
JOB 4: 1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered,

Eliphaz answers; and accuses Job of impatience, and of despondence in the time of adversity, Job 4:1-6; asserts that no innocent man ever perished, and that the wicked are afflicted for their sins, Job 4:7-11; relates a vision that he had, Job 4:12-16, and what was said to him on the occasion, Job 4:17-21.

Verse 1

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered - For seven days this person and his two friends had observed a profound silence, being awed and confounded at the sight of Job's unprecedented affliction. Having now sufficiently contemplated his afflicted state, and heard his bitter complaint, forgetting that he came as a comforter, and not as a reprover, he loses the feeling of the friend in the haughtiness of the censor, endeavoring to strip him of his only consolation, - the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation among men, - by insinuating that if his ways had been upright, he would not have been abandoned to such distress and affliction; and if his heart possessed that righteousness of which he boasted, he would not have been so suddenly cast down by adversity.

JOB 4: 2 "If someone ventures to talk with you, will you be grieved? But who can withhold himself from speaking?"

Verse 2

If we assay to commune with thee - As if he had said, Should I and my friends endeavor to reason with thee ever so mildly, because we shall have many things to say by way of reprehension, thou wilt be grieved and faint; and this we may reasonably infer from the manner in which thou bearest thy present afflictions. Yet as thou hast uttered words which are injurious to thy Maker, who can forbear speaking? It is our duty to rise up on the part of God, though thereby we shall grieve him who is our friend. This was a plausible beginning, and certainly was far from being insincere.

JOB 4: 3 Behold, you have instructed many, you have strengthened the weak hands.

Verse 3

Thou hast instructed many - Thou hast seen many in affliction and distress, and thou hast given them such advice as was suitable to their state, and effectual to their relief; and by this means thou hast strengthened the weak hands, and the feeble knees - the desponding have been encouraged, and the irresolute confirmed and excited to prompt and proper actions, by thy counsel and example.

JOB 4: 4 Your words have supported him who was falling, You have made firm the feeble knees.

JOB 4: 5 But now it has come to you, and you faint. It touches you, and you are troubled.

Verse 5

But now it is come upon thee - Now it is thy turn to suffer, and give an example of the efficacy of thy own principles; but instead of this, behold, thou faintest. Either, therefore, thou didst pretend to what thou hadst not; or thou art not making a proper use of the principles which thou didst recommend to others.

JOB 4: 6 Isn't your piety your confidence? Isn't the integrity of your ways your hope?

Verse 6

Is not this thy fear - I think Coverdale hits the true meaning: Where is now thy feare of God, thy stedfastnesse, thy pacience, and the perfectnesse of thy life? If these be genuine, surely there is no cause for all this complaint, vexation, and despair. That this is the meaning, the next words show.

JOB 4: 7 "Remember, now, whoever perished, being innocent? Or where were the upright cut off?"

Verse 7

Remember, I pray thee - Recollect, if thou canst, a single instance where God abandoned an innocent man, or suffered him to perish. Didst thou ever hear of a case in which God abandoned a righteous man to destruction? Wert thou a righteous man, and innocent of all hidden crimes, would God abandon thee thus to the malice of Satan? or let loose the plagues of affliction and adversity against thee?

JOB 4: 8 According to what I have seen, those who plough iniquity, and sow trouble, reap the same.

Verse 8

They that plough iniquity - A proverbial form of speech drawn from nature. Whatever seed a man sows in the ground, he reaps the same kind; for every seed produces its like. Thus Solomon, Pro 22:8: "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity." And St. Paul, Gal 6:7, Gal 6:8: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he who soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." And of the same nature is that other saying of the apostle, He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly, 2Cor 9:6. The same figure is employed by the Prophet Hosea Hos 8:7: They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind; and Hos 10:12, Hos 10:13: Sow to yourselves in righteousness; reap in mercy. Ye have ploughed wickedness; ye have reaped iniquity. The last sentence contains, not only the same image, but almost the same words as those used by Eliphaz. Our Lord expresses the same thing, in the following words: Mat 7:16-18: Do men gather grapes of

thorns, or figs of thistles? Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. So the Greeks: - Ατης αρουρα θανατον εκκαρπιζεται.

Aesch. Έπτα επι Θηβαις, ver. 607. "The field of iniquity produces the fruit of death." Υβρις γαρ εξανθους εκαρπωσε σταχυν Ατης, όθεν παγκλαυτον εξαμα θερος.

IB. Περσαι, ver. 823. "For oppression, when it springs,

Puts forth the blade of vengeance; and its fruit

Yields a ripe harvest of repentant wo." - Potter.

The image is common every where because it is a universal law of nature.

JOB 4: 9 By the breath of God they perish. By the blast of his anger are they consumed.

Verse 9

By the blast of God they perish - As the noxious and parching east wind blasts and destroys vegetation, so the wicked perish under the indignation of the Almighty.

JOB 4: 10 The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, the teeth of the young lions, are broken.

Verse 10

The roaring of the lion - By the roaring lion, fierce lion, old lion, stout lion, and lion's whelps, tyrannous rulers of all kinds are intended. The design of Eliphaz in using these figures is to show that even those who are possessed of the greatest authority and power - the kings, rulers, and princes of the earth - when they become wicked and oppressive to their subjects are cast down, broken to pieces, and destroyed, by the incensed justice of the Lord; and their whelps - their children and intended successors, scattered without possessions over the face of the earth.

JOB 4: 11 The old lion perishes for lack of prey. The cubs of the lioness are scattered abroad.

Verse 11

The old lion perisheth - In this and the preceding verse the word lion occurs five times; and in the original the words are all different: -

1. אריה aryeh, from ארה arah, to tear off.

2. שחל shachal, which as it appears to signify black or dark, may mean the black lion, which is said to be found in Ethiopia and India.

3. כפיר kephir, a young lion, from כפר caphar, to cover, because he is said to hide himself in order to surprise his prey, which the old one does not.

4. לויש lavish, from לש lash, to knead, trample upon; because of his method of seizing his prey.

5. לביא labi, from לבא laba, to suckle with the first milk; a lioness giving suck; at which time they are peculiarly fierce.

All these words may point out some quality of the lion; and this was probably the cause why they were originally given: but it is likely that, in process of time, they served only to designate the beast, without any particular reference to any of his properties. We have one and the same idea when we say the lion, the king of beasts, the monarch of the forest, the most noble of quadrupeds, etc.

JOB 4: 12 "Now a thing was secretly brought to me. My ear received a whisper of it.

Verse 12

Now a thing was secretly brought to me - To give himself the more authority, he professes to have received a vision from God, by which he was taught the secret of the Divine dispensations in providence; and a confirmation of the doctrine which he was now stating to Job; and which he applied in a different way to what was designed in the Divine communication.

Mine ear received a little thereof - Mr. Good translates, "And mine ear received a whisper along with it." The apparition was the general subject; and the words related Job 4:17, etc., were the whispers which he heard when the apparition stood still.

JOB 4: 13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men,

Verse 13

From the visions of the night - "It is in vain," says Mr. Good, "to search through ancient or modern poetry for a description that has any pretensions to rival that upon which we are now entering. Midnight-solitude - the deep sleep of all around - the dreadful chill and horripilation or erection of the hair over the whole body - the shivering, not of the muscles only, but of the bones themselves - the gliding approach of the spectre - the abruptness of his pause - his undefined and indescribable form - are all powerful and original characters, which have never been given with equal effect by any other writer."

Mr. Hervey's illustration is also striking and natural. "'Twas in the dead of night; all nature lay shrouded in darkness; every creature was buried in sleep. The most profound silence reigned through the universe. In these solemn moments Eliphaz, alone, all wakeful and solitary, was musing on sublime subjects. When, lo! an awful being burst into his apartment. A spirit passed before his face. Astonishment seized the beholder. His bones shivered within him; his flesh trembled all over him; and the hair of his head stood erect with horror. Sudden and unexpected was its appearance; not such its departure. It stood still, to present itself more fully to his view. It made a solemn pause, to prepare his mind for some momentous message. After which a voice was heard. A voice, for the

importance of its meaning, worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance. It spoke, and these were its words:"

JOB 4: 14 fear came on me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake.

JOB 4: 15 Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up.

JOB 4: 16 It stood still, but I couldn't discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes. Silence, then I heard a voice, saying,

JOB 4: 17 'Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?

Verse 17

Shall mortal man - אנוש enosh; Greek βροτος poor, weak, dying man.

Be more just than God? - Or, האנוש מאלוה יצדק haenosh meeloah yitsdak; shall poor, weak, sinful man be justified before God?

Shall a man - גבר gaber, shall even the strong and mighty man, be pure before his Maker? Is any man, considered merely in and of himself, either holy in his conduct, or pure in his heart? No. He must be justified by the mercy of God, through an atoning sacrifice; he must be sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God, and thus made a partaker of the Divine nature. Then he is justified before God, and pure in the sight of his Maker: and this is a work which God himself alone can do; so the work is not man's work, but God's. It is false to infer, from the words of this spectre, (whether it came from heaven or hell, we know not, for its communication shows and rankles a wound, without providing a cure), that no man can be justified, and that no man can be purified, when God both justifies the ungodly, and sanctifies the unholy. The meaning can be no more than this: no man can make an atonement for his own sins, nor purify his own heart. Hence all boasting is for ever excluded. Of this Eliphaz believed Job to be guilty, as he appeared to talk of his righteousness and purity, as if they had been his own acquisition.

JOB 4: 18 Behold, he puts no trust in his servants. He charges his angels with error.

Verse 18

Behold, he put no trust in his servants - This verse is generally understood to refer to the fall of angels; for there were some of those heavenly beings who kept not their first estate: they did not persevere to the end of their probation, and therefore fell into condemnation, and are reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day; Jde 1:6. It is said he put no trust in them - he knew that nothing could be absolutely immutable but himself; and that no intelligent beings could subsist in a state of purity, unless continually dependent on himself, and deriving constant supplies of grace, power, and light, from him who gave them their being.

And his angels he charged with folly - Not chargeth, as many quote the passage. He charged those with folly who kept not their first estate. It does not appear that he is charging the others in the same way, who continue steadfast.

The several translations of this verse, both ancient and modern, are different from each other. Here are the chief: -

In angelis suis reperit pravitatem, "In his angels he found perverseness," Vulgate. The Septuagint is nearly the same. Il met la lumiere dans ses anges, "He puts light into his angels," French Bible. Even those pure intelligences have continual need of being irradiated by the Almighty; wa-bemalakui neshim temcho, "And he hath put amazement in his angels," Syriac. The Arabic is the same. In angelis suis ponet gloriationem, "In his angels he will put exultation," Montanus. The Hebrew is תהלה toholah, irradiation, from הלה halah, to irradiate, glister, or shine. In this place we may consider angels (מלאכים malachim) as heavenly or earthly messengers or angels of the Lord; and the glory, influence, and honor of their office as being put in them by the Most High. They are as planets which shine with a borrowed light. They have nothing but what they have received. Coverdale translates the whole verse thus: Beholde he hath founde unfaythfulnesse amonge his owne servaunts and proude disobedience amonge his angels. The sense is among all these interpreters; and if the fallen angels are meant, the passage is plain enough.

JOB 4: 19 How much more, those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth!

Verse 19

How much less - Rather, with the Vulgate, How much more? If angels may be unstable, how can man arrogate stability to himself who dwells in an earthly tabernacle, and who must shortly return to dust? Crushed before the moth? The slightest accident oftentimes destroys. "A fly, a grape-stone, or a hair can kill." Great men have fallen by all these. This is the general idea in the text, and it is useless to sift for meanings.

JOB 4: 20 Between morning and evening they are destroyed. They perish forever without any regarding it.

Verse 20

They are destroyed from morning to evening - In almost every moment of time some human being comes into the world, and some one departs from it. Thus are they "destroyed from morning to evening."

They perish for ever - יאבדו yobedu; peribunt, they pass by; they go out of sight; they moulder with the dust, and are soon forgotten. Who regards the past generation now among the dead? Isaiah has a similar thought, Isa 57:1: "The righteous perisheth, and No Man Layeth It to Heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Some think that Isaiah borrowed from Job; this will appear possible when it has been proved, which has never yet been done, that the writer of this book flourished before Isaiah. If, however, he borrowed the above thought, it must be allowed that it has been wondrously improved by coming through his hands.

JOB 4: 21 Isn't their tent cord plucked up within them? They die, and that without wisdom.'

Verse 21

Doth not their excellency - go away! - Personal beauty, corporeal strength, powerful eloquence, and various mental endowments, pass away, or are plucked up by the roots; they are no more seen or heard among men, and their memory soon perisheth.

They die, even without wisdom - If wisdom means the pursuit of the best end, by the most legitimate and appropriate means, the great mass of mankind appear to perish without it. But, if we consider the subject more closely, we shall find that all men die in a state of comparative ignorance. With all our boasted science and arts, how little do we know! Do we know any thing to perfection that belongs either to the material or spiritual world? Do we understand even what matter is? What is its essence? Do we understand what spirit is? Then, what is its essence? Almost all the phenomena of nature, its grandest operations, and the laws of the heavenly bodies, have been explained on the principle of gravitation or attraction; but in what does this consist? Who can answer? We can traverse every part of the huge and trackless ocean by means of the compass; but who understands the nature of magnetism on which all this depends? We eat and drink in order to maintain life; but what is nutrition, and how is it effected? This has never been explained. Life depends on respiration for its continuance; but by what kind of action is it, that in a moment the lungs separate the oxygen, which is friendly to life, from the nitrogen, which would destroy it; suddenly absorbing the one, and expelling the other? Who, among the generation of hypothesis-framers, has guessed this out? Life is continued by the circulation of the blood; but by what power and law does it circulate? Have the systole and diastole of the heart, on which this circulation depends, ever been satisfactorily explained? Most certainly not. Alas, we die without wisdom; and must die, to know these, and ten thousand other matters equally unknown, and equally important. To be safe, in reference to eternity, we must know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent; whom to know is life eternal. This knowledge, obtained and retained, will entitle us to all the rest in the eternal world.