
JOB 23: 1 Then Job answered,

Job answers; apologizes for his complaining; wishes to plead his cause in the presence of his Maker, from whom he knows he should receive justice; but regrets that he cannot find him, Job 23:1-9. He, however, gives himself and his cause up to God, with the conviction of his own innocence, and God's justice and goodness, Job 23:10-14. He is, nevertheless, afraid when he considers the majesty of his Maker, Job 23:15-17.

JOB 23: 2 "Even today my complaint is rebellious. His hand is heavy in spite of my groaning.

Verse 2

Even to-day is my complaint bitter - Job goes on to maintain his own innocence, and shows that he has derived neither conviction nor consolation from the discourses of his friends. He grants that his complaint is bitter; but states that, loud as it may be, the affliction which he endures is heavier than his complaints are loud. Mr. Good translates: "And still is my complaint rebellion?" Do ye construe my lamentations over my unparalleled sufferings as rebellion against God? This, in fact, they had done from the beginning: and the original will justify the version of Mr. Good; for מרי meri, which we translate bitter, may be derived from מרה marah, "he rebelled."

JOB 23: 3 Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat!

Verse 3

O that I knew where I might find him! - This and the following verse may be read thus: "Who will give me the knowledge of God, that I may find him out? I would come to his establishment; (the place or way in which he has promised to communicate himself); I would exhibit, in detail, my judgment (the cause I wish to be tried) before his face; and my mouth would I fill with convincing or decisive arguments;" arguments drawn from his common method of saving sinners, which I should prove applied fully to my case. Hence the confidence with which he speaks, Job 23:6.

JOB 23: 4 I would set my cause in order before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.

JOB 23: 5 I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would tell me.

Verse 5

I would know the words which he would answer me - He would speak nothing but what was true, decree nothing that was not righteous, nor utter any thing that I could not comprehend.

JOB 23: 6 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No, but he would listen to me.

Verse 6

Will he plead against me - He would not exhibit his majesty and his sovereign authority to strike me dumb, or so overawe me that I could not speak in my own vindication.

No; but he would put strength in me - On the contrary, he would treat me with tenderness, he would rectify my mistakes, he would show me what was in my favor, and would temper the rigid demands of justice by the mild interpretations of equity; and where law could not clear me, mercy would conduct all to the most favorable issue.

JOB 23: 7 There the upright might reason with him, so I should be delivered forever from my judge.

Verse 7

There the righteous might dispute with him - נֹכַח nochach, might argue or plead. To dispute with God sounds very harsh.

So should I be delivered for ever - Mr. Good translates: "And triumphantly should I escape from my condemnation." The Hebrew word לַנְצַח lanetsach may as well be translated to victory as for ever: and in this sense the Vulgate understood the words: Proponat aequitatem contra me; et perveniat ad victoriam iudicium meum. "He would set up equity against me; and would lead on my cause to victory." Coverdale renders thus: - But let hym give me like power to go to lawe, then am I sure to wyinne my matter. Nothing less than the fullest conviction of his own innocence could have led Job to express himself thus to the Judge of quick and dead!

JOB 23: 8 "If I go east, he is not there; if west, I can't find him;

Verse 8

Behold, I go forward - These two verses paint in vivid colors the distress and anxiety of a soul in search of the favor of God. No means are left untried, no place unexplored, in order to find the object of his research. This is a true description of the conduct of a genuine penitent.

JOB 23: 9 He works to the north, but I can't see him. He turns south, but I can't catch a glimpse of him.

Verse 9

On the left hand, where he doth work - In these two verses Job mentions the four cardinal points of the heavens: the East, by the word קֶדֶם kedem, which signifies before; the West, by אַחֲרֵי achor, which signifies after, or the back part; the North, by שְׂמֹאל semol, which signifies the left; and the South, by יָמִין yamin, which signifies the right. Such is the situation of the world to a man who faces the east; see Gen 13:9, Gen 13:11; Gen 28:14. And from this it appears that the Hebrews, Idumeans, and Arabs had the same ideas of these points of the heavens. It is worthy of remark that Job says, He hideth himself on the right hand, (the south), that I cannot see him: for in fact, the southern point of heaven is not visible in Idumea, where Job was. Hence it comes that when he spake before, Job 9:9, of the constellations of the antarctic pole, he terms them the hidden chambers of the south; i.e., those compartments of the celestial concave that never appeared above the horizon in that place - See Calmet.

Mr. Good translates these verses as follows: -

Behold! I go forward, and he is not there;

And backward, but I cannot perceive him.

On the left hand I feel for him, but trace him not:

He enshroudeth the right hand, and I cannot see him.

The simple rendering of Coverdale is nervous and correct: -

For though I go before, I fynde hym not:

Yf I come behynde, I can get no knowledge of him:

Yf I go on the left syde to pondre his workes,

I cannot atteyne unto them:

Agayne, yf I go on the right syde, he hydeth himself,

That I cannot se him.

JOB 23: 10 But he knows the way that I take. When he has tried me, I shall come out like gold.

Verse 10

But he knoweth the way that I take - He approves of my conduct; my ways please him. He tries me: but, like gold, I shall lose nothing in the fire; I shall come forth more pure and luminous. If that which is reputed to be gold is exposed to the action of a strong fire, if it be genuine, it will lose nothing of its quality, nor of its weight. If it went into the fire gold, it will come out gold; the strongest fire will neither alter nor destroy it. So Job: he went into this furnace of affliction an innocent, righteous man; he came out the same. His character lost nothing of its value, nothing of its lustre.

JOB 23: 11 My foot has held fast to his steps. I have kept his way, and not turned aside.

Verse 11

My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept - I have carefully marked his providential dealings; and in his way - his pure and undefiled religion - have I walked. I have not only been generally but particularly religious: I have attended carefully to the weightier matters of the law, and have not forgotten its slightest injunctions.

Coverdale is curious: - Nevertheles my fete kepe his path, his hye strete have I holden, and not gone out of it. The hye strete is highway, the causeway, or raised road; formed, as they anciently were, by stones in the manner of pavement. It has its name from the Latin strata, paved, via being understood: via lapidibus strata, "a way paved with stones:" hence street, a raised road or pavement either in town or country. And hence the four grand Roman or British roads which intersected this kingdom: viz. Watling street, Icknild or Ricknild street, Ermin street, and Fosse street. Some say these streets or roads were made by Bellinus, a British king. Fosse street began in Cornwall, passed through Devonshire, Somersetshire, and along by Titbury upon Toteswould, beside Coventry, unto Leicester; and thence by the wide plains to Newark and to Lincoln, where it ends. Watling street begins at Dover, passes through the middle of Kent, over the Thames by London, running near Westminster, and thence to St. Alban's, Dunstable, Stratford, Towcester, Weden, Lilbourn, Atherston, Wreaken by Severn, Worcester, Stratton, through Wales unto Cardigan, and on to the Irish sea. Ermin, or Erminage street, running from St. David's in Wales, to Southampton. Ricknild, or Icknild street, running by Worcester, Wycomb, Birmingham, Lichfield, Derby, Chesterfield, and by York, into Tynemouth. See Camden, Holinshed, and Minshieu.

JOB 23: 12 I haven't gone back from the commandment of his lips. I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Verse 12

The commandment of his lips - The written law that proceeded from his own mouth.

I have esteemed the words of his mouth - Mr. Good has given a better version of the original: In my bosom have I stored up the words of his mouth. The Asiatics carry every thing precious or valuable in their bosom, their handkerchiefs, jewels, purses, etc. Job, therefore, intimates that the words of God's mouth were to him a most precious treasure.

JOB 23: 13 But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? What his soul desires, even that he does.

Verse 13

But he is in one mind - The original is וְהוּא בְּאַחַד vehu beechad, and is literally, But he is in one: properly rendered by the Vulgate, Ipse enim solus est. But he is alone. And not badly rendered by Coverdale - It is he himself alone. He has no partner; his designs are his own, they are formed in his infinite wisdom, and none can turn his determinations aside. It is vain, therefore, for man to contend with his Maker. He designs my happiness, and you cannot prevent its accomplishment.

JOB 23: 14 For he performs that which is appointed for me. Many such things are with him.

Verse 14

For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me - Coverdale translates: - He rewardeth me into my bosome, and many other thinges mo doth he, as he maye by his power. חֶקֶךְ chukki may as well be translated bosom here as in Job 23:12; but probably it may mean a portion, lot, sufficiency: For he hath appointed me my lot; and like these there are multitudes with him. He diversifies human affairs: scarcely any two men have the same lot; nor has the same person the same portion at all times. He has multitudes of resources, expedients, means, etc., which he employs in governing human affairs.

JOB 23: 15 Therefore I am terrified at his presence. When I consider, I am afraid of him.

Verse 15

Therefore am I troubled - I do not as yet see an end to my afflictions: he has not exhausted his means of trial; therefore, when I consider this, I am afraid of him.

JOB 23: 16 For God has made my heart faint. The Almighty has terrified me.

Verse 16

For God maketh my heart soft - Prostrates my strength, deprives me of courage, so that I sink beneath my burden, and I am troubled at the thought of the Almighty, the self-sufficient and eternal Being.

JOB 23: 17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither did he cover the thick darkness from my face.

Verse 17

Because I was not cut off - "O, why can I not draw darkness over my face? Why may not thick darkness cover my face?" Mr. Good. This verse should be read in connection with the preceding; and then we shall have the following sense. Job 23:16: "The Lord hath beaten down my strength, and my soul has been terrified by his fear." Job 23:17: "For it is not this deep night in which I am enveloped, nor the evils which I suffer, that have overwhelmed me; I sink only through the fear which the presence of his Majesty inspires. This is my greatest affliction; sufferings, diseases, yea, death itself, are nothing in comparison of the terror which my soul feels in the presence of his tremendous holiness and justice."

Nothing can humble a pious mind so much as Scriptural apprehensions of the majesty of God. It is easy to contemplate his goodness, loving-kindness, and mercy; in all these we have an interest, and from them we expect the greatest good: but to consider his holiness and justice, the infinite righteousness of his nature, under the conviction that we have sinned, and broken the laws prescribed by his sovereign Majesty, and to feel ourselves brought as into the presence of his judgment-seat, - who can bear the thought? If cherubim and seraphim veil their faces before his throne, and the holiest soul exclaims,

I loathe myself when God I see,

And into nothing fall; what must a sinner feel, whose conscience is not yet purged from dead works and who feels the wrath of God abiding on him? And how without such a mediator and sacrifice as Jesus Christ is, can any human spirit come into the presence of its Judge? Those who can approach him without terror, know little of his justice and nothing of their sin. When we approach him in prayer, or in any ordinance, should we not feel more reverence than we generally do?