" all is thine. Then we ought to take all our encouragement in prayer from God only, believing that whatever we ask in faith we shall receive it. As all spiritual blessings are the gift of God, so all civil ornaments are put on man by God. Isa. xlv. 5. "I girded thee," &c. 2 Chron. ix. 25. "The Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly." But the majesty, excellency, glory, and beauty of God, are all of and from himself. The majesty, glory, &c. of the most illustrious man, is only a fading flower, when compared to him whose glory is eternal. O how does all the glory of this world vanish at the appearance of the glory of God?

Why did the Lord call Job to *deck himself*, &c. Was it not to bring him to a due sense of his own divine majesty and excellency, as well as to convince Job of his own meanness and nothingness in comparison of Jehovah, decked with majesty and glory.

Hence observe, the way to lay the creature low is to consider the majesty of God.

*Ver. 11. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath, and behold every one that is proud, and abase him.* Let me see now what a man thou art when inflamed with anger.

*Cast abroad*; that is, furiously disperse and scatter thy rage. The word notes a violent hurrying along. Go look upon proud ones; as they deserve, deal with them. There is a beholding with favour, delight, and pleasure, Psal. xxxiii. 18.; and there is a beholding with anger and displeasure, which is the meaning here. Behold them all, not only to take notice of them who they are, but to abase them. Every proud

man is as a mountain ; and Job is here called upon to lay them low. But it is only the Lord himself that can accomplish this. As if he had said, I have power, that though proud ones are as great mountains, yet I can make them as valleys. This is repeated :

*Ver. 12. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place.* As if the Lord had said, I behold the proud man, and I abase him ; I look upon the proud man, and bring him low. Now let me see you do so too. Psal. cxxxviii. 6. "He knoweth the proud afar off." That is, a proud man shall never come near him ; he will not admit him into his presence, much less into his embraces. To those whom the Lord knows afar off in this world, he will say at last, "I never knew you, depart from me," &c. Matt. vii. As God is able, so he will cast down proud men, as he did Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 37. and Isa. ii. Proud men look upon themselves much above others ; but "wherein they deal proudly God is above them," Exod. xviii. James iv. "God resisteth the proud." God will not bear it, even in his own children. When Hezekiah's heart was lifted up, "there was wrath upon him," 2 Chron. xxxii. "A man's pride, (Prov. xxix.) "shall bring him low." He shall be brought low for his pride. David desired no more for his portion but that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, Psal. iv. 6. that is, that God would look favourably upon him ; and as he can save his people with a smiling look, so he can destroy his enemies by a frowning one.

Inf. 1. Since God has an evil eye upon proud men, then woe unto them. Isa. xxviii. 1. "Woe to the crown of pride ;" that is, to those who make that their glory and honour which will prove their shame and downfall. "To the drunkards of Ephraim ;" that is, those that are drunk with their own presumptions, or with vain hopes and expectations. We have vain confidences and expectations so expressed, Nahum i. 10. 2d, Since there is such a woe to proud men, it is necessary to consider who are the proud ones. Pride is an evil weed, yet it grows often in the best soil. All are proud who value themselves highly on account of their natural parts, their knowledge or learning, their moral virtues, their spiritual graces, faith, self-denial, and holy duties, prayer, fastings, &c. their good deeds. But what is there in which the vain heart of man is not ready to be unduly lifted up? And to be lifted up in any thing lays man open to the resistance of God, and all such he will bring down and abase. 3d, Since the Lord will bring down proud men, then let us not be afraid of proud men, nor envy them, but let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, believing he will lift us up in due time. 4th, Learn that pride is a very heinous sin in the sight of God. It is the devil's sin, and they who are not subject to God are the devil's subjects ; for he is a king over all the children of pride. As unbelief is a mother sin, so is pride, Hab. ii. 5. They who walk humbly, and are low in their own eyes, walk safely ; for they are under the protection of the Most High.

To be *wicked in* the last clause is the same as to be *proud*. To tread down a person intimates utter contempt and absolute conquest over him. God shall bruise or tread Satan under your feet shortly ; that is, he will give you a full and final victory over the devil.

*Ver. 13. Hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret.* That is, bring them to utter destruction, to condign punishment *together* ; put them into the same condition, that they may not be able to do any more mischief ; and *to bind their faces in secret*, is to bring them to death. David, Psal. cxix. 21. shews the wickedness of proud men. They are such as wander continually out of the ways of truth and holiness.

When the Lord blasts proud women in their beauty and bravery, Isa. iii. and proud men in their honour and estimation, he toucheth them in that which the spirit of pride prizeth most, and is parted from with the greatest regret.

Observe, That impenitent high-minded sinners, are in a very sad condition, and shall come to an awful end, Psal. ix. 16, 17 ; that is the utmost sorrow and suffering shall be their portion.

Neither strong associations, nor wise consultations, nor highest resolutions, nor the completest preparation for action shall avail in the day of God's wrath, Isa. viii. 9. "The Lord is known by the judgment that he executeth," that is, by punishing the wicked he is known to be the Lord ; God's power, and wisdom, and justice, are visible in his judgments.

*Ver. 14. Then will I confess that thine own right hand can save thee.* That is,



when thou hast done all these things I will acknowledge that thou hast some ground to contest with me, and that thou art able to uphold thyself. These mighty acts are peculiar to me, yet thou seemest to say, thou can do all these, or surely thou hadst never offered to contend with me.

But did Job ever say his own right hand could save him? No. Yet when he spake of debating his matters, and arguing with God, he spake too highly of himself. God is "the one lawgiver who is able to save and destroy," James iv. and because he can destroy all, he is able to save all, and will save all that trust in him.

Let us renounce all confidence in ourselves, and look upon our own right hand as weak and withered, unable to bring any thing to pass but as the Lord is pleased to put forth his right hand to strengthen ours. And when we are thus sensible of and humbled on account of our own weakness, then the Lord will enable us to do all things which he gives us a call to do, through "Christ strengthening," 2 Cor. xii. 10, "I take pleasure in infirmities, &c. for when I am weak," that is, in myself, "then am I strong," that is, in the Lord.

Thus God taught Job, and teaches all men, that no man can save himself by his own right hand, therefore, to think that we can save ourselves, or do any thing effectually towards it, is presumptuously assuming the prerogative of God. There is no salvation in any name, nor by any hand but by Jesus Christ.

God having spoken of proud men whom he alone is able to abase, he proceeds to a large and accurate description of two monstrous creatures, in the making and governing of which his mighty power and wonderful providence are clearly seen. Some of the ancients take behemoth and leviathan as an allegory, understanding by them the devil and antichrist, with all the oppressive powers of this world; but whatever use may be made of the allegory, yet doubtless these two creatures are here intended primarily in a proper and literal sense.

The Lord having manifested his power and wisdom in lesser creatures, now farther to convince and humble Job, describes those great creatures as made and governed by him, shows how great God is, and that, since man is no match for the creatures, how foolish it must be to contend with the Almighty!

*Ver. 15. Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee, he eateth grass as an ox.* Behold, calls for attention, and gives warning that what follows is of no ordinary importance. All the works of God ought to be carefully and attentively considered by us; but let us not forget, but chiefly through all his works, be led to behold Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, &c.

*Behemoth.* The common and received opinion is that it is the proper elephant, though Bochart asserts that it is the hippopotamus, or Egyptian elephant, and that leviathan is the crocodile. He says, that as all the other creatures mentioned before were land animals, it is likely that these two are amphibious, and the hippopotamus and the crocodile are fitly joined together, because there is a great likeness, as both are very big and fierce, and amphibious, and four footed, and the river Nilus is their common habitation; besides, the Hebrew word Behema is applicable to all four-footed beasts. But take which you will of these animals, there are some things in this description of them by God himself which cannot be applied either to the one or to the other without evident difficulties. All which arise from our ignorance of the creatures treated of, and the description given of them, and not from the darkness of the Scriptures in themselves.

Here behemoth is described by his Author and Maker. *I made him*, saith the Lord; he is my workmanship.

*With thee.* God spake this to humble Job, from the consideration that behemoth was of God's making as well as himself. He is thy fellow-creature; and though he is the greatest beast that moves on the earth, yet I made him as well as the least worm, and on the same day that I made man. I made him to be with thee on the land, yea, to love thy company, to be guided by thee, and in many things to act with a kind of reason. I made him to serve thee.

*He eateth grass as an ox.* He is as harmless as a labouring ox. Isa. xi. 7. speaking of the power of the gospel, says, "The lion shall eat straw like the ox;" that is, the spirits of those men who have been fierce as lions shall not hurt the lambs of Christ's flock. The Lord speaks of behemoth eating grass like an ox, to shew that though he is exceeding strong, yet he is a very harmless creature.

*Ver. 16. Lo now his strength is in his loins, and his force in the navel of his belly.*

He has strength proportionable to his greatness. It is said of the virtuous woman, "She girdeth her loins with strength;" that is, she is ready and able for any work within her sphere, or becoming her sex. And Ezekiel is called to sigh to the breaking of his loins; that is, sigh, mourn, and lament, till thou art become feeble with mourning, lamenting, &c. When the Lord calls us to "fear him, and depart from evil," he says, "It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones;" that is, thou shalt have health and strength, and much comfort in thy life.

The Lord has furnished behemoth with wonderful strength, not in any offensive part. His head hath no horns; his feet no claws to do mischief with; but that he may be useful to man in bearing burdens, I have placed it chiefly in his loins and belly. His strength further appears:

*Ver. 17. He moveth his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his stones are wrapt together.* Some take the tail properly. Others say it cannot be so understood; for his tail is so small that it cannot resemble a cedar. Others expound the original word of his snout or trunk. Beza renders, "he moveth his prominent part or trunk, which is as the cedar; the sinews of the terribleness thereof are wrapped together."

The word for *stones* properly signifies fear, and is everywhere so rendered.

*Ver. 18. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron.* Bones are the strength and stability of the body. They are as a corset on the body, to defend and preserve the nobler parts from danger and annoyance. It may be read, "His bones are as conduit pipes of brass;" and then it refers to those bones that are hollow. The second clause is not the same word, and may refer to solid bones, said to be like bars of iron. The bones being compared to brass, says they are exceedingly strong; but iron is spoken of as the strongest of all metals by Daniel: "The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces, and subdueth all things."

Now follows the triumphant conclusion.

*Ver. 19. He is the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him.* Behemoth is the chief of the ways of God, not absolutely, but in his kind, that is, among the beasts.

The Hebrew strictly taken, in Psal. cxix. 160. "The beginning or head of thy word is true." That which is chief in the word of God is the truth of it, or God's faithfulness in making it good; and therefore the first thing that faith does is to set its seal to the truth of God. The works of God are called his ways. He appeared displaying gloriously his divine perfections in creation; and in his works of providence every day he manifests his power, wisdom, and goodness.

Hence observe, that though all the works of God are very good and excellent, yet he has made some for to excel others. Behemoth is called the chief of the ways of God, and one star differs from another in glory. And among men there is a great variety, some far excelling others. But let none be troubled that they are not chief, nor that they are not equal to many others in abilities or station. It is best to be where God has placed us. Let us therefore be content with and thankful for what God has given us, and study to improve every talent he has been pleased to bestow upon us, without repining that others excel us in gifts and usefulness. And we must not desire even the best gifts of faith, hope, charity, merely for self ends, but that by them we may be fitted and inclined to honour God, and serve our generation according to the will of God.

Let us adore the power of God who overrules the mighty strength of this creature, and makes him serviceable and obedient to man; and let us consider it as a strong obligation to obey and serve God with cheerfulness and alacrity. And if at the sight and consideration of the creatures, which in some things excel man, we do not humble ourselves before God, who is infinitely superior to us and all other creatures, we despise and neglect the scope and design of this and every similar passage of Scripture. We are to honour God as the maker of all creatures, but especially as he is the maker of the new creature; he makes the proud humble, the carnal spiritually minded, &c. Since God not only made all things, but made all things for himself, therefore we should dedicate ourselves to him, and live and act for his glory and to his honour.

Some read, He that made him made his sword (his trunk) to defend himself. There is no creature but hath some way or other for defence or escape from danger. So God has armed the new creature with weapons of offence and defence to save from the

wounds of temptation, and to resist and overcome the tempter. The sword is the power of God put forth, by whatever mean, for subduing or destroying this mighty creature.

There is no creature so great or strong but God can easily subdue and conquer him; this teaches us not to trust in the power of any creature, nor to fear the hatred of the world, nor the most powerful persecutors in it, for God has them wholly in his power, and can at pleasure prevent them from injuring his chosen ones. This is the very argument used, Isa. liv. Notwithstanding the skill of the smith in making instruments, and the strength of the waster to destroy with them; yet the very ground upon which the Lord assured them, "That no weapon formed against them should prosper," was because both the smith and the waster were his own creatures.

Now the Lord who made the four great beasts, or successions of kings, to arise out of the earth, made his sword to approach every one of them. So the great beasts mentioned in the Revelation are the powers of the earth set against the church of God, and Isaiah, chap. xxvii. speaks of the Lord's sword and the use he will make of it; that is, he will overcome the devil and all his instruments who oppose and would destroy his vineyard of red wine; that is his church.

*Ver. 20. Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field do play.* God provides suitable and sufficient food for all his creatures, therefore behemoth hath mountains to graze upon. So the Lord supplies his people according to their needs; however great their needs, his store is greater! "The world is mine and the fulness thereof." They shall not want any thing that is good and expedient for them; "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

The beasts of the field not only feed with behemoth, but sport and play, because they know he will not hurt them. Were the elephant as cruel as he is great and strong the beasts would not venture to play beside him. The church is represented as playing even where ravenous beasts feed, Isa. xi. 6—9. The care of God over his people appears, 1st, In hiding them from such as would do them hurt, Jer. xxxvi. 26. 2dly, By restraining and disappointing their enemies, and even causing them to shew them favour and deal kindly with them.

A playing life is the life of a beast. How beast-like do they live, who, like Israel, Exod. xxxii. 6. "Eat and drink, and rose up to play?"

*Ver. 21, 22. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about.* These two verses shew the manner of behemoth's repose; as he hath food upon the mountains, so he is shaded by the trees from the heat of the sun. God has so provided that one thing shall defend or counterbalance the annoyance of another. And thus the Lord hath not only given us bread to eat, but conveniences and comforts; and while he is bestowing liberally upon us, let us take heed that we make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.

When we are disappointed and vexed by one creature, God can easily raise up another, and frequently does give help and comfort by one from whom we had no expectation. And the goodness and grace of God shines most clearly in all the distresses which come to us by men, yea, that come to us by our own sins, that we may find relief against them all in Jesus Christ, who is to all believers not only as the shadow of a tree, but as the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isa. xxxii. 2. The Lord hath provided us shady trees and the willows of the brook, (blessed and precious promises) to compass us about in all our troubles.

*Ver. 23. Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.* Now we have behemoth's drinking in, or at the river. The word which we translate to *drink up*, signifies to rob, to oppress; and so some render, "he robbeth a river;" to express his great drought, he drinks, as if at a draught he meant to drink a river dry.

*And hasteth not;* that is, he does not drink in fear, he takes his time. In the greatness of his thirst he does so much slight any small brook or pond, that he is confident were he at the banks of Jordan he would drink it dry. He drinks a great quantity, yet only what nature and necessity require; he does not drink thus in wantonness, or to satisfy a lust; he drinks much, but he is no drunkard.

*Ver. 24. He taketh it with his eyes; his nose pierceth through snares.* Some read interrogatively, "Will any take him in his sight, or bore his nose with a snare?" importing an utter impossibility.

*He taketh it with his eyes.* This intimates that he is so thirsty, that he is exceed-

ingly pleased to see the river, the very sight of the water makes him glad. Some of the Rabbins expound, "He taketh it with his eyes;" that is, when he comes to a river he is so thirsty that he thrusts his head in up to his very eyes, as if he were to drink with them. The very sight of any thing we greatly want and earnestly desire is pleasing to us. They that are given to drink are pleased at the sight of it in the cup, their eyes are taken with it, therefore Solomon's caution, Prov. xxiii. "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup."

O how David complains, Psal. lxi. of being in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; and how earnestly does he desire to see "thy power and thy glory as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." As if he had said, "There I have seen the flowing forth of thy goodness, power, and glory; and O how I long to see it again!" He speaks to the same purpose, Psal. xxvii. 4. The sense of seeing is delightful; what, then, must the grace of seeing be?

*His nose pierceth through snares;* that is, he thrusteth his nose into the river disregarding any snare that may have been placed there to entangle him; he is so thirsty and determined to drink, that he makes way through all impediments.

Those whose understandings have been enlightened, their wills rectified, and the affections set on things above, by means of the word of God, the water of life, they will break through every difficulty, and risk every danger, to obtain fresh instruction and consolation for their souls from the same source.

## CHAPTER XLI.

*Ver. 1. Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord that thou lettest down?* The word *leviathan* is derived from an Hebrew root, which signifies, added to, or joined together. Many say *leviathan* here is wholly an allegory of the old enemy of mankind the devil. It is true that many things here spoken of him are applicable to the devil; others who prosecute the allegory apply it to bad princes, who use their power for oppression and vexation. Nor can it be denied that *leviathan* (Isa. xxvii. 1, 2.) means the king of Babylon, as the king of Egypt is expressly called (*Tannin*) a sea dragon, Ezek. xxix. Some say the word means all great fishes, but most say it is the whale in particular. Beza and Bochart confidently assert that *leviathan* is the crocodile. It seems that some parts of the description will not apply to the whale, others will not apply to the crocodile; so that whether it applies to either of them, or to some other creature, is not easily determined.

If the fish bite, the hook takes him by the tongue or jaws. The Heb. is, "Canst thou take him with a cord which thou drawest, or lettest down?" The question implies, Thou canst not; but that God can as easily draw out this huge creature as a man can draw out a small fish with a hook. As he that made *behemoth* can make his sword to approach unto him; so he has a hook that can draw up *leviathan*.

*Ver. 2. Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?* To put a hook into the nose signifies, 1st, To repress the rage or wrath of man; 2d, To divert or turn him aside from his purpose, 2 Kings xix. 28. Ezek. xix. 4. and so in this place he says, "Canst thou, O Job, abate the fury, or stop the course of *leviathan*?" "Canst thou," &c.

*Or bore his jaw through with a thorn,* and so carry him away with thee, which is impossible from its amazing size. From which learn, how great, how mighty is that God who has made such great, such mighty creatures!

*Canst thou?* is as if the Lord had said, "Thou cannot, but I can." As the power of God supplies all the weakness of the creature to do any thing, so it surpasseth all that strength and greatness of the creature which may seem to hinder him from doing anything with it or upon it.

It is much easier for Christ to subdue any *leviathan* than to change our vile body into the likeness of his own glorious body. For as Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power in his own resurrection, so he will declare himself to be the Son of God with power by our resurrection.

As the Lord prepared a fish to swallow up Jonah, so he commanded the fish to deliver him safe back again; which teaches us, that the Lord has a sovereign power over all, even the greatest of creatures. This may comfort and strengthen the faith of those who at any time see *leviathans* ready to swallow them up as the fish did Jonah. The

account of the Lord having a net for Pharaoh, Ezek. xxxii. Psal. lxxiv. and a hook for Sennacherib, is food for the faith of all the Lord's people in all the dangers and distresses they are exposed to in their journey through this world.

*Ver. 3. Will he make many supplications to thee? will he speak soft words unto thee?* Some speak soft words to divert evil, others that they may obtain good. But leviathan is here represented in the pride of his heart, as neither fearing any hurt you can do him, nor desiring you should do him any good, and therefore will he speak soft words unto thee? No, not he.

Hence observe, That the proud and mighty will not make supplications nor use entreaties. There are many proud stout-hearted leviathans in the likeness of men, yea, whole families that will not make supplication to God, Jer. x. 25. they think they have enough of strength of their own, and behave as if they were not indebted to God for any thing they have, nor desired to have any thing from him. The Lord speaks, Psal. xiv. of a generation of men who "shame the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge," that is, because in all their wants, dangers, and distresses, they have recourse to God by prayer as their only refuge. Of what spirit those men were, who shamed, or were ashamed of this counsel and course of the poor, he tells us, ver. 4. "They eat up my people—and will not call upon God." None but humble ones who are convinced that all they have, yea, that the greatest things they can have in this world can stand them in no stead without God, will speak soft words of supplication unto God. Leviathan never thinks himself in danger or in want, and therefore he scorns all the world, and in this he is an emblem of all carnal worldly men.

*Ver. 4. Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever.* That is, will he become thy servant by covenant? There are two things in a servant's covenant, 1st, It obliges him to work. 2d, It assures him of a reward. God's covenant with us assures us of mercy. I will be to you a God, I will pardon your sins, and that requires duty,—you shall be to me a people, you shall walk humbly and uprightly before me, you shall serve me for ever. All the creatures were made for man's service, and were once his servants; and therefore, when creatures will not serve us, especially when they rise up against us, we should remember, not only our fall in Adam, but our daily failings in the service of God. In the charter of man's lordship over the creatures, Gen. i. 28. "He gave him dominion over the fish of the sea," which includes dominion over the leviathan, and when the charter was renewed to Noah, it includes among other grants the subjection of the fish of the sea. But when man by sin lost command of himself, he also lost command over the creatures. Sin hinders our present enjoyments, and will, unless repented of by us, and pardoned by God, cut us off from our future hopes. We should behold and bewail it as a part of that great curse fallen upon us by the sin of Adam and our own present sins, that many creatures refuse to serve us.

*Ver. 5. Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?* Wilt thou cozen or ensnare him as a bird? canst thou entangle him with lime-twigs, or entice him into thy net and then play with him? He does play in his own element, Psal. civ. 26. "There is that leviathan whom thou hast made to play therein;" that is, in the sea, but he will not play with you, nor dare you play with him. He is like that froward generation, Matt. xi. 16. "If you mourn, he will not lament, if you pipe, he will not dance." He will neither weep nor rejoice, fast, nor feast, work nor play with you.

The five following verses shew the great difficulty and danger of catching him.

*Ver. 6. Shall thy companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants.* Fishermen use to go out in companies, and when successful, they first eat part and make merry, as at a banquet, and then send the remainder to market. That which is got by hard and perilous labour, makes the labourer merry when they obtain it. What will not men do? Whither will they not venture for profit? Gain sweetens labour, and the hope of a market, the hardness of any undertaking. Merchants have been of old buying and selling, conveying by land, and transporting by sea the commodities of one country to another, which turns to the mutual advantage of mankind; only let merchants keep always in mind the admonition, 1 Cor. vii. 29. "The time is short, let them that buy, be as if they possessed not;" &c. but let them in the midst of all their earthly pursuits, maintain a constant and diligent search after the treasure hid in the field; and then let them habitually live, renouncing all expectation of happiness from the merchandize of this world, buying "without money and

without price" the pearl of infinite value,—so shall they rejoice with exceeding great joy.

*Ver. 7. Canst thou fill his shin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears?* Barbed irons and fish spears are instruments used in taking whales. These questions do not import an utter impossibility, but the extreme difficulty of taking the leviathan.

Note, that which is very hardly done, may be spoken of as if it could not be done at all. Because it is a hard thing for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, Christ saith, "It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye." To shew the extreme difficulty of reclaiming an accustomed sinner, it is said, Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin? then may he who is accustomed to do evil, learn to do good." But though many things are impossible with men, yet all things are possible with God, and blessed be his name, that through his grace, many a hardened sinner has repented, and learned to fear and obey God.

*Ver. 8. Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more.* Some render, If thou shalt lay thine hand on him, thou wilt remember the battle, and do no more. It is at thy peril if thou touch him, or attempt to take him either by craft or force. Thus it seems to be a concession like that Solomon gives the young man, Eccl. xi. 9. "Rejoice O young man," &c. but what follows, "know for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." So here the Lord seems to say, Go lay thy hand upon him, but remember, leviathan is a terrible creature, therefore I advise thee to do no more, venture no further. It is a wise and necessary duty to consider the issue of every action before we enter upon it. We should look at and prepare for every danger that duty may expose us unto; or else, when danger comes, we shall soon forsake our duty. Many take up a profession who never think of the afflictions and temptations which may befall them for Christ's sake;—they remembered not the battle, they did not count what their profession might cost them, and so have either been overcome and fallen in it, or have unworthily forsaken their colours and run from it. There are things that we are to persevere in doing, though we see our danger to be very great, yea though we should lose our lives in doing them, but there are many things we may not do if we foresee danger. Take heed of doing any thing that is sinful, for it will expose you to a sore battle in thy own conscience; but that is not all, remember the battle with God, who is greater than conscience,—you must come to judgment, and every sin exposes us to eternal death.

*Ver. 9. Behold the hope of him is in vain, shall not one be cast down at the sight of him?* As if the Lord had said, the hope of him that attempts to take leviathan by any of those means, will be frustrated. Our hope is said to be in vain, or a lie, three ways. 1st, When we hope for much and get but little, as Hag. i. 9. "Ye looked for much," that is, ye looked for a plentiful harvest, "and behold it came to little." 2d, Hope is much more in vain when we hope for much and get nothing, as Jer. ii. 30. "In vain have I smitten your children." Why in vain? "they have received no correction," that is, they were never a whit the better for it. When God spends his rods upon us, and we neither cease to do evil nor learn to do good, then we are corrected in vain. 3d, Hope is yet more in vain when we look for good and get hurt instead of it. Jer. viii. 15. and xiv. 19. and Isa. v. 5. "While he looked for grapes, it brought forth wild grapes," that is, as ver. 27. "Oppression instead of judgment," &c. It is said, Job xxvii. 8. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul." Then he will not only find no good, but trouble and anguish, however much he may have gained of this world.

How vain, then, is the hope of that man, yea, how foolish a man is that who hopes for gain in doing that which endangers the loss of his soul. The Lord supposes, that he who tries to take leviathan, hopes to gain by it. It is the hope of attaining, that encourages to doing. To suffer rightly for Jesus Christ is so honourable, that we should suffer willingly, though we were to get nothing by it, yet he has set the reward of a crown by his cross, and assures us, that all our losses, even the loss of life for his sake, shall turn to our gain. Hope of attaining, is the motive to every undertaking. Were it not for hope, the heart would faint, whether in labouring, suffering, or waiting. Hope is like a helmet upon the head in every combat, and like an anchor, both sure and steadfast in every storm. On 1 Sam. xii. 21. "Turn ye not aside." If you turn aside from the ways of God, to by-ways from the truths of God, to error from the true worship of God, to idolatry, and from communion with God to creature-comforts, you go after vain things which cannot profit, yea, must prove ruinous. Can there be any hope of taking leviathan, when a man shall be cast down, that is, struck with

fear at the very sight of him. The eye hath a mighty force upon the heart. Old Simeon rejoiced so much at the sight of Christ, that he had done with living, or had enough of it. A sensitive sight of good rejoices the heart, how much more does a sight of the excellency of Christ make a believer to rejoice with joy unspeakable. The eye also affects the heart with sorrow, Lam. iii. 54. "Mine eye affects my heart;" that is, seeing the calamities of my people, I cannot but weep and mourn. If some creatures are so terrible that a man is cast down at the sight of them, then what a deplorable state will the kings and great men, yea, all the wicked be in, when they seek to hide themselves from Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb? Rev. vi. 15.

*Ver. 10. None are so fierce that dare stir him up; who then is able to stand before me?* The word rendered *fierce* properly signifies cruel, because cruelty makes men fierce. He has more rashness than courage who meddles with more than his match. How cruel and foolish to provoke God, by refusing subjection to his authority, and not submitting cheerfully to his will in all things, by which we are cruel to our own souls indeed, as we thereby provoke God to give us up to our iniquities, like the wind to carry us away. When we are compassed about with a sense of guilt and dangers procured by our own sins, let us not add to our guilt, and expose ourselves to farther danger, by neglecting to call upon the name of the Lord, and not stirring up ourselves to take hold of him, Isa. lxiv. 7. Our inability to stand before mighty creatures should keep us in mind of the impossibility of standing before the Almighty God. Since the Lord promised to Joshua that none should be able to stand before him all the days of his life, and made it good, then who can stand before Him who gave this power to Joshua? None is able to stand before God in his own wisdom; for if we attempt to plead with God, our wisdom will be found foolishness, and we shall be confounded as fools. 2d, There is no standing before God in our own strength or power. They who do so will find their root, which is their strength, shall be as rottenness, and their blossom, which is their beauty, shall go up as the dust. 3d, There is no standing before God in our own righteousness. We must become fools that we may be wise, and weak if we would be strong; and we must look upon ourselves as guilty, condemned persons, renouncing our own righteousness. The most ignorant, weak, and guilty sinner, may stand before God, by faith in the wisdom, strength, and righteousness of Jesus Christ. There is no standing before God without a mediator, and Jesus Christ is the alone and only Mediator.

*Ver. 11. Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.* Or who gave me any thing first, that I may pay him again. The apostle alludes to and seems to quote this passage, Rom. xi. 35. "or who hath been his counsellor;" or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again.

*To prevent* is to be beforehand with another in kindness, help, or assistance; but as none were the Lord's counsellors to give him advice, so none were his helpers to give him assistance, either in creating or disposing of the things of this world.

*That I should repay him.* That is, that I should be under any obligation to repay him; for God will not be in any man's debt. What we do in a way of duty to the Lord, he is ready to reward us for it; and though it be through his grace and strength that we do any good, yet he will bestow a reward, as if we had done it alone. He is always beforehand with us. And as the Lord always prevents us, by helping us to pray, so sometimes he gives before we pray, Isa. lxxv. 24. Mercies often come before we are well fitted for them, always before we deserve them. David's prayer may be said to prevent God, Psal. lxxxviii. 13. because he resolved to pray early and earnestly, Psal. v. 3.

All that God is indebted to us is by promises, which proceed freely from himself. Therefore he can do man no wrong, however little he gives him, or however much he takes from him. God did not elect any because he saw any worthiness in them, nor will he save any on account of any thing done by them. The foundation-stone of election, and the top-stone of salvation, are laid in free grace. When we have no help in ourselves, and no comfort from any creature, there is enough to be had in God, Hos. xiv. 3. As our mercies are always of grace only, so sometimes they are wrought out by the power of God only; and whatever instruments he employs, it is himself that doth the work; for his wheel is in every wheel. Such is the power of God, that he can overcome all opposition; and such is the freeness of his grace, that he passes

over all our unworthiness. Let us therefore be thankful and humble, as of him are all things in their constitution, so through him are all things in their dispensation.

*Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.* Therefore none has a right to question me, when I give to one or take from another. The Lord is the great proprietor and possessor of heaven and earth. He supplies the needs of all that wait on him. Let us therefore acknowledge that we receive all from him, by using what he gives us for his service cheerfully, bearing reproach, the spoiling of goods, &c. for his sake. Believers appropriate God to themselves; they do not stand talking of gold and of silver, of houses and lands; but, say they, God is our God, who is the possessor of heaven and earth; so they need not fear the want of whatever is good for them, so they may be always ready to distribute, willing to communicate when God gives an opportunity.

*Ver. 12. I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion.* This seems to be a preface to the further description of leviathan, and is intended to convince Job of his inability to stand before the power of God, who gives being and power to this mighty creature.

*I will not conceal.* I will fully and largely declare *his parts*. Much more is intended than expressed, as Isa. lxii. 1.; "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace;" that is, he would pour out his heart in prayers for Zion; and ver. 6. "Keep not silence;" that is, speak much for Zion. The Lord's remembrancer must speak much and often, and use many arguments till he bring forth salvation in Zion. This is parallel to the text in hand, "*I will not conceal his parts nor power.*"

*Nor his comely proportion.* For the Lord has made all the creatures, in number, weight, and measure; that is, exactly to answer the purpose for which they were made, and thereby to display his own glory. He is seen in the parts, power, and comely proportion of every creature, and therein has lighted a candle to manifest himself. And all who take pleasure in God, and in searching his works, will increase their own knowledge, and will be fitted and inclined to declare the glorious perfections of God. To know the creatures is useful; but it is absolutely necessary to know God, and Jesus Christ as the sent of God, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The Lord hath not shunned to declare his counsel, for our direction, instruction, caution, and consolation, John xvii. 3. He will not conceal the knowledge of himself from us in what is needful for us to know unto salvation. If we did duly consider who Christ is, and what he is, both in himself and unto us, we would be filled with admiration, and report to others his parts, power, and comely proportion. Like the spouse, in answer to the question, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" who gives a copious narrative of his gracious excellencies, (Song of Solomon, v. 9, 10, &c.) let us with heart and tongue declare the glorious perfections of God. David speaks as if this was the Lord's design in lifting him up from the gates of death, that he might declare his praise in or to all who come in at the gates of Zion, Psal. ix. 14. and cxviii. 17.

*Ver. 13. Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle?* The surface is called the face of the earth; so the face of leviathan's garment is his skin. God hath given every creature some kind of garment or covering. Man originally had a natural garment, though not an artificial one; their innocency was the reason they were not ashamed, which was a better garment than their skin. Since the fall he must be clothed to keep him from cold and shame; but no artificial garment, however thick, costly, or fashionable, is sufficient to keep him from shame: he must put on the new man. All are naked till they put on Christ and his graces; and all who put on the Lord Jesus shall be clothed with the garments of joy and glory.

By the *double bridle* may be meant any thing which we may attempt to put into his jaws to subdue him; as if it had been said, who can coerce or bridle him, or who dares come near leviathan as we do to a horse, to put a bridle into his mouth? No man hath skill or strength sufficient to halter or bridle him.

*Ver. 14. Who can open the doors of his face; his teeth are terrible round about.* As our lips are called doors, Psal. cxli. 3. so leviathan's jaws bear the similitude of a two-leaved door, which who can open? This may be an allusion to the horse, whose mouth must be opened before he can be bridled.

The *teeth* of leviathan are terrible, because he can so easily crush those that come near him. The consideration of the terribleness of any creature should lead us to think how terrible the Lord is to those that provoke him.



The Lord appeared terrible at the giving of the law, to shew transgressors of the law what they may expect, except they repent and turn from sin to God. How terrible was God to Nadab and Abihu, whom he devoured with fire, for offering strange fire before him, and how terrible is God to the unworthy partakers of the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. xi. 30. and to all who prepare not themselves with due reverential respect to his holiness for holy duties! He is a jealous God, and will not hold them guiltless; that is, he will deal with them as very guilty, "who take his name in vain." He is especially terrible to those who profess to worship him. Psal. lxxviii. 35. "O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places." How terrible did God appear to Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. 15. "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted." Now if the Lord is so terrible to good men, (for their trial), how will he draw up his army of terrors against all the wicked and ungodly! Sin has made all things terrible and troublesome to us that are so. Leviathan had not been terrible to man if he had not sinned against God. It is only as we are sinners that God is terrible to us.

*Ver. 15. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal.* The confidence which he hath in his scales are his pride, being like bucklers of brass; he is proud of his scales; whatever a man is proud of may be called his pride. Pride, strictly taken, is proper to man, yet there is more than a shadow of pride in brutes, and so far as any man is proud he is brutish; and it is not for want of grace only, but for want of a due exercise of reason that any man is proud.

Extraordinary attainments and enjoyments discover pride. As we are in danger of being high-minded on account of any peculiar favour bestowed upon us, so we are ready to boast of any trifling favours we confer on our fellow-creatures. The Jews were proud of their descent from Abraham, of the temple, &c. and the apostle cautions the Gentiles against that natural and universal evil, pride, when he says, "Be not high-minded but fear."

And what is most astonishing of all, it appears, from what the apostle says, 1 Cor. iv. that even they that have received grace are in danger of boasting, as if they had not received it, so it may be said, of all men, as of leviathan, *their scales*, (that is some attainment or other), *are their pride*.

From this let us be convinced of the danger of great attainments, and of the necessity of praying earnestly for the grace of humility, and of being willing and desirous to be clothed with humility. The scales of leviathan are said to be shut up together as with a seal; and

*Ver. 16. One is so near to another that no air can come between.* The air is the most subtle thing in nature, and yet the scales of leviathan are so closely joined that no air can come between.

The next verse is only a heightening of the same thing,

*Ver. 17. They are joined one to another, they stick together that they cannot be sundered.* This union or closeness of leviathan's scales, is both his strength and safety. Weak things closely joined become strong, and strong things without union prove weak. Satan is the strong man armed, and he and his agents stick together like the scales of leviathan in opposing the kingdom of Jesus Christ, Psal. lxxxiii. 5-7, they have consulted together with one consent, &c.

It is said of the ten horns, Rev. xvii. "These have one mind," &c. It is strange that ten kingdoms, who seldom agree long about other things, should agree in giving their power and strength unto the beast that is to uphold his kingdom. What a pity there should be such a union among the supporters of antichrist, while those who testify against their abominations, and profess to love and be subject to Christ in all things, should not only be divided in their sentiments, but alienated from one another. Good men should cleave together in that which is good, and pray earnestly that all who really believe in Christ may be of one heart and of one soul, knit together as members of the same body, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit in all things.

The lusts and corruption of the heart of man may be said to be like the scales of leviathan, sticking so close to them and to one another, that nothing less than the power of the Divine Spirit can find a passage or make impression upon them.

*Ver. 18. By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eye-lids of the morning.* This, and the three following verses, describe the fierce and furious spirit of leviathan in his neesings, eyes, mouth, nostrils, breath, all which are expressed by elegant metaphors, alluding to, or by comparisons made with light and fire, with lamps and sparks, with smoke and flames.

Leviathan's eyes are said to be like the eye-lids of the morning, because of the lightness of them, and also on account of their greatness and brightness. It is usual in Scripture to express the clearest light by the light of the morning, Isa. lviii. 8. "then shall thy light break forth as the morning;" and Amos speaks of making the morning darkness, and of turning the shadow of death into the morning; that is, God can change a state of great prosperity into adversity, and a state of deepest adversity into the highest prosperity.

*Ver. 19. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out;* that is, somewhat goes out of his mouth like burning lamps and sparks of fire, which is a proof of the extreme heat of leviathan.

*Ver. 20. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething-pot or caldron.* A caldron is a great vessel wherein much is boiled at once, and so sends out a great fume or smoke. The Heb. word rendered *caldron*, properly signifies a copper vessel in which dyeing stuff is boiled for the colouring of cloth. It signifies also a pond, and so any great vessel, as that in the temple, was called a sea for its greatness.

*Ver. 21. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth.* His breath is not only compared to a great wind issuing out of a pair of bellows, which soon kindles a spark into a great fire, but by a strong hyperbole is here compared to a fire.

What is the meaning and import of this description in these verses? not that leviathan hath or doth these things indeed, but in his wrath he appears as if he would set the very element of water on fire, and turn the very billows of the sea into burning flames.

In Psal. xviii. The Lord is spoken of in his anger almost word for word as the description of leviathan in his rage in this passage; and in Psal. l. it is said, "Out of Zion a fire shall devour before him," &c.; and Psal. xcvi. 3. "A fire goeth before him and burneth up his enemies round about;" that is, he destroyeth his enemies in his anger as if he consumed them by fire. But what is the anger of leviathan, and all the creatures in their greatest rage, when compared with the anger and hot displeasure of Jehovah against presumptuous sinners! Who is able to abide his wrath; who, unpardoned, can stand before the devouring fire and flames of the Lord's displeasure?

*Ver. 22. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him.* A stiff or thick neck signifies both strength of body and stoutness of spirit. The obstinacy of man is intimidated by a stiff neck, Psal. lxxv. 5. "Speak not with a stiff neck;" that is, who will not yield to the yoke of Christ, nor obey his commands. Humble ones bow their heads to worship God; but to bow down the head as a bulrush for a day, is but an outside repentance, for they may still remain pertinacious in sin. Speak no more as if you were leviathans; speak not arrogantly, 1 Sam. ii. 3.

Leviathan is so powerful that nothing can trouble, much less terrify him; and if any object of sorrow present itself he makes sport of it. If leviathan by reason of strength has sorrow turned into joy; surely the faithful, who have the Lord for their strength, may turn their sorrow into joy, into such joy as none can take from them. The disciples of Christ in this world shall weep and lament, but our Lord adds, "But your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

*Ver. 23. The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved.* His flesh is as compact as if it were brass molten in a furnace and cast into a body. Though leviathan be an inhabitant of the waters, yet his body is called flesh, which is as if it were glued or joined fast together so that they cannot be separated; and as his flesh covering his bones is thus firm, so is his heart; as

*Ver. 24. His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.* The heart of any creature is very firm and hard; but the heart of leviathan is extraordinary hard, as appears from the last words of this verse.

There is a threefold moral hardness of heart spoken of in scripture, 1st, Impenitency is often called hardness of heart. They have hard hearts indeed who knowingly persevere in sinning against God; and such hearts have all men by nature, and therefore God gives that promise to sinners, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "I will take away the heart of stone." 2d, Unmercifulness or cruelty to men is called hardness of heart. 3d, A man of great courage has a heart hardened against all fears and dangers. In the two last senses leviathan has a hard heart; and as he is not afraid of the greatest dangers, so when he appears all are filled with fear, as in

*Ver. 25. When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves.* When he raiseth up himself to the surface of the water, from

the description given of him he must be an object of terror even to the most courageous ; when he appears like a moving mountain all are amazed.

Great danger will put the stoutest into fear ; even our Lord himself, in the prospect of his awful sufferings, was both afraid and amazed. As some are afraid when there is no cause of fear, and from conscious guilt flee when none pursueth ; so it is natural to fear where there is real or apparent danger. And if when a leviathan lifteth up himself the mighty are afraid, how should we be afraid and tremble, and be silent before the Almighty, when in the execution of threatened judgments,—when he is said to be “ raised up out of his holy habitation.” This seems to be the lesson God designs to teach us in this passage. To be silent is not only to refrain from speaking, but from boasting. Let us be filled with reverence and awe of the divine majesty.

Leviathan breaks the waves and waters. In Heb. the waves of the sea are expressed by a word which signifies *breakings*, because they break themselves one against another. The meaning may be this : “ by reason of the troubled waters which he makes when he bestirs himself, *they purify themselves.*”

The word rendered to *purify*, properly signifies to err, or wander out of the way, and may refer to wandering when we know not whether to go ; or to the mind, when we know not what to do, which is often the case when the mind roves and cannot fix on the path of duty ; or when it is discerned, we have not courage to walk in it.

Great fears cause great distraction, which is strikingly exemplified in Psal. cvii. 26, 27. “ Their soul is melted—they are at their wit’s end.” The disciples of Christ in a storm were not only like men at their wit’s end, but almost at their faith’s end too. There is nothing but faith can keep down the prevailings of fear in times of great danger and distress. It is either for want of faith, or some want in faith, that mighty men, by reason of breakings, are not only afraid but wander.

The word which we translate here to *purify*, is applied to the spiritual purifying by confessing of sin, and turning to God, and promises of amendment, Psal. li. 7. “ Purify or purge me with hyssop ;” only here it is God’s act, in the other it is man’s. But as God doth purge us by pardon, so we may be said to purify ourselves by earnest application to God for pardon and purification. We say well that true repentance is never too late ; but late repentance is seldom true. We may also say, repentance in a storm is good, but repentance in a storm is not always genuine and abiding. Real dangers may produce but false and feigned repentance ; but in a time of threatened or inflicted judgments, the people of God will not only repent and renounce all evil and all dependence on themselves ; they will also hold fast and cleave unto God with full purpose of heart. When the Lord breaks us by any afflicting visitation it is high time for us “ to break off our sins by righteousness,” &c. as Daniel advised Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 27.

Ver. 26. *The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold ; the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon.* If any be so bold as to come near with a sword in his hand to strike leviathan, it is to no purpose ; for such is the strength of his natural armour of defence, that the sword can do him no more hurt than a stroke with a bulrush. Nor can the darting spear or javelin which is cast out of a man’s hand with the greatest force, enter to wound him. Neither can an habergeon protect him who puts it on ; yea, though he were covered all over with iron, yet leviathan can easily crush him, as

Ver. 27. *He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood.* That is, he makes no more account of iron and brass than we do of a straw. He slights all your artillery as if he had reason to do it, and fully understood that his skin and scales were an armour of proof against all assaults.

Ver. 28. *The arrow cannot make him flee : the sling-stones are turned with him into stubble.* The Heb. “ The sons of the bow cannot make him flee ; he regards whole showers of arrows shot from a strong bow by a strong man no more than if they were feathers.” Slings are no contemptible weapons ; David slew Goliath with a sling-stone ; yet with this sea-Goliath sling-stones are turned into stubble ; that is, he blows them away like stubble. David shews how easily God can subdue his enemies when he prays, Psal. lxxxviii. 13. “ Make them, O my God, as a wheel, and as the stubble before the wind ;” from this similitude we see how unable the strongest are to stand before the Lord.

Ver. 29. *Darts are counted as stubble : he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.* To shake a spear, or brandish a sword, is to defy an enemy or bid him do his worst ; or it shews him that you will do your best to overcome him. When leviathan is attacked with these weapons he disregards them.

Eliphaz says of a godly man, Job v. 22. "At destruction and famine he shall laugh." He is so fortified with a promise and assurance of protection and provision by God, that neither sword nor famine can daunt him. Alas, where are such godly men to be found in our day!

The scope of these four verses is the same, and shews that leviathan is so armed by nature that no artificial arms can hurt him.

From the whole learn, 1st, Since the Lord has made a creature that no weapon can hurt; then, as there is no wisdom nor counsel, so there is no weapon against the Lord; for though man by sin fights against God, he only injures himself, he can do none to God, nor to any that are protected by him; "for no weapon formed against the Lord shall prosper." 2d, As no offensive weapon can hurt the Lord; so no defensive weapon can protect from the wrath of the Almighty. It is only in and by Jesus Christ that believers are preserved from injury from the weapons of men and devils; but where shall unbelievers find a shield or buckler to secure themselves against the offensive weapons of Jehovah?

Some say leviathan is an emblem of the devil, and no outward weapon can terrify or hurt him; yet the Lord has provided the sword of the Spirit that can pierce him, and the breastplate, &c. Eph. vi. which can defend against all his fiery darts. This description of leviathan is a fit resemblance of a hardened sinner. Woe to those that harden their hearts against the word or works of God, that laugh at the shaking of these spears; let all such know that if they prevail not to conversion, they will prevail to condemnation; and that while they go on in sin, they are only going as an ox to the slaughter, Prov. vii. 22.

*Ver. 30. Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp-pointed things upon the mire.* This is a farther proof of the hardness of his skin and flesh, that he can lie upon rocks or any sharp pointed things if it were on the mire. We should learn to endure hardships, to be ready to suffer hard things at Christ's call and for his name's sake. Though all the followers of Christ are not honoured to suffer for him, yet they who have not, at least who pray not that they may have a spirit of suffering, are not worthy to be called his disciples, Matth. x. 38.

*Ver. 31. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot; he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.* This shews the force of the leviathan. He disturbs the whole ocean wherever he comes; he raises a storm in the sea; he troubles the sea when God has made it quiet, but he cannot quiet nor calm it when God sends a storm. His restless spirit will not let the sea rest, he makes it boil like a pot; and as Broughton translates the last clause, "He sets the sea as a spicer's kettle," when it boils vehemently, all in a fume and foam. Any fierce boiling pot resembles the sea when the waves foam and the waters are enrag'd by the winds.

The turbulent spirit of this creature fitly represents the wicked, who are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, Isa. lviii. 20; they have not only a continual tumult in their own breasts, but they disturb all around them.

*Ver. 32. He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary.* That is, he swims with such force and violence near the surface of the water, that the froth is so great that it appears as if hoar frost covered the sea like a beaten path behind him.

It is good in one sense to make a path shine after us, that is, by the holiness of our lives. The path of the righteous is said to shine as the morning light, which increases till he arrives at the inheritance of the saints in the full splendour of the mid-day glory. But the path of the unrighteous shines only like leviathan's path with an ugly foam or froth; at best it is but like the shining of a pinching frost or a hoary head. It is a kind providence that this dangerous monster gives such warning where he is, that seamen may prepare to attack or avoid him.

Thus we have, as it were, the picture of leviathan drawn by God himself; and from the whole, it appears that he is a very *nonsuch*, he has no equal in the visible world.

*Ver. 33. Upon the earth there is not his like, who is made without fear.* The two last verses close the discourse about this creature of whom the Lord says, *there is not his like upon the earth.* There is none to be compared with him for size and fearfulness, where there is no fear, there is nothing but courage. Leviathan is said to be without fear, not as they who apprehend no danger, but like those who see and discover great danger near them, yet fear it not. In some things there is a likeness among all creatures, and there is something wherein one excels another, but leviathan is un-

equalled, as it was said of wicked Ahab, "there is none like him;" and of holy Job, "there is none like him in the earth," in respect of holiness and righteousness.

Some good men excel others in one thing, and some in another, as Enoch, in close walking with God, Jacob in wrestling with God, Moses in disinterestedness, as well as meekness, &c. but all is by a special dispensation and gift from the Lord. As the outward frame of the creature, so also the inward disposition is of God. Some creatures are nothing but fear, as the hare; and the hart, though a goodly creature, yet a little dog will make a hundred of them run, and there are other creatures that seem to have no fear at all, and so it is among men, one is of a fearful and another of a courageous spirit.

The more we fear God, the more perfect we are, but the more of natural fear, or fear of the creature we have, the more imperfect we are. The perfection of the godly is often expressed by being above, or delivered from fear, Psal. xci. 5. Trust in God is the special qualification of the person who stands under the protection of that promise. "Thou shalt not be afraid." David professes this gracious courage, Psal. xli. "Yet will not I fear," and Psal. xxiii. 4. "I will fear no evil." Our Lord rebuked his disciples, Matt. viii. If their faith had not been very little, their fear would not have been so great. It is the absolute perfection of God only, whose infinite power and strength is accompanied with a most constant serenity and immutability of mind, who, as he wants nothing, so he fears nothing.

*Ver. 34. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.* Understanding the relative, *he*, leviathan, then these words may be taken, 1st, As a further argument of the mighty courage of leviathan—let things or persons be never so high, great, or formidable, he looks at them boldly with open face. 2d, He beholds them with disdain as his underlings, not worthy of a look. Thus, *to behold*, is to contemn, as Goliath did David when he saw he was but a youth, he disdained him as no match for him. Looks of disdain, despising looks, are very common in the world, as the Pharisee, Luke xviii. is represented as saying, "I am not as other men, or even as this publican," and our Lord spake a parable to certain that trusted in themselves, that they were righteous and despised others. Pride itself is always accompanied with contempt of others, and indeed causeth it. 3d, Some explain these words, that small matters will not go down with leviathan, he is always looking at great things. Such is the spirit of worldly men, a carnal man is high-minded, a godly man is heavenly minded, Psal. cxxxi. 1. "Lord, my heart is not haughty," &c. What generation was this, Prov. xxx. 13. "O how lofty are their eyes!" &c. It is the generation of proud vain men, who can tell how lofty they are? they have such a desire after high things that nothing else will please them. The least things of this world will serve the turn of a godly man so as to be content with them, yet the greatest things in the world will not satisfy him. Some persons, as leviathan here, are so like pride, that they may well be called the children of pride, as if pride itself were their mother that brought them up. Leviathan may be called *the king of the children of pride*, because he is the chief of all proud ones, or because he has more to be proud of than all proud ones, even the proudest of this world. The Lord brings in this to humble Job, and thus calls upon him to lay down all thoughts and words which have any tincture of pride, and consider under whom thou art to reckon thyself when thou art lifted up in pride, even under leviathan, for he is a king over all the children of pride. Some read, That God himself is king over all the children of pride, and indeed, God beholdeth all high things, and is a king over them, he can make the proudest and greatest that are in the world to stoop to him. Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the greatest that were in the world in his days, was at last brought to confess, that the Lord was king over all the children of pride. Thus we have gone through what is said about leviathan, and other creatures, on purpose to humble Job, and in the next chapter we shall see him deeply humbled and eminently restored.

## CHAPTER XLII.

*Ver. 1. Then Job answered the Lord and said.* Job had said, chap. xl. That he would answer no more, and he did answer no more, as he had done formerly. Besides, God had said at ver. 7. "I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me," which released Job from that bond, and having hope of a gracious acceptance, he was en-

couraged to speak, and he proceeds to answer. The Lord having set forth his own infinite power and wisdom, in his speech out of the whirlwind concerning his works of creation and providence, especially by his discourse about that unparalleled pair, behemoth and leviathan, by which he humbled and convinced Job, that there was no disputing with God, nor inquiring into, much less complaining of, or murmuring at his secret counsels, and instead of calling God to account about any of his dealings with him, as sometimes he had done, but rather to adore him, and therefore he submits and answers only with exalting God and abasing himself. He answers no more in justifying or excusing himself, but in adoring and exalting God; as

*Vcr. 2. I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.* When we begin to have high thoughts of God, we cannot but have low and mean thoughts of ourselves. This verse is a short, yet a full confession of the omnipotence and omniscience of God. A few words are pleasing to God when they proceed from much faith.

*I know, &c.* This great truth is fixed upon my heart, and I desire to give thee the glory of it, though I have spoken as if I doubted and were not well assured of it. But now I acknowledge *thou canst*, that is, thou hast power and might, and a right to do all things, that is, every thing becoming thy majesty, and thou overcomest all difficulties. In Prov. xxx. 1. Christ is called "Ithiel," which signifies, God with us, and "Ucal," that is, powerful and Almighty. Though Job knew this before, he did not know, as he does now; there is a growth in knowledge as well as in grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18, and in proportion to our spiritual growth in knowledge, is our growth in grace. For though many grow in speculative knowledge who grow little in grace, yet they cannot but grow much in grace, who grow much in spiritual and experimental knowledge. Speculative knowledge alone, goes no farther than the notion of what we know, whereas, experimental knowledge finds and feels the power of what we know,—it operates on the will. Many handle texts and truths learnedly and excellently in discourse, who never feel them by any experience of their sweetness and efficacy, either in their hearts or lives. Job had been a great while in the school of affliction, before he came to say, *I know, &c.* in the temper in which he now said it. The godly never increase more in knowledge than under the cross. David says, Psal. cxix. 71. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Doubtless he knew the statutes of God before, but now he knew them to better purpose. If we do not learn to know God and ourselves better by means of our afflictions, we may expect to meet with others, as well as the continuance of those already upon us. O to be duly concerned for the Lord's gracious presence, and his blessing along with our afflictions! Job was taught by God under his afflictions, he had not only a rod upon his back, but a tutor by his side; his three friends spake much to him, but he learned little by them, he yielded somewhat to Elihu, but not fully; but when once God spake home to him, he quickly learned and profited greatly. While we have nothing but the rod, or even the word, we shall profit but little. It is the Spirit given along with the word and rod by which we profit under either, Psal. xciv. 12. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy law." Chastening and teaching must go together, else there will be no profiting by chastening.

Learn, That God is omnipotent, his power is infinite, and that nothing is too hard for God, is matter of comfort to all believers; and it must needs be terrible to the wicked, seeing his will is to destroy them, except they repent and turn to him. And since God is not only able, but has an unquestionable right to do whatever he pleases, let us beware of complaining that God has done us any wrong by any affliction he lays upon us.

*And no thought can be withholden from thee.* Some are of opinion, that by thought, we are to understand God's own thought, so they are a further explication of what was said before. *I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought*, that is, not any one of thy thoughts can be withholden from thee, that is, from thy fulfilling it, or bringing it to pass. As none of God's thoughts are vain, so none of them are ineffectual, they all reach their end, "I will work, and who shall let it," Isa. xliii. God is full of kind thoughts to his people. When the church was in Babylon, and the Lord was dealing very hardly with them, though not so hardly as they deserved; but what were his thoughts? they were "thoughts of peace, and not of evil," Jer. xxix. 11. and this is matter of comfort to his people. But it seems rather to mean, that no thought of man can be withholden from God. All our thoughts are open before God,

neither is their any way of concealing any of them from him who tries and searches the reins and heart. "The Lord knoweth our thoughts afar off;" therefore keep your thoughts in good order, for you cannot hide your disorderly thoughts from God. Let us bring every thought into the obedience of Christ. We expose ourselves to the displeasure of God as much by evil vain thoughts, as by the very worst of our actions. Gen. vi. 5. "Every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually." Take heed, watch and pray to be delivered from proud, impure, envious thoughts, especially discontentment with the condition which God orders for us, which it seems was Job's sin, and which he has chiefly in view in this confession.

*Vcr. 3. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I know not.*

*Who is he?* That is, what manner of man is he? Job hid the counsel of God. 1st, By setting forth his own innocency so much. While we set forth ourselves we obscure God. 2d, By so repeatedly mentioning his sufferings, and not duly considering the sovereign authority of God in laying them on him. 3d, Because he expostulated with God as severe towards him, as if his design had been only to put him to pain, by which he hid the counsel of God, which was only to try his graces, and do him good in the latter end. "He doth not afflict willingly," &c. He would have continued to bless God, both in and for his affliction, if he had known and believed the gracious end God had in view.

*Without knowledge,* or for want of knowledge. But was Job an ignorant man? No. But he had not right knowledge of the counsel of God concerning himself.

Some read these words of Job with a preface, as if they were a repetition of what God said, chap. xxxviii. 2. Thou hast said, Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? and Job acknowledges, I am he; and so he falls down convinced before the Lord, as David before Nathan. So Job saith, I am the man, I have hid counsel, &c.

The following words shew that Job takes the charge home to himself; for he speaks in the first person.

*Therefore have I uttered that I understood not, &c.* The word rendered *understood* imports a distinct knowledge of things. Prov. xiv. 8. "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way;" that is, to know what to do, and how to do every duty, in all the changes of life. Thus Gabriel was commanded, Dan. viii. 16. "Make the man to understand the vision." Job had not such an understanding as this when he said, chap. xix. 7, 8. "Behold I cry out of wrong," &c. and now he confesses that he had rashly uttered things that he did not fully understand, and adds, *Things too wonderful for me, which I know not.*

There are wonders in God which man cannot apprehend, much less comprehend. Job here confesses that he had spoken of things too wonderful for him; and we know that, (though he was a mirror of patience), that many impatient speeches passed from him. Here we have the root of all that impatience which he shewed under his afflictions,—he had not a clear knowledge about the counsel or design of God in afflicting him.

Hence observe, that impatience flows from ignorance. Did we consider, 1st, Our sins, as deserving greater evils than the Lord hath yet laid upon us; and, 2d, His sovereignty and right to lay upon us what he pleases; and, 3d, That the end for which the Lord brings sufferings upon his people is to do them good; then impatience would appear a very unreasonable thing.

Again observe, that our words and our understanding should go both together. How shall we utter knowledge if we have it not? Psal. cxlvii. 7. "God is the King of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding." As in singing praises there must be an exercise of the affections, so there should be of our understanding also. 1 Cor. xiv. 15. "I will pray and sing with the understanding also." A word should not go out of our mouths but such as the understanding dictates and directs.

Job had no gross sin to confess. That which he charges himself with is want of knowledge, and speaking rashly about things too wonderful for him.

Hence note, that our ignorance and errors are to be confessed and bewailed before the Lord. Sins of ignorance are calls for repentance, and woe to those who wilfully neglect or stop their ears against these calls. The Psalmist said, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse me from secret faults;" that is, from those faults and errors which I do not understand; yea, cleanse me from this fault, that I have not a better understanding. No man knows how destitute he is of knowledge, grace, and goodness,

till the Lord is pleased to reveal himself to him. When God appears in his fulness to us, we then appear empty to ourselves; and with Job we must confess, that the dispensations of God are too wonderful to us.

Job having thus acknowledged the weakness of his understanding in the mysteries of providence, applies to God for instruction in

*Ver. 4. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.* This is Job's humble petition, 1st, That God would not reject, but give ear to a poor creature, burdened with a sense of his infirmities; and, 2d, That God would instruct him while he waited for advice and counsel.

This is as if Job had said, I formerly desired to plead my cause with thee, chap. xiii. 22. and thou hast justly chid me for it. The word translated *demand* may be rendered petition or crave.

*Declare thou unto me.* The Heb. is, "make me to know, I resign myself wholly to thy teaching." It may be asked why the Lord spake no more to Job when he desired to receive further instruction from him? It may be answered, 1st, Job made this suit to God, that he would be pleased to instruct him, if he saw fit to do it. 2d, In this Job confesses that he and others ought to desire and submit to the Divine Teacher. 3d, That upon Job's submission the Lord saw meet to speak no farther to him. When Job saw his need of knowledge, he came to God for it. True and fervent prayer flows from a sense of need.

Note.—We know nothing of God nor of ourselves aright till he declare and make it known to us, James i. 17. 'The light may shine round about us; but until God enlighten us by his Spirit, as well as send the light, it will profit us nothing. As in conversion the Lord first opens the eyes, and then turns from darkness to light, so we are in the dark as to the meaning, end, and design of every dispensation, till God himself teach us to understand them. In Psal. cxix. the Psalmist prays, "Teach me the way of thy statutes," and then "give me understanding;" or else thy teaching will do me no good, and again "make me to go in the path of thy commandment;" for unless thou help and direct me, I shall not be able to take one right step in them. The teachings of God are effectual to all purposes,—to enlighten the ignorant, to convince and convert sinners, to encourage and comfort the fearful and dejected, to raise up and recover those that fall. Thus Job is become a petitioner to the Lord for instruction, having confessed his own ignorance and weakness.

*Ver. 5. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.* By the *hearing of the ear* Job may refer to the instruction of his ancestors. And the present appearance of God to him for his instruction and humiliation is what he means, when he saith, *But now mine eye seeth thee.* Job had a powerful illumination of the Spirit, as well as an outward appearance of the glory and majesty of God; so that though Job had a saving knowledge of God formerly, yet this discourse of God with him had made him a better scholar than all his earthly teachers. It is as if he had said, Now I have as clear a sight or knowledge of thy mind and will as if I had seen thee with my bodily eyes; for the cloud out of which thou hast been pleased to speak, and make known thy mind to me, who am but dust and ashes, assures me that thou art near. God reveals himself more clearly and fully at one time than at another. It is a great mercy to have the word of God sounding in our ears, "Hear, and your soul shall live," though to have the word only sounding in the ear can do no good. That sad prophecy quoted by Christ will be fulfilled in many, "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive." Yet Christ says to his faithful followers, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." They receive a blessing by hearing, whose ears are blessed when they hear. A believer, in the vigorous exercise of his faith, tastes, and feels, and sees the truths of the gospel which he has heard. His faith, the eye of his soul, is the evidence of those things to him which are not seen, and cannot be seen by an eye of sense. Thus the Holy Spirit sometimes discovers the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ with surpassing clearness, undoubted certainty, and a sweetness of consolation, that makes the believer say, this is the house of God. The word is scattered upon all in the public preaching of it; but they only learn to know God and themselves truly to whom God inwardly reveals it, by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit. John vi. 45. "Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me;" that is, all that are taught of God believe on me; and the more any



learn of the Father, the more readily they come to, and abide the more closely with the Son.

Hence observe, that God usually reveals himself to his people under or after great afflictions more than at other times; therefore some are of opinion that Job in these words pointed at his two states. 1st, That of his prosperity; then he heard of God only by the hearing of the ear. 2d, Of his adversity; then his eye saw him; that is, he greatly profited in the knowledge of him. He that has not learned to know the statutes of God better, and to observe them more carefully, by means of his affliction, has reason to apprehend that more are awaiting him. The deep impression made on Job appears,

*Ver. 6. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* Job having obtained a sight of his own folly, weakness, and vileness, and having made confession, he adds, *Wherefore*; that is, since I am now convinced of my own sinfulness, *I abhor myself*, &c. Or it may refer to the discovery he had now got of the glory, sovereignty, goodness, faithfulness, and all-sufficiency of God, that made him thus cry out, *I abhor myself*. The word signifies the greatest disgust at and against himself. The word *myself* is a supplement, and our translators have put in *myself*; that is, whatever may be called myself, as self-wisdom, righteousness, strength, self-ends, and I would the end of sinful self. Others translate, I abhor those former things; that is, whatever I formerly thought or spake amiss, I do not only dislike and retract, but abhor them. 1st, I abhor that ever I cursed the day of my birth. 2d, That I wished so often for death in the time of my affliction. 3d, That ever I despaired of my restoration. 4th, That I complained so much of the severity of God's dealings with me. 5th, That I was so bold as to desire to plead with God. 6th, That I spake so much of my own righteousness and innocency. 7th, I abhor that ever I spake any word which should in the least darken or reflect upon the goodness, mercy, faithfulness, and sovereignty of God, in his dispensations towards me.

Both translations come to the same; for he did abhor himself for those and all other things that he had said or done amiss.

*And repent.* Job was not only affected to abhorrence, but to repentance. The word translated *repent* signifies, 1st, To grieve, which is proper to repentance. Sorrow and repentance must go together. 2d, To comfort, or to take comfort. It is thus rendered, Gen. xxiv. 67. 2 Sam. xiii. 39. Psal. lxxvii. 2. "My soul refused to be comforted. It may seem strange that the same word, which signifies sorrow and repentance, should also signify comfort; but sorrow and comfort meet in true repentance. Godly sorrow does not hinder, much less exclude joy in God. To repent, in general, is to change both the mind and way, and so take up new principles and new practices, 2 Cor. vii. 10. Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; that is, the repentance which it works fills the soul of an humbled believing sinner with great joy.

*In dust and ashes.* This I suppose to be only a proverbial speech, implying very great, solemn, and serious repentance. Another rendering is, I repent, as looking upon, or accounting myself dust and ashes; it is an evidence of great humility to do so, like Abraham, Gen. xviii. There is no difficulty in the words, but they yield many useful observations. As 1st, That the clearer manifestations God gives us of himself, the greater and deeper will be our humiliation before him. Job saw more of the power, sovereignty, and holiness of God in himself, and more of his goodness to him than he had done before, and therefore, he abhors himself. As soon as the Lord discovered himself in his holiness and glory to Isaiah, then he cries out, "Wo is me," &c. chap. lxi. Or like Habakkuk, chap. iii. 16. "When I heard, my belly trembled," &c. 2d, That the more we see and know of ourselves, the more will we be abased. The reason why we are so proud of ourselves is, because we are so ignorant of ourselves. If we duly considered that we are but creatures, it would tend to make us live more like new creatures; there are some who behave themselves as if they were gods and not men. David prays, Psal. ix. 20. "Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men." Even Job was formerly too high in his own thoughts. Observe 3d, That true repentance is joined with self-abhorrence. 1. Of sinful self, or of ourselves for sin. Ezekiel, speaking of the repentance of those who departed from God, chap. vi. 9. says, "They shall loathe themselves for the evils they have committed;" and chap. xx. 43. and xxxvi. 31. "Then shall ye remember," &c. — "and shall loathe yourselves," &c. 2. He that truly repents, not only abhors his

sin, so as not to commit it again; but he abhors his righteousness, even his best deeds, so as never to trust in them, Phil. iii. 7, 8. "I count all things but loss," &c. So did Job as to all the glitter of his moral virtues, of which he spake so much before. In true repentance there is not barely a turning away from sin, but a war against it, a desire to mortify it, because it appears filthy, hurtful, and loathsome, which he has vomitted up, by humble confession to God. If a man loathe and abhor his sin, he will not return to it again. I do not say that he who loathes and abhors his sin can never relapse into the same sin, or be overtaken with it again, but this I say, he that truly repents, never delights in sin again. A good man may be overtaken with the same fault, but he never runs a course in that sin again. We defile this precious thing called repentance, from which faith in Christ cannot be separated, when our hearts are not fully taken off from those sins of which we repent. Repentance is a grace of the gospel wrought in the heart of a sinner by the word and Spirit turning the whole man from all sin to God, in the sincere and universal obedience to his holy will. Although repentance is usually named first, because most visible to us in its actings, yet without faith, no man can come to Christ as a true penitent. The law neither admits of nor gives ability to repent. Adam had neither a heart to mourn for sin, nor a tongue to confess it, he hid himself and made excuses. Some, in repenting, turn only to self, that is, their own peace, &c. which is all that moves them to it, or is aimed at by them in it;—they neither mind the glory of God nor the reparation of his honour, which had been impaired by their sin. Job did not begin his repentance now, but renewed it—our daily sins call for daily repentance. Not only gross sins, but slips of the tongue, and impatience under affliction, &c. call for repentance and self-abhorrence. Let us repent of our repining thoughts and rash and unwary words under our afflictions. We are not bound to profess repentance openly for all our sins, but when we openly dishonour God, or offend others, we are bound to give a public testimony of our repentance. We can neither edify nor satisfy such as are grieved by our sins, unless our repentance be visible. "As the light of our zeal must so shine before men, that they may see our good works: so the light of our repentance must so shine before men, that they may see us professing humiliation before God." The essence of repentance consists in a broken heart for sin, and turning from it unto God. They who repent indeed, arraign, judge, and condemn themselves. God will not give over dealing with his sinning servants till he bring them to true contrition for their sins. Job said, chap. xl. "I am vile," and that might be thought sufficient repentance, but God continued to speak to him till he repented in dust and ashes; and God never left smiting Ephraim, till he made him smite upon his thigh, &c. Jer. xxxi. The due time of our lifting up is at hand, when we are laid low and sincerely humbled under the hand of God. Repentance issues in joy in the church in heaven, and especially in the soul; for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; that is, to be rejoiced and glorified in, for repentance is joined with faith in Christ, who gives us ability to repent, and who is for himself to be rejoiced in. This concludes the account of Job's humiliation.

*Ver. 7. And it was so, that, after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job.* The Lord reproving Job first teaches us, that whom the Lord loves most he rebukes and chastens first, and that God does every thing in its proper season, and words in season are like apples of gold in pictures of silver. This should teach us to observe the proper season both of our actions and speeches. We cannot shew ourselves more friendly to any man than by early reproving him for what he has said or done amiss, or as Lev. xix. 17. "By not suffering sin upon him." But how shall we prevent it? The meaning follows, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke him," and even if the most faithful and discreet rebukes are contemned, and of no profit to the offending brother, yet the other has not suffered sin upon him, and has used the means appointed by God for restoring one who has been overtaken in a fault.

*The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, my wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends.* The Lord fetches a compass to reprove Job, as Nathan did with David, but he told his friends at first word, *my wrath is kindled.* This is spoken by God after the manner of men, He feels no change, no impression is made on Him by any passion. Wrath in God is only a change of dispensations towards man, not in himself.

The Lord knows how and when to declare wrath and displeasure as well as love and favour, and sin is the cause of kindling divine wrath. Whenever we observe the

tokens of the divine displeasure, we may conclude that sin is the cause. There is no safety under guilt

*Because ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.* God is never angry without a just cause, as Jonah was, and as men often are. Some read, ye have not spoken to me the thing that is right. Did we really believe that all that we speak, as well as whatever we do, is before God, and must come under his judgment, we would certainly be more careful both to do and to speak nothing but what is right. Ye have not spoken concerning me, or my proceedings with Job, the thing that is right; what we say, or even think, concerning the ways of God, may kindle his wrath. They failed in their manner,—they spake not as they ought, as well as what they ought not, to a poor afflicted creature; they spake not with that tenderness and pity which became them, and they did not speak so right as Job did, about the doctrine of God's providence, and also by taking up the tokens of God's love or hatred from his outward dispensations; and so, because Job was now a great sufferer, they asserted that he must have been formerly a great sinner. It is the office of a judge to condemn the guilty and to acquit the innocent; the great Judge doth both here: yea, the Lord doth not only acquit, but own Job as his servant still, and as if he had said, Job shall wear my livery still, notwithstanding all that Satan has done to make Job quit my service, and, as he said, to make him curse me to my face.

From this several useful observations may be drawn, as, 1st, That wise, learned, and good men may err; they may err in judgment and in speech. Job's friends spake many truths but did not apply them truly to Job's case. The best of men may not only miss but mistake the mark.

2d, That God will sooner or later vindicate the credit of his faithful servants, for his knowledge is infinite and unerring.

3d, That God takes himself concerned in what is spoken amiss of, or concerning his servants. The Lord doth not say, Ye have not spoken of Job the thing that is right, but ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right. In the great day he will say to the wicked, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these, ye did it not to me." The Lord accounts himself interested in all the good or evil which is done or spoken to his people.

4th, The Lord is greatly displeased when his truths are misapplied; and even zeal for God and good intentions will not excuse us when we do or speak amiss.

5th, That the Lord overlooks many failings of his servants, and will not upbraid them with them. The Lord will not flatter his servants; he told Job plainly enough that he had darkened counsel by words without knowledge, when he asked him who did it, chap. xxxviii. 2.; yet here he speaks of Job as if he had forgot both his own censures and the occasion of them.

6th, That the Lord deals even with those he reprove very mildly. He does not call Eliphaz and his friends heretics, nor aggravates their fault by grievous words. Let this be our pattern in dealing with an offending brother; beware of reproachful language.

7th, That God honours a man greatly by owning him for his servant. To serve the Lord is as much a privilege as a duty. When the Lord calls us into his service, he rather confers a favour than imposes a burden. If the Lord do but own us for his servants we shall not faint at his work; for every command has a promise annexed to it, not only of a reward when we have done it, but of strength to do it; and so it is easy, as well as honourable and profitable, to serve the Lord. Therefore let us labour to approve ourselves the Lord's servants, and he only is the Lord's servant that does the Lord's work; unless we are in the Lord's work, and doing the Lord's will, we cannot be reckoned among his servants. "His servants ye are to whom ye obey," and are willing to do all his work willingly, and only his work, and for his sake. The will of the Lord is as much the reason why ye do his work, as the rule by which ye do it. Should we do never so much of that which is materially the Lord's work, unless we do it because it is his work, we are not his servants in doing it. He that does the Lord's work only or chiefly for self-ends, is not the Lord's servant but his own; it must be done, courageously resolved never to quit it. To serve the Lord is better than to rule the world. He is so good a master that we shall never have the least occasion to desire a change, and we need not fear that there ever will be any change.

*Ver. 8. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams.* These rich men were to bring a great sacrifice for the expiation of their sins, which was doubtless

only a sin of ignorance. This plainly signified that the Lord was highly displeased with them for their harsh judgment and uncharitable censures of his servant Job. 2d, They are directed to apply to Job. *Go to my servant Job.* And why to Job? to try both Job and them; he thus tried Job's charity and their humility. It was a great piece of self-denial for them to go to Job and intreat him to speak for them, of whom they had spoken so hardly and contended so bitterly. It is no easy matter for a man to own himself overcome, and to become a suppliant to one whom we lately despised and trampled upon; yet they must digest all this before they could acceptably obey the Lord's command in going to his servant Job. Nor was it an easy matter for Job. It is hard for a man that has been wronged, and reproached, and condemned, to pass all by. Thus the Lord, by commanding them to supplicate Job whom they had grieved and vexed, and expecting that he should make suit and supplication for them who had offended him, put both their graces to a trial, and in a most sweet way at once healed the breach between Job and them, and also between himself and them.

*And offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering.* That is a sacrifice wholly consumed by fire. The Lord is ready to forgive those who have offended him, Micah vii. 18. "He retaineth not his anger for ever;" that is, he is speedily pacified. The Lord deals gently with some sinners that none may despair; and severely with others (as he did with Miriam) that none may presume. The goodness of God appears in his slowness to anger, and in his readiness to shew mercy, (as one of the ancients expresses it) "He sharpeneth the sword of his justice with the oil of his mercy, and so it becomes a healing as well as a wounding sword."

There is no expiating of sin by the inventions of men. The typical sacrifices were appointed by God, and even of them Christ says, Heb. x. 8, 9. "Sacrifice and offering, &c. thou wouldest not;" that is, thou wouldest not have these legal sacrifices for sin to rest in them ultimately; "then said he," that is Christ, "Lo I am come to do thy will, O God." It was the will of God that Jesus Christ should be the expiatory sacrifice; ver. 10. "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is not sacrifices of bullocks and rams, nor the blood of bulls and goats that could ever take away sin, they only pointed at Christ, as Dan. ix. 24. "He shall make an end of sin;" that is, when Christ comes he shall make an end of all sacrifices for sin, as the apostle says, 2 Cor. v. 21. "He made him to be sin (that is a sacrifice for sin) for us who knew no sin," &c. Those who will not embrace and depend on the atonement made by Christ, must suffer for themselves.

The Lord sending Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar unto Job with their sacrifice, teaches us, that we must reconcile ourselves to those we have injured before we can expect any of our services to be accepted of God, Christ clearly directs to this duty, Matth. v. 23. "First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift;" and in order to this there must be faith in exercise or else we cannot "lift up holy hands without doubting." There must be also love before we can "lift up holy hands without wrath." With what face can any expect favour from God who will not acknowledge wherein they have wronged man. As it is the duty of those that have wronged others to submit to them, even to an inferior, in making a free and full acknowledgment; so those who have been injured are to be ready to express their forgiveness upon such a confession.

They who know what it is to be forgiven of God, know also the need of God's forgiving grace and mercy every day; they will be as ready to accept of satisfaction as any can be to give it. This was eminent in Job, as will appear further in opening the next clause.

*And my servant Job shall pray for you.* It is not only a duty to forgive and be reconciled to an offending brother upon confession, but to pray for him. James having said, chap. v. 16. "Confess your faults one to another," presently adds, "pray for one another." It is a duty not only to pray for them that acknowledge their faith, but for them also who continue to reproach and injure us. God undertakes for a good man that he will do his duty. The Lord speaks with confidence concerning his people, that they will do this and that; and that they will humble themselves and pray for, and forgive their enemies, because he has given them an heart to do them. And it is a great honour which the Lord confers on his faithful servants, that their prayers prevail not only for themselves, but for others. Not to pray for others proceeds from uncharitableness. Not to desire the prayers of others proceeds from ignorance and pride.

Observe. That prayer for another does not profit him unless he be faithful himself. Job shall pray for you, but you must carry a sacrifice, which implied their faith, and they must carry it to Job, which implied their repentance. Job prayed for his friends, and they repenting and believing, he prevailed for them. Even the prayer of faith prevails not for those that go on in unbelief and impenitency.

The Lord having assured Eliphaz, &c. that Job would pray for them, gives them encouragement to go and desire his prayers by a gracious promise.

*Him will I accept.* The Lord's acceptance of any person is, 1st, To show favour and manifest affection. 2d, To esteem and honour him. 3d, To answer his prayers both for himself and others.

Hence observe, that it is a very great privilege for our persons and services to be accepted of the Lord. It may well fill the possessor with joy and gratitude, and bear up the spirit amid all the reproaches and injuries in the passage through this world.

Let us labour to know and do what is acceptable to the Lord. Eph. v. 10. "Prove what is acceptable to the Lord," that is, 1st, Study the word to find out what is acceptable. 2d, Approve and embrace what we find to be so. 3d, Make conscience of doing the least thing that we know is acceptable to the Lord.

While we attend to the true worship and service of God, which is called sacrifice, Rom. xii. 1, let us remember, that it is said, Prov. xxi. 3. "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable than sacrifice." Yet attention to second table duties without any regard to the duties of the first table of God's law is little better than heathenish morality; and sacrifice to God without justice to man is but hypocrisy; both united are the beauty of Christianity.

The apostle having said, Rom. xiv. 17, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," presently adds, ver. 18, "He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable unto God," that is, This shows he is a person accepted of God. To do any thing with a willing mind, 2 Cor. viii. 12; to pray for those in power, 1 Tim. ii. 2, 3; and for children to requite their parents, 1 Tim. v. 4, is all acceptable to God; and to suffer patiently for well doing is also pleasant to God, 1 Pet. i. 20. Job and all others who are accepted by God are accepted only in Christ the beloved, Eph. i. 6.

Next follows a threat if they did not go to Job.

*Lest I deal with you according to your folly, in that you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, like my servant Job.* As if the Lord had said, do not despise this advice, nor delay to apply to Job, lest I teach you by sad experience that you have done very foolishly, and were greatly mistaken in your views of me, and of my providence towards Job; ye have offended against the laws of friendship and humanity, insulting over a man in misery, and against the laws of piety ye have judged of a man's holiness by his outward state, and have censured him as a bad man because in this world he has endured so much evil; thus ye have dealt foolishly with my servant Job, therefore hasten to him and do as I have commanded you.

Hence note, that sin is the greatest folly, for it hurts ourselves. Nothing hurts us but our sins, 1 Pet. iii. 13, "Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good." It is an unequal contest; it exposes to shame. Again, the Lord will not spare even good men when they offend.

The Lord calls Job his servant so often to intimate his approbation of him, as his steady servant, that what he was at first he was at the last.

*Ver. 9. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went and did according as the Lord commanded; the Lord also accepted Job.* Their obedience was not only speedy and cheerful, but exact; they not only did what was commanded, but they did it because it was commanded. Here is a great example of humility, modesty, meekness, and submission to the will of God. It is very pleasant to see the people of God joining in one, when they are all of the same mind and judgment in regard to the truth, and when they are one in affection, and when they cordially join together in doing that which is good, and in turning from all evil. To join in sin, and to be brethren in iniquity, is the worst of unions, and is a combination against God; so to join as brethren in mourning for sin, and repenting of our iniquities, is a blessed union and highly pleasing unto God.

We may not dispute the command of God, we must make no delay. Those men did not try to excuse themselves, saying, If we have failed it was through ignorance, we meant well, we intended no hurt to Job, may we not then be spared this cost and

trouble. We hear none of this, but presently they did as the Lord commanded. It is possible we may hit the outward form of worship and yet miss in the inward manner of it. God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and that includes, 1st, Faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God. 2d, It includes love to God and man. 3d, Humility, that is, under a sense of our own inability, and that our best services merit nothing; we are unprofitable servants. They who are ashamed of sin will readily acknowledge their sin.

Observe, That intimations of mercy and hopes of pardon prevail mightily with a sinner. Mercy viewed as coming through the atonement of Christ quickens to obedience more than wrath revealed in the law.

It is not said the Lord accepted the sacrifice or the prayer of Job; but *the Lord also accepted Job*, which implies that Job did willingly undertake the service and duty for his friends, and that his person as well as his sacrifice and intercession for his friends, were all accepted through the sacrifice or intercession of Christ. For the better improvement of those words, 1st, Compare the promise, ver. 8, *Him will I accept*, with the performance here, *The Lord also accepted Job*.

Hence learn, that whatever God promises he will certainly perform. A word from God is as sure as his deed. Christ will be *Amen*, that is, performance to all the promises, 2 Cor. i. 20, as they are all made in him, so they shall all be made good by him "unto the glory of God by us," that is, we shall at last have cause to glorify God for making good all the promises upon the undertaking of Jesus Christ for us. 2d, From the *Lord accepting Job* upon their doing what he commanded.

Observe, that though the Lord will perform what he has promised, yet if we would have the good promised, we must do the duty commanded, otherwise our faith is but presumption.

If you will have peace you must walk according to rule, Gal. vi. 16. The Lord is not bound to fulfil promises to those who neglect to obey his laws. The more firmly a person rests on the truth and faithfulness of God for the accomplishment of his promises, the more exact and constant will he be in his obedience to the commands of God. When we are accepted in our services, we are bountifully rewarded for them, and if our persons are accepted, we shall be eternally saved. Did the Lord presently accept Job for his friends, then with what confidence and joy may believers look to and confide in Jesus Christ, who now appears in the presence of God for them; Christ's suit shall never be refused, nor the prayer of any that come to God through him.

This concludes the long continued controversy between Job and his friends, and now they are all reconciled unto God and among themselves.

O, how blessed is the issue of the Lord's judgment and undertaking! When once he was pleased to appear in this case he soon silenced both sides, and, in conclusion, made them both of one heart and of one mind. And no sooner was this humbling and reconciling work over, when restoring and restitution work followed, as appears in what follows.

*Ver. 10. And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.* The afflicted condition of Job may well be called a captivity. He speaks of himself not only as a man in captivity, but as a man in the stocks, ch. xiii. 27. The Lord did not only deliver Job from all those evils which he was under, but restored the good things which he had lost; and he withdrew Satan's commission so that he could no more touch Job. In like manner, our Lord relieved in a moment the poor woman whom Satan had bound eighteen years, Luke xiii. The Lord can deliver from temporal or spiritual bondage whenever it seems good to him, Psal. cvii. 10—14.

Christ spoiled principalities and triumphed over them, not only really but openly in his passion; and he led them captive, and triumphed over them also in his ascension. And he brings captive sinners out of a miserable captivity into a blessed captivity to himself.

Let us consider the season when the Lord turned Job's captivity. It was *when he prayed for his friends*, that is, either in the very time of praying, or immediately after it, the Lord turned his captivity. Prayer is making known our requests to God with the heart, it is not mere lip labour. Job prayed in the same sense as Paul did when it is said, *Behold he prayeth*, that is, he prays in earnest indeed.

Observe, that a godly man prays for others as well as for himself, and sometimes more for others than for himself.

Many by their untender walk unfit themselves for praying for their friends, or for the church; they thereby indispose the heart for prayer in general; for this reason, the apostle, 1 Pet. iii. 7, counsels husband and wife to walk "according to knowledge, and as being heirs together of the grace of life," (and gives this reason), "that your prayers be not hindered," that is, lest your hearts be indisposed to prayer. He that watches over his own heart and ways, will be most in prayer for removing or preventing the sorrows and sufferings of others, especially for the pardon of their sins.

To pray much for those who have wronged or grieved us is to imitate Christ, who prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" while his crucifiers were reviling him he was begging mercy for them; and Psal. cix. "When for my love they are my adversaries;" and how did he requite them? "But I gave myself unto prayer;" and Psal. cxli. 5, it is as if he had said, "The more they sharpen their reproofs the more I think myself bound to pray for them. Prayer is the noblest way of recompensing the unkindness of friends; we never find more comfort in prayer than when we are enabled to pray heartily for those who have vexed and injured us.

*My prayer returned into my own bosom*, that is, I found comfortable effects from it.

But what prayer is it that obtains so high favours? It is the prayers of a faithful man made in faith, and mixed with sound repentance, and accompanied with a holy hatred of and turning from all sin. Psal. lxxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart," &c.

But what is there in such prayers to render them efficacious? Notice, 1st, That such prayer is God's own appointment, and when we meet God in his own ordinance he cannot refuse to answer us.

2d, He has bound himself by promise to hear and answer the prayer of faith, and even half a promise, or a *may-be*, from God, is good security.

3d, Such prayer honours God, and he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him; we often want vessels to receive; but he never wants oil to give. "O thou that hearest prayer" is a title of honour given to God.

4th, Prayer is not only the voice of the new creature, but it is the voice of the Spirit with the new creature; it is the Holy Spirit's work to form requests in the heart of a believer.

5th, Jesus Christ does not only present the prayers of his people to God, but he also prays in them, for he and they are mystically one. Now, a believer's prayer being in this sense Christ's prayer, it cannot but do great things, they must be heard—for him the Father heareth always. Besides, Christ is always praying for them, even when they are not praying for themselves. The apostle, speaking of Christ's intercession, uses the word in the present time, which denotes a continued act, Rom. viii. 34, "Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Prayer has had a great hand in all the good turns, (or revivals,) that ever God gave his church.

Many inquiries have been made about the time when the captivity of Zion shall fully end. When the Lord is about completely to turn back the captivity of Zion, he will pour out a mighty and universal spirit of prayer upon all his people; as Jer. xxix. "And ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken." We may forebode the near approach of any mercy when God gives enlargement of heart in prayer for it.

*And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.* The Lord is a bountiful rewarder of his servants, and a liberal repainer of their losses, 1 Cor. xv. 58. "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord;" that is, labour abundantly, for you shall be richly rewarded. "The Lord is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love," Heb. vi. 10. Not because any labour of ours can entitle us to a reward, but because he has freely promised to reward us; therefore he would be unrighteous to forget his own promise. The Lord has a plentiful reward for the godly, and so he has for the wicked, Psal. xxxi. 23. "He plentifully rewardeth the proud doer." Wrath is the reward of proud men. Fear not to lose by God when he comes to borrow of you. Every time we have a proper call to give to the poor, &c. God sends to borrow of us. "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord," Prov. xix. 17. Those who have an interest in God, and a portion in the promise, need not fear though he strips them naked; for God will restore in the same kind as he did to Job at last, or will give a patient, humble, and contented spirit, as he gave to Job at first, which was better than all that he had lost.

All these troubles of Job "happened for examples, 1 Cor. x. 11. that we should be patient when the Lord takes away, and for the encouragement of our faith. Remem-

ber the Lord's bounty in restoring, James v. 11. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," &c.

Those who have suffered shame for Christ's sake shall have double. Isa lxi. 7. As by shame we are to understand any evil suffered, so by double, any good promised as a reward for suffering that evil. Christ will not only indemnify all his people who suffer for him, but give them double, yea, he speaks of an hundred fold, and everlasting life. And if he give us double faith, love, and zeal for God, and double peace of conscience, that is an hundred fold better than all we can lose or suffer for him in this world.

Ver. 11. *Then came to him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every one also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold.* Job suffered the loss of his estate, children, health, and friends, who had left him in his long and sharp winter of sorrow, and now they all unite in making this friendly address to him. There was not one missing.

*Then* may refer either to the turn of his captivity, or to his prayer for his friends, and the Lord's acceptance of him. *Brethren* and *sisters* are taken largely for the whole kindred; *all that knew him before*, that is, had familiarity and converse with him.

From the return of Job's friends observe, that the defection of friends is a grievous loss, and that in time of affliction worldly friends will leave us, and godly friends may prove strange to us. As Christ had those that followed him for the loaves, so friendship often follows the purse, and when it is empty, such friends are gone. Trust not in friends, no, not in godly friends, for they may fail. Though we are to trust them, so as not to suspect them, yet we are not to trust them so as to rely upon them. "Cease ye from man." Let us make sure of Christ as our friend; he will never leave us. Friends are a great mercy, but they are not a sure mercy. Prov. xvii. 17. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." That's the spirit of unfeigned friendship.

God suffered Job's integrity to lie under a cloud of supposed hypocrisy for a time; but at last the Lord restored him to his credit as well as to his estate, and made not only his unkind but censorious friends return to him, and thereby acknowledge that he was upright and faithful. God can quickly give us new friends, or restore the old. The hearts of all men are in the hand of the Lord, who can turn them from or to us as he pleases. It is said late repentance is seldom true; yet true repentance is never too late. Let none be discouraged at any time to come to God, who will not refuse a sinner who really turns to him at any time.

Though Job's friends came late, they were kindly received. For,

1st, *They did eat bread with him in his house.* There is no worldly thing better than to eat and to drink with sobriety, in the use of the creature, and with singleness of heart towards one another. Doubtless when they came they made their apologies, and confessed that they had failed in friendship in the time of Job's distress. But noble-spirited Job did not only not upbraid them with their deserting him, and supposing him a hypocrite because the Lord had afflicted him, but welcomed and embraced them. When friends forsake a godly man in the time of great trouble, he considers it as from the Lord, to try whether he can trust in and cleave to the Lord alone, when friends leave him or persecute him. How unprofitably have we behaved to God, and yet he receives us when we return unto him! Happy they who are enabled to shew their conformity to God in thus following his example. But,

2d, It is said *they bemoaned him.* They expressed their compassion, and condoled his former sad state, which is a proper act of sincere love and friendship. We bemoan ourselves, like Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18. with respect to the sins we have committed, as well as for the afflictions we endure. And we ought to bemoan those that are suffering, and also those that are sinning, as well as our own sins and sufferings. It being a great addition to Job's distress that he had none to pity him during his tedious and grievous sufferings, the Lord now sent his brethren to do what they should have done in the time of his sufferings. *They bemoaned him;* and it is added,

*They comforted him over all the evil which the Lord had brought upon him.* Comforting begins at pitying. There may be pitying without comforting, but there cannot be comforting without pitying. To minister comfort to the sorrowful is a greater point of charity than to give bread to the hungry. Though bread be more costly than



good words, yet comfortable words are preferable to gold. 1 Thess. v. 11. "Comfort yourselves together," &c.; and ver. 14. "Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak." Comfort to a feeble mind is like a pillar to a weak building, the supporter of it. They administered a plaster as broad as the sores. *They comforted him over all the evil*, &c. This directs us that we should comfort the sorrowful in or about every thing which has been the occasion of their pain and distress. We should acknowledge and keep in mind, that God is the author of our crosses as well as of our comforts, our sickness as well as of our health, &c.

Job's friends did not only bestow good words upon him for the removal of his inward grief, but they brought their handful of good things to bestow upon him to supply his outward losses.

*Every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold.*

Job's friends loved him now, not in word only, but in deed and in truth. Though seasonable and suitable words are very valuable, they are not sufficient when more is needed. To say to a naked or hungry person be clothed and fed, or to give a great many condoling words, and do nothing for the supply of his wants, can this be called love or charity?

The word which we render here *a piece of money* some translate a sheep, as the same word signifies both. But why did they bring Job either a piece of money or a lamb? It might be to testify their renewed friendship, and evidence their love, and so to ingratiate themselves into his favour. Or it might be with a view to repair his losses, or rather to honour him as a great man. For their giving him a jewel or ear-ring shewed him a person of honour.

To send or bring gifts is in many cases not only lawful, but a duty. 1st, Gifts of pure charity bestowed on the poor. 2d, Honorary gifts. When the Messiah is spoken of as a king, Psal. lxxii. it is said, "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." And so it was fulfilled. The wise men of the East came with gifts to him as soon as he was born. 3d, There are gifts of courtesy from equals. 4th, Of bounty from superiors. 5th, Gifts in token of thankfulness for favours received. There are also gifts of bribery, which put out the eyes of judges. Let all take heed of giving or receiving gifts to pervert justice, or to tempt any to any act of wickedness.

Ver. 12. *So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses.* The Lord effectually poured out a blessing upon Job. The word implies plenty and abundance, a large provision of good things.

*The Lord blessed the latter end of Job.* That is, he made his latter end very blessed. He commands the blessing; and it must take effect, for he speaks no vain words. A man may have many blessings; for the matter, he may be rich, and great, &c. and yet not be blessed. When Jacob wrestled with the angel, he asked nothing of him but a blessing, Gen. xxxii. He did not say, I will not let thee go except thou deliver me from my brother, unless thou make me rich, &c. Esau got much riches, but he got not the blessing, for he was hated of the Lord, Rom. ix. 13.; and therefore it is said, Heb. xii. 17. "He found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears;" that is, he could not make Isaac repent of blessing Jacob, though through a mistake; yet according to God's appointment Jacob was blessed, but he wrestled for it. They that would have it must ask it with a gracious importunity. They that seek it diligently shall find it. And they that do so must be first brought into a state of grace, and walk in Christ, worshipping him in fear. The fear of the Lord is often put for the worship of the Lord; and so they that fear him are the same with them that worship him. Those who trust in the Lord for all, and so make him the all of their trust, are only and truly blessed. We cannot trust in God and creatures too. Let us ascribe all to God. It is his blessing on means that makes them successful, Eccles. ix. 11. But what is obtained by unlawful means must not be ascribed to God. Only that which is got in God's way comes by a blessing from God.

Let us beware of judging the works of God before the latter end. Let not the people of God be offended at the crosses they meet with in the course of their journey, but look to the end for peace and rest, Psal. xxxvii. 37. Let the people of God remember that all their troubles will have an end, and believe that in the issue they will be be-

nefficial and comfortable. Heb. xii. 11. "It yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness," &c.

Observe, that the Lord sometimes gives his people much more of the things of this world, than ever they either expected or desired. Job said, chap. xxix. 2. "O that it were with me as in months past," but he never wished that his estate might be doubled. The Lord's stock and treasures can never run dry; He has abundance of temporal and spiritual blessings always ready. A godly man esteems spiritual blessings, not only as the noblest, but as absolutely necessary; and common things are but to them when they can receive them, as blessings coming from the love of God. Which they may do, 1. When they have got and kept them with a good conscience. 2. When they are enabled to use and order them with prudence. 3. When they dispense them freely and charitably according to the calls and opportunities in providence. 4. When the Lord gives them an increase of grace, and makes their souls thrive as well as their estates, then they may look on riches as coming in love. There are none so unhappy as foolish rich men, none so base as covetous rich men. None more irreligious than they, who, having riches, trust in and dote upon them. It is only in so far as the Lord gives spiritual blessings along with temporal goods, that they become mercies indeed.

*Ver. 13. He had also seven sons and three daughters.* It was the pleasure of the Lord to give him the same number of children as before. Those children are not lost to their parents when they die, who are not lost to God. When God said, Gen. xv. 2. "I am thy shield and exceeding great reward." Abraham said, "Lord, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless." As if he had said, What is an inheritance without an heir. Children are a blessing which God many times denies his own children; and seeing they are a blessing from the Lord, let all who have them be admonished to bring them up for him. Whatever we receive from God, we should use for him, and return to him; our estates should be at his service, and above all we should labour to make our children serviceable to him. Job said of himself, chap. xxiii. 10. "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." As the time of affliction is a special time for using grace, so for the increase of it. Grace never grows more in a gracious heart than in a day of trouble; and God having employed Job as a mediator for his friends, and calling him so repeatedly "my servant," is a proof that Job's graces had improved under his sufferings; he became a more humble, spiritual, and profitable servant. From this it appears, that Job's increase was not only in cattle, but in grace and goodness; his passive obedience had fitted him for more active service. The Lord highly honoured Job in making him a mediator and accepting of him.

*Ver. 14. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch.* Whatsoever God is made known by, is called his name. Were it not for names, we should be in great confusion, both about persons and things. A name is a mark of distinction. But why did Job give his daughter such names as these. I suppose it was to remind him of his wonderful restoration, to commemorate which, he called the name of the first, Jemima, that is, *day*, to signify, that God, who had laid him low in a dark night of sadness and sorrow, had raised him up to a comfortable day of prosperity. "Light is sown for the righteous." However long the night of adversity may rest on the people of God, joy will come in the morning. He called his second, Kezia, *spice* or *perfume*, as if he had said, my former condition of stink and filth is passed away, and the Lord has renewed my flesh and made me sweet and clean. Since the Lord has healed me and recovered my strength, therefore the name of my third daughter shall be, *The horn of beauty*, to remind me that the Lord had given me "beauty for ashes, and garments of joy for a spirit of heaviness." To impress upon his mind the change the Lord had made upon him, might be the reason of giving these names to his children.

Observe, That it may be profitable to godly parents to give such names to their children as may be memorials of the providence of God towards them. Joseph called the name of his first born Manasseh, (forgetfulness) for "God hath made me forget all my toil," &c. Gen. xli. 51. and the name of the second, Ephraim, (fruitful) that he might remember the kindness of God to him, as often as he belied, spoke to, or of him. We find also names given to things as well as persons, by way of remembrance, 1 Sam. vii. 12. Samuel set up a stone, and called it Ebenezer, or the stone of help. This was to mind them of the Lord's constant readiness to help them, even unto that day. So Moses, Exod. xvii. built an altar, and called it "Jehovah-nissi,"

The Lord is my banner; to keep them in mind how the Lord went forth as a man of war and confounded their enemies. Job might give his daughters these names, not only with respect to his condition, as changed, but in respect to the bodily beauty and divine excellency of grace bestowed on his daughters. To give significant names to children, may express their parents' hopes or desires, that they might be minded of the mercies of God to them, or of the duties they ought to perform to God and for him.

I shall conclude with a short admonition to all children,—that they should have a gracious ambition to make good the signification of their names. What will it advantage John, which signifies grace, if he remain graceless; or Obadiah, if he neglect to serve God, though his name signifies, servant of God. To profess ourselves to be, or to have a name to be what we are not, is only hypocritical, and to bear that in our names, which we take no care to be, is very disgraceful. But when persons exemplify in their conduct and conversation the signification of their names, it is profitable to themselves, and may be beneficial to others. How beautiful and admirable to find the virtues of the three names in the text, to meet and centre in any one woman. When *Jemima*, the day-light of true knowledge and understanding, is joined with *Kezia*, the perfume of reputation ascending from *Keren-happuch*, store of beautiful graces put forth in the gracious actions of a spotless and unblameable conversation. Truly the value of such is far above rubies!

*Ver. 15. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.* We must keep in mind, that though beauty is a gift of God, it is an inferior gift; and there are many considerations which may keep them humble in their own thoughts, who are most beautiful in the eyes of others. As beauty is a blessing, so it is often a snare; if the possessors have not grace, it makes them vain and proud, and how foolish to be vain and proud of that which may ensnare, and so ruin both themselves and others. Besides, there is nothing more frail and sooner lost than bodily beauty; therefore let us strive after the beauty of the mind, even the hidden man of the heart. That is the ornament with which good women in old time adorned themselves; and men, as well as women, should adorn themselves with a meek and quiet spirit. It was no great matter of commendation to Job's daughters, that they were the fairest women in all the land, if they were not the holiest. They are truly beautiful and lovely who have gracious dispositions and follow beautiful and lovely actions. They that are deformed in person, may have it more than made up by being conformed to the image of Christ in heart and life. Whereas, if the body be never so well formed, yet, while inhabited by a proud, ignorant, and impious soul, it defiles and dishonours the body.

The Hebrew word for a male, signifies, *remembrance*; for a female, *forgetfulness*; because daughters lose the name of their family in marriage, and therefore do not inherit but where there is no male issue. But Job gave his daughters inheritance among their brethren.

Hence note, That it is the father's duty to provide for his children, and his privilege to dispose of his property; and children ought to be satisfied with their father's pleasure in disposing of his estate. How much more should believers be content with the portion which their Father in heaven provides for them, and at last he will give to all his daughters inheritance equal with his sons. As it is in the giving of grace here, so it will be in the distribution of glory hereafter. There is neither male nor female, but Christ is all in all. Therefore, let all who have a well-grounded hope of eternal felicity, be content and thankful for what God gives them of the things of this life, and use them, and lay them out for his glory and service.

*Ver. 16. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.* He survived all his sorrows, and saw a blessed resurrection of his comforts and enjoyments. *After this*, that is, after this unparalleled affliction was overpast. Long life is to be reckoned among divine blessings. Job had many blessings, but his long life was the chief of mere earthly blessings. The fifth command is said to be the first command with an express promise, though they all have promises implied to those that obey them. Long life is only a blessing to those who have true grace, and even to them only when their growth in grace, and gifts and usefulness continue with it. But it is no distinguishing blessing, for bad men often live long. It is awful to live to old age, and the old man of sin in full vigour. It is said, Isa. lxx. 20. "The sinner of an hundred years old shall die accursed," and

therefore long life must be looked upon only as a common blessing. It is common to say, "to live is to be well." To live is to flourish; some live whose life is a kind of death. As they who live in sinful pleasure, are dead while they live, so also are they who live in great worldly sorrow. Job lived comfortably all that long time of his latter life.

Long life in health, peace, and prosperity, is a blessing indeed, and what but few enjoy, for some good men live long under many bodily distempers, grievous pains, and many disappointments, and trials of various kinds. To enjoy the comfort of fellowship with God, and to be enabled to perform every duty he calls unto, and to bear every affliction he appoints us with cheerful submission to his will, and patiently wait his time of deliverance is a blessed old age indeed. God can, and sometimes does succeed short sufferings with long comfortable enjoyments, as he did Job and Joseph. But though he should see meet to continue the afflictions of his faithful servants to the end of their lives, yet we are assured, that he will reward them with an eternal enjoyment of glory in the world to come. An immoderate desire of long life, is certainly very foolish, for it is but "labour and sorrow," and an "evil day, wherein is no pleasure," Eccl. xii. 1. and therefore we should "remember our Creator," not only in our youth, but through life, performing every duty while we have ability and opportunity. Job lived to see the fourth generation, and no doubt a numerous offspring, which was the greatest of all his outward blessings.

It no doubt must be pleasing to a good man, to see a numerous and godly family. O what a joy was it to the apostle John, to see his spiritual children, who had been converted by his ministry, as he expresses it, 3 Epistle, ver 4. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." But how many have, like Rachel, Jer. xxxi. 15. "mourned for their children, and would not be comforted, because they were not." And what an awful sight was it to Zedekiah, to see his children murdered before his eyes. And yet a far greater affliction is the lot of some of God's people, to live to see their children going on in a course of sin, and even though they may be attentive to, and prospering in the affairs of this world, but forgetting God and the concerns of their souls. But Job was blessed every way, and also in his death, as it is said,

*Ver. 17. So Job died, being old, and full of days.* The Lord having spoken of Job's life, is not silent about his death; and that could not but be a blessed death which was the close of a gracious life. To fear God and keep his commandments, should be the constant exercise of our lives; but to die is the certain end of all our lives, and to every good man it is an entrance into eternal life.

Job lived long; yet a day came when he could not live a day longer. Death takes all sooner or later, Psal. lxxxix. 48. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death." How great, or good, or wise, or strong, or rich, or useful any man living is, he must die, Psal. lxxxii. 6. "I said ye are gods, but ye shall die like men." Rulers who have the honour to be called gods, have not the privilege of God not to die like men. Sooner or later we must die, "For it is appointed unto men once to die," Heb. ix. 27. All men deserve to die eternally, and also to die naturally, Rom. v. 12. "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And since we are always under the sentence of death, let us be diligently preparing for it. How miserable are they who are so old that they cannot long survive, and yet so conscious of being unprepared that they are afraid, and have good reason to be afraid of death. Since there is no discharge in that war, Eccl. viii. 8. there is no exemption and no privilege to be pleaded. Let us submit quietly to the arrest of death, "as there is no work nor knowledge in the grave whither we are going, Eccl. ix. 10. So your strength cannot withstand the assault of death, your prudence and policy cannot find any way of escape, neither can your piety or godliness deliver you from natural death. Christ said to the Jews, John viii. 21. "I go away and ye shall die in your sins;" they that die in their sins die a temporal and eternal death at once. Only those who have got the sting of death pulled out, that is the guilt of sin washed away by the blood of Christ, can die safely. And those only can expect to die easily who are dying more and more unto sin every day; that is not only to cease from the love and practice of sin, but to perform every duty from a pure principle, and in its proper season. While either sin, or self, or the world are lively in us, death will be grievous. They who are most dead to sin and the world will have the sweetest and most comfortable passage out of it; therefore let none think themselves dead enough to sin while they live, but let them

persevere in fighting the good fight of faith, and press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God.

It is added, *he died, being old*—to teach us, that old age and death cannot be far asunder. The youngest have not a day nor an hour to reckon upon. What then have they that are old? Young men may die, old men must soon die. Then let old men be much in meditation on death, especially on the reality, necessity, and sufficiency of the death of Christ, and daily and earnestly praying to him for an abundant entrance into rest and glory.

*And full of days.* These words may include, not only Job's willingness to die, but the easiness of his death; he was fully ripe, and fruit that is fully ripe, is easily gathered. He was every way ripe for death, and this is surely a sweet way of dying. He did not loathe his natural life, nor did he hunger after a longer life, as they do who have their portion in this life, and who are never satisfied, however long they have lived in this world. That man's days are empty who has lived in vanity and done little good with his life, however long he has been in this world.

Sometimes a good man may be full of days, even to weariness, though he has not lived many days, by reason of temptations, corruption, and sins, as 2 Cor. v. 2. "In this (earthly house of the body) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon," &c. At other times he may crave a little more time, as Psal. cii. 24, "O take me not away in the midst of my days." And some godly young men have been fully satisfied with a few days, and could say with Paul, Phil. i. 23, "We desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better." And that man whose eye of faith is kept steadily looking at God's salvation, can say at any time, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace."

Hence observe. That when God calls a good man to depart, he satisfies him with the length of his days; he craves no more; the Lord both prepares him for and makes willing to depart when and where the Lord pleases.

As a godly man has a peculiar way of living, so of dying, and the reason of both is, because he sees a blessed eternity beyond time, and himself, by a well grounded (that is, a scriptural) hope, a partaker of the blessedness of it. Again, they die full of days who fill their days, or whose days are full of the fruits of righteousness, of faith and repentance, of love and charity. Acts vi. 8, Stephen was full of faith and power. They who bring forth fruit in old age, Psal. xcii. 14; or like Dorcas, full of good works and alms deeds which they have done, may be said to die full of days.

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, Psal. xci. 1, that is, who trusteth fully in God for safety by Christ in this world, and for salvation in the next, stands under the shadow and sweet influences of many promises for the preservation of life in the midst of a thousand deaths and dangers, all which are summed up in the last verse of the Psalm, "With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." Nothing can satisfy the hunger of a gracious soul but the long and blessed life of eternity, which is chiefly intended in that promise, "With length of days" will I satisfy him, as the Heb. has it. With this Job was satisfied; and Abraham and Isaac are said to be full of days, but that which filled them both, and that which only can fill any whose lives are yet measured by time, is the hope of a blessed eternity. So *Job died being old and full of days.*

This is that Job who was,—1st, A sorrowful man, yea, even a man of sorrows, (for a time), as some expound his name. 2d, A man hated, (by Satan at all times), as others expound his name. 3d, A man highly approved and loved of God, as appears by the testimony which he gave of him both first and last.

This is that Job who was,—1st, Famous for the afflictions with which God exercised and tried him to the utmost. 2d, More famous for his patience and constancy under those afflictions. 3d, Most famous for his wonderful deliverance out of all those afflictions.

This is that Job that was,—1st, Famous for his riches and prosperity. 2d, More famous for his virtues and integrity. 3d, Most famous for his victory over Satan in his deepest adversity.

This is that Job who was,—1st, Reviled by his wife. 2d, Reproached by his friends. 3d, Deserted by his nearest relations in the day of his greatest need.

This is that Job who was,—1st, Unjustly accused of, charged with, and censured for the worst of iniquities. 2d, Who stoutly maintained his own innocence against all

those charges. 3d, Who was clearly acquitted from them all by the testimony of his own conscience always, and by the testimony of God in the end.

This is that Job who was,—1st, Greatly distressed by the malice of the devil through the permission of God. 2d, Mightily supported by the power of God in all his distresses. 3d, Fully resolved to trust in God though he should die under his hand.

This is that Job who,—1st, In the greatness of his pain, expostulated sometimes over boldly with God; yet, 2d, At last submitted and humbled himself meekly before God. 3d, Was honoured as a mediator for his mistaken friends, and accepted by God.

Once more, this is that Job who,—1st, After his restoration, was filled with the blessings of this life. 2d, Lived long, even to fulness of days, in the full enjoyment of those blessings. 3d, Died peaceably and passed sweetly into the enjoyment of eternal life.

Thus I am come to the end of Job, and to the end of the Book of Job, and now let me leave these five words as so many uses of the whole Book of Job. 1st, While you live in this world, live in expectation of, and preparation for changes; Job met with them and so may you. 2d, Be patient under all the troubles and changes of this life, Job is your pattern. 3d, Never measure the heart of God towards you, by his hand upon you; judge not of your spiritual estate by what appears in your temporal; that was the grand mistake of Job's friends, and it was his honour to withstand them in it, and to stand fast to his integrity in the midst of his various tribulations. 4th, Whatever God does to you or with you, submit freely to him; so did Job at first. Lastly, However low you are brought, yet hope for a good issue, possibly in this life, assuredly in that which is to come,—Job found both at last.

To close all, there are two sorts of examples recorded in the Scriptures, 1st, For caution, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 2d, For imitation, to the intent we should do good things which they also did, and suffer evil things with the same mind and in the same manner as they likewise suffered. Holy Job, is an example of caution to us in some things, for even he had his failings; and he also may be an example in many things, both how to do good and how to suffer evil. Let us admire and follow his unspotted integrity in morals, his fervent zeal about spirituals, his unshaken faith and hope for eternal, and let us admire and follow his moderation in a high estate, his contentment in a low estate, his stedfastness with and for God in every estate.

He that rests in a bare speculation of what is written by inspiration of God, or what is written through the help of God, by the study of man, in the exposition of this Book, is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was; that is, he forgets his own spots and defects, and suffers them to increase unto more ungodliness; but he that reduceth or brings down his speculation to practice at all times, and to a preparation for suffering and free submission to the will of God in hard times, without any hard thoughts of God, and so conforming himself to what he sees in this glass, continueth in it, this man shall be blessed both in doing and suffering, and after he hath suffered a while, shall be perfected, and lifted up far above the reach of suffering, and, which is far better, above the fear of sinning any more for ever.

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