
JOB 34: 1 Moreover Elihu answered,

Elihu begins with an exhortation to Job's friends, Job 34:1-4; charges Job with accusing God of acting unrighteously, which he shows is impossible, Job 34:5-12; points out the power and judgments of the Almighty, vv. 13-30; shows how men should address God, and how irreverently Job has acted, Job 34:31-37.

JOB 34: 2 "Hear my words, you wise men. Give ear to me, you who have knowledge.

JOB 34: 3 For the ear tries words, as the palate tastes food.

Verse 3

The ear trieth words - I do not think, with Calmet, that the inward ear, or judgment, is meant simply. The Asiatics valued themselves on the nice and harmonious collection of words, both in speaking and in writing; and perhaps it will be found here that Elihu labors as much for harmonious versification as for pious and weighty sentiments. To connect sense with sound was an object of general pursuit among the Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian poets; and so fond are the latter of euphony, that they often sacrifice both sense and sentiment to it; and some of the Greek poets are not exempt from this fault.

JOB 34: 4 Let us choose for us that which is right. Let us know among ourselves what is good.

Verse 4

Let us choose to us judgment - Let us not seek the applause of men, nor contend for victory. Let our aim be to obtain correct views and notions of all things; and let us labor to find out what is good.

JOB 34: 5 For Job has said, 'I am righteous, God has taken away my right:

Verse 5

JOB hath said, I am righteous - Job had certainly said the words attributed to him by Elihu, particularly in Job 27:2, etc., but it was in vindication of his aspersed character that he had asserted his own righteousness, and in a different sense to that in which Elihu appears to take it up. He asserted that he was righteous quoad the charges his friends had brought against him. And he never intimated that he had at all times a pure heart, and had never transgressed the laws of his Maker. It is true also that he said, God hath taken away my judgment; but he most obviously does not mean to charge God with injustice, but to show that he had dealt with him in a way wholly mysterious, and

not according to the ordinary dispensations of his providence; and that he did not interpose in his behalf, while his friends were overwhelming him with obloquy and reproach.

JOB 34: 6 Notwithstanding my right I am considered a liar. My wound is incurable, though I am without disobedience.'

Verse 6

Should I lie against my right? - Should I acknowledge myself the sinner which they paint me, and thus lie against my right to assert and maintain my innocence?

My wound is incurable without transgression - If this translation is correct, the meaning of the place is sufficiently evident. In the tribulation which I endure, I am treated as if I were the worst of culprits; and I labor under incurable maladies and privations, though without any cause on my part for such treatment. This was all most perfectly true; it is the testimony which God himself gives of Job, that "he was a perfect and upright man, fearing God and eschewing evil;" and that "Satan had moved the Lord against him, to destroy him, Without a Cause. See Job 1:1; Job 2:3.

The Chaldee translates thus: - "On account of my judgment, I will make the son of man a liar, who sends forth arrows without sin."

Mr. Good thus: - "Concerning my cause I am slandered;

He hath reversed my lot without a trespass."

The latter clause is the most deficient, אָנוּשׁ חָצִי בְלִי פֶשַׁע; Miss Smith's translation of which is the best I have met with: "A man cut off, without transgression." The word חָצִי chitstsi, which we translate my wound, signifies more literally, my arrow; and if we take it as a contracted noun, חָצִי chitstsey for חֲצִים chitstsim, it means calamities. אָנוּשׁ anush, which we translate incurable, may be the noun enosh, wicked, miserable man; and then the whole may be read thus: "A man of calamities without transgression." I suffer the punishment of an enemy to God, while free from transgression of this kind.

JOB 34: 7 What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water,

Verse 7

Drinketh up scorning like water? - This is a repetition of the charge made against Job by Eliphaz, Job 15:16. It is a proverbial expression, and seems to be formed, as a metaphor, from a camel drinking, who takes in a large draught of water, even the most turbid, on its setting out on a journey in a caravan, that it may serve it for a long time. Job deals largely in scorning; he fills his heart with it.

JOB 34: 8 Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men?

Verse 8

Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity - This is an allusion to a caravan: all kinds of persons are found there; but yet a holy and respectable man might be found in that part of the company where profligates assembled. But surely this assertion of Elihu was not strictly true; and the words literally translated, will bear a less evil meaning: "Job makes a track אַרַח arach, to join fellowship, לחברה lechebrah, with the workers of iniquity;" i.e., Job's present mode of reasoning, when he says, "I am righteous, yet God hath taken away my judgment," is according to the assertion of sinners, who say, "There is no profit in serving God; for, if a man be righteous, he is not benefited by it, for God does not vindicate a just man's cause against his oppressors." By adopting so much of their creed, he intimates that Job is taking the steps that lead to fellowship with them. See Job 34:9.

JOB 34: 9 For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.'

JOB 34: 10 "Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness, from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.

Verse 10

Far be it from God - Rather, Wickedness, far be that from God; and from iniquity, the Almighty. The sense is sufficiently evident without the paraphrase in our version.

JOB 34: 11 For the work of a man he will render to him, and cause every man to find according to his ways.

Verse 11

For the work of a man shall he render - God ever will do justice; the righteous shall never be forsaken, nor shall the wicked ultimately prosper.

JOB 34: 12 Yes surely, God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert justice.

JOB 34: 13 Who put him in charge of the earth? or who has appointed him over the whole world?

Verse 13

Who hath given him a charge - Who is it that governs the world? Is it not God? Who disposes of all things in it? Is it not the Almighty, by his just and merciful providence? The government of the world shows the care, the justice, and the mercy of God.

JOB 34: 14 If he set his heart on himself, If he gathered to himself his spirit and his breath,

Verse 14

If he set his heart upon man - I think this and the following verse should be read thus: - "If he set his heart upon man, he will gather his soul and breath to himself; for all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust." On whomsoever God sets his heart, that is, his love, though his body shall perish and turn to dust, like the rest of men, yet his soul will God gather to himself.

JOB 34: 15 all flesh would perish together, and man would turn again to dust.

JOB 34: 16 "If now you have understanding, hear this. Listen to the voice of my words.

JOB 34: 17 Shall even one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn him who is righteous and mighty?—

Verse 17

Shall - he that hateth right govern? - Or, Shall he who hateth judgment, lie under obligation? It is preposterous to suppose that he who lives by no rule, should impose rules upon others. God, who is the fountain of all justice and righteousness, binds man by his laws; and wilt thou, therefore, pretend to condemn him who is the sum of righteousness?

JOB 34: 18 Who says to a king, 'Vile!' or to nobles, 'Wicked!'

Verse 18

Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? - The sentence is very short, and is thus translated by the Vulgate: Qui dicit regi, Apostata? Qui vocat duces impios? "Who says to a king, Apostate? Who calls leaders impious?" Literally, Who calls a king Belial? Who calls princes wicked? Civil governors should be treated with respect; no man should speak evil of the ruler of the people. This should never be permitted. Even where the man cannot be respected, because his moral conduct is improper, even there the office is sacred, and should be revered. He who permits himself to talk against the man, would destroy the office and authority, if he could.

JOB 34: 19 Who doesn't respect the persons of princes, nor respects the rich more than the poor; for they all are the work of his hands.

Verse 19

That accepteth not - If it be utterly improper to speak against a king or civil governor, how much more so to speak disrespectfully of God, who is not influenced by human caprices or considerations, and who regards the rich and the poor alike, being equally his creatures, and equally dependent on his providence and mercy for their support and salvation.

JOB 34: 20 In a moment they die, even at midnight. The people are shaken and pass away. The mighty are taken away without a hand.

Verse 20

In a moment shall they die - Both are equally dependent on the Almighty for their breath and being; the mighty as well as the poor. If the great men of the earth have abused their power, he sometimes cuts them off by the most sudden and unexpected death; and even at midnight, when in security, and least capable of defense, they are cut off by the people whom they have oppressed, or by the invisible hand of the angel of death. This appears to be spoken in reference to Eastern tyrants, who seldom die a natural death.

JOB 34: 21 "For his eyes are on the ways of a man. He sees all his goings.

JOB 34: 22 There is no darkness, nor thick gloom, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

Verse 22

There is no darkness - In this life; and no shadow of death in the other world - no annihilation in which the workers of iniquity may hide themselves, or take refuge.

JOB 34: 23 For he doesn't need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgement.

Verse 23

For he will not lay upon man - The meaning appears to be this: He will not call man a second time into judgment; he does not try a cause twice; his decisions are just, and his sentence without appeal. Mr. Good translates: - "Behold, not to man hath he intrusted the time

Of coming into judgment with God."

Man's time is not in his own hand; nor is his lot cast or ruled by his own wisdom and power. When God thinks best, he will judge for him; and, if oppressed or calumniated, he will bring forth his righteousness as the light, and do him justice on his adversaries.

JOB 34: 24 He breaks in pieces mighty men in ways past finding out, and sets others in their place.

Verse 24

He shall break in pieces - In multitudes of cases God depresses the proud, and raises up the humble and meek. Neither their strength nor number can afford them security.

JOB 34: 25 Therefore he takes knowledge of their works. He overturns them in the night, so that they are destroyed.

Verse 25

He knoweth their works - He knows what they have done, and what they are plotting to do.

He overturneth them in the night - In the revolution of a single night the plenitude of power on which the day closed is annihilated. See the cases of Belshazzar and Babylon.

JOB 34: 26 He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others;

Verse 26

He striketh them as wicked men - At other times he executes his judgments more openly; and they are suddenly destroyed in the sight of the people.

JOB 34: 27 because they turned aside from following him, and wouldn't pay attention to any of his ways,

Verse 27

Because they turned back - This is the reason why he has dealt with them in judgment. They had departed from him in their hearts, their moral conduct, and their civil government. He is speaking of corrupt and tyrannical rulers. And they did not, would not, understand any of his ways.

JOB 34: 28 so that they caused the cry of the poor to come to him. He heard the cry of the afflicted.

Verse 28

So that they cause the cry of the poor - They were cruel and oppressive: the poor cried through their distresses, and against their oppressors; and God heard the cry of the poor. Nothing so dreadful appears in the court of heaven against an unfeeling, hardhearted, and cruel man of power, as the prayers, tears, and groans of the poor. In times of little liberality, when some men thought they did God service by persecuting those who did not exactly receive their creed, nor worship God in their way, a certain great man in Scotland grievously persecuted his tenants, because they had religious meetings in private houses out of the order of the establishment; though he never molested them when they spent their time and their money in the alehouse. A holy, simple woman, one of those people, went one morning to the house of the great persecutor, and desired to speak with him. The servant desired to know her message, and he would deliver it; for she could not be admitted. She told him she could deliver her message to none but his master; said it was a matter of

great importance, and concerned himself intimately, and alone. The servant having delivered this message, and stated that the woman appeared to have something particular on her mind, his worship condescended to see her. "What is your business with me?" said he, in a haughty, overbearing tone. To which she answered, "Sir, we are a hantle o' puir folk at - , who are strivin' to sairve God accordin' to our ain conscience, and to get our sauls sav'd: yee persecute us; and I am come to beg yee to let us alane, and in ye dinna, we'll pray yee dead." This rhetoric was irresistible. His lordship did not know what influence such people might have in heaven; he did not like to put such prayers to the proof; wisely took the old woman's advice, and e'en let them alane. He was safe; they were satisfied; and God had the glory. When the poor refer their cause to God, he is a terrible avenger. Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth; but wo to the man that contendeth with his Maker.

JOB 34: 29 When he gives quietness, who then can condemn? When he hides his face, who then can see him? Alike whether to a nation, or to a man,

Verse 29

When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? - How beautiful is this sentiment, and how true! He ever acts as a sovereign, but his actions are all wise and just. If he give quietness, who dares to give trouble? And if he give to every human being the right to worship himself according to their conscience, for the director of which he gives both his word and his Spirit, who shall dare to say to another, "Thou shalt worship God in my way, or not at all;" or, through a pretended liberality, say, "Thou shalt be tolerated to worship him so and so;" and even that toleration be shackled and limited? Reader, thou hast as much right to tolerate another's mode of worship as he has to tolerate thine: or, in other words, neither of you have any such right at all; the pretension is as absurd as it is wicked. If, however, there be any thing in the religious practice of any particular people that is inimical, by fair construction, to the peace of the country, then the civil power may interfere, as they ought to do in all cases of insurrection; but let no such inference be drawn when not most obviously flowing from the practice of the people, and the principles they profess; and when solemnly disclaimed by the persons in question. Whatever converts sinners from the error of their ways must be good to society and profitable to the state.

Whether it be done against a nation - He defends and supports nations or individuals howsoever weak, against their enemies, howsoever numerous and powerful. He destroys nations or individuals who have filled up the measure of their political or moral iniquity, though all other nations and individuals stand up in their support.

JOB 34: 30 that the godless man may not reign, that there be no one to ensnare the people.

Verse 30

That the hypocrite reign not - The Vulgate translates, Who causes a wicked man to reign because of the sins of the people. This was precisely the defense which Hegerage, the oppressive ruler of the Babylonian Irak, under the caliph Abdul Malec, made when he found the people in a state of insurrection. See at the end of the chapter, Job 34:37 (note).

JOB 34: 31 "For has any said to God, 'I am guilty, but I will not offend any more.

Verse 31

Surely it is meet to be said unto God - This is Elihu's exhortation to Job: Humble thyself before God, and say, "I have suffered - I will not offend."

JOB 34: 32 Teach me that which I don't see. If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more'?

Verse 32

That which I see not - "What I do not know, teach thou me; wherein I have done iniquity, I will do so no more."

JOB 34: 33 Shall his recompense be as you desire, that you refuse it? For you must choose, and not I. Therefore speak what you know.

Verse 33

According to thy mind? he will recompense it - Mr. Good renders the whole passage thus: - "Then in the presence of thy tribes

According as thou art bruised shall he make it whole.

But it is thine to choose, and not mine;

So, what thou determinest, say."

This may at least be considered a paraphrase on the very obscure original. If thou wilt not thus come unto him, he will act according to justice, whether that be for or against thee. Choose what part thou wilt take, to humble thyself under the mighty hand of God, or still persist in thy supposed integrity. Speak, therefore; the matter concerns thee, not me; but let me know what thou art determined to do.

JOB 34: 34 Men of understanding will tell me, yes, every wise man who hears me:

Verse 34

Let men of understanding tell me - I wish to converse with wise men; and by men of wisdom I wish what I have said to be judged.

JOB 34: 35 'Job speaks without knowledge. His words are without wisdom.'

Verse 35

Job hath spoken without knowledge - There is no good in arguing with a self-willed, self-conceited man. Job has spoken like a man destitute of wisdom and discretion.

JOB 34: 36 I wish that Job were tried to the end, because of his answering like wicked men.

Verse 36

My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end - יבחנו אבי איוֹב abi yibbachen Aiyob, "My father, let Job be tried." So the Vulgate, Pater mi, probetur Job. But it may be as in the common translation, I wish Job to be tried; or, as Mr. Good renders it, Verily, let Job be pursued to conquest for replying like wicked men. This is a very harsh wish: but the whole chapter is in the same spirit; nearly destitute of mildness and compassion. Who could suppose that such arguings could come out of the mouth of the loving Savior of mankind? The reader will recollect that a very pious divine has supposed Elihu to be Jesus Christ!

JOB 34: 37 For he adds rebellion to his sin. He claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God."

Verse 37

He addeth rebellion unto his sin - An ill-natured, cruel, and unfounded assertion, borne out by nothing which Job had ever said or intended; and indeed, more severe than the most inveterate of his friends (so called) had ever spoken. Mr. Good makes this virulent conclusion still more virulent and uncharitable, by translating thus: - "For he would add to his transgressions apostasy;

He would clap his hands in the midst of us:

Yea, he would tempest his words up to God."

There was no need of adding a caustic here; the words in the tamest translation are tart enough. Though Elihu began well and tolerantly, he soon got into the spirit, and under the mistake, of those who had preceded him in this "tempest of words."

On Job 34:30 I have referred to the case of Hagiage, governor of the Babylonian Irak, under the caliph Abdul Malec. When Hagiage was informed that the people were in a state of mutiny because of his oppressive government, before they broke out into open acts of hostility, he mounted on an eminence, and thus harangued them: - "God has given me dominion over you; if I exercise it with severity, think not that by putting me to death your condition will be mended. From the manner in which you live you must be always ill-treated, for God has many executors of his justice; and when I am dead he will send you another, who will probably execute his orders against you with more rigour. Do you wish your prince to be moderate and merciful? Then exercise righteousness, and be

obedient to the laws. Consider that your own conduct is the cause of the good or evil treatment which you receive from him. A prince may be compared to a mirror; all that you see in him is the reflection of the objects which you present before him." The people immediately dropped their weapons, and quietly returned to their respective avocations. This man was one of the most valiant, eloquent, and cruel rulers of his time; he lived towards the close of the 7th century of the Christian era. He is said to have put to death 120,000 people; and to have had 50,000 in his prisons at the time of his decease. Yet this man was capable of generous actions. The following anecdote is given by the celebrated Persian poet Jami, in his Baharistan: - Hegiage, having been separated from his attendants one day in the chase, came to a place where he found an Arab feeding his camels. The camels starting at his sudden approach, the Arab lifted up his head, and seeing a man splendidly arrayed, became incensed, and said, Who is this who with his fine clothes comes into the desert to frighten my camels? The curse of God light upon him! The governor, approaching the Arab, saluted him very civilly, with the salaam, Peace be unto thee! The Arab, far from returning the salutation, said, I wish thee neither peace, nor any other blessing of God. Hegiage, without seeming to heed what he had said, asked him very civilly "to give him a little water to drink." The Arab in a surly tone, answered, If thou desirest to drink, take the pains to alight, and draw for thyself; for I am neither thy companion nor thy slave. The governor accordingly alighted, and having drunk, asked the Arab, "Whom dost thou think the greatest and most excellent of men?" The prophet sent by God, said the Arab, and thou mayest burst with spleen. "And what thinkest thou of Aaly?" returned Hegiage. No tongue can declare his excellence, said the Arab. "What," asked Hegiage, "is thy opinion of the caliph Abdul Malec?" I believe him to be a very bad prince, replied the Arab. "For what reason?" said Hegiage. Because, said the Arab, he hath sent us for governor the most execrable wretch under heaven. Hegiage, finding himself thus characterized, was silent; but his attendants coming up, he rejoined them, and ordered them to bring the Arab with them. The next day Hegiage ordered him to be set at table with himself, and bade him "eat freely." The Arab, ere he tasted, said his usual grace, "God grant that the end of this repast may be no worse than the beginning!" While at meat the governor asked him, "Dost thou recollect the discourse we had together yesterday?" The Arab replied, God prosper thee in all things! but as to the secret of yesterday, take heed that thou disclose it not to-day. "I will not," said Hegiage; "but thou must choose one of these two things; either acknowledge me for thy master, and I will retain thee about my person; or else I will send thee to Abdul Malec, and tell him what thou hast said of him." There is a third course, replied the Arab, preferable to those two. "Well, what is that?" said the governor. Why, send me back to the desert, and pray God that we may never see each other's face again. Cruel and vindictive as Hegiage was, he could not help being pleased with the frankness and courage of the man; and not only forgave him the preceding insults but ordered him 10,000 pieces of silver, and sent him back to the desert, according to his wish.