

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 6

This and the following chapter contain Job's answer to the speech of Eliphaz in the two foregoing; he first excuses his impatience by the greatness of his afflictions, which, if weighed by good and impartial hands, would be found to be heavier than the sand of the sea, and which words were wanting to express, (~~Job~~ Job 6:1-3); and the reason why they were so heavy is given, they being the arrows and terrors of the Almighty, (~~Job~~ Job 6:4); and by various similes he shows that his moans and complaints under them need not seem strange and unreasonable, (~~Job~~ Job 6:5-7); and what had been said not being convincing to him, he continues in the same sentiment and disposition of mind, and wishes to be removed by death out of his miserable condition, and gives his reasons for it, (~~Job~~ Job 6:8-13); and though his case was such as required pity from his friends, yet this he had not from them, but represents them as deceitful, and as having sadly disappointed him, and therefore he neither hoped nor asked for anything of them, (~~Job~~ Job 6:14-23); and observes that their words and arguments were of no force and weight with him, but harmful and pernicious, (~~Job~~ Job 6:24-27); and in his turn gives them some exhortations and instructions, and signifies that he was as capable of discerning between right and wrong as they, with which this chapter is concluded, (~~Job~~ Job 6:28-30).

Ver. 1. *But Job answered and said.*] Though Eliphaz thought his speech was unanswerable, being, as he and his friends judged, unquestionably true, and the fruit of strict, laborious, and diligent search and inquiry; or, "then Job answered"^{f233}, as the same particle is rendered, (~~Job~~ Job 4:1); after he had heard Eliphaz out; he waited with patience until he had finished his discourse, without giving him any interruption, though there were many things that were very provoking, particularly in (~~Job~~ Job 4:5-7 5:2); and when he had done, then he made his reply; and this was no other than what every man has a right unto, to answer for himself when any charge or accusation is brought against him; when his character is attacked, or his good name, which is better the precious ointment, is taken from him; and is what all reasonable men, and the laws of all civilized nations, allow of.

Ver. 2. *Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed*, etc.] Or, “in weighing weighed”^{f234}, most nicely and exactly weighed; that is, his grievous affliction, which caused so much grief of heart, and which had been shown in words and gestures; or his “wrath” and “anger”^{f235}, as others render it: not his anger against Eliphaz, as Saphorno, but as before, meaning the same thing, his affliction; which either, as he understood, was the fruit and effect of the wrath and anger of God, who treated him as an enemy; or rather, that wrath, anger, and resentment raised in his own mind by those afflictive providences, and which broke out in hot and passionate expressions, and for which he was blamed as a foolish man, (~~8RD~~ Job 5:2); or else the “complaint”^{f236}, the groans and moans he made under them; or the “impatience”^{f237} he was charged with in bearing of them; and now he wishes, and suggests, that if they were well weighed and considered by kind and judicious persons, men of moderation and temper, a great allowance would be made for them, and they would easily be excused; that is, if, together with his expressions of grief, anger, and impatience, his great afflictions, the cause of them, were but looked into, and carefully examined, as follows:

and my calamity laid in the balances together! that is, his affliction, which had a being, as the word signifies, as Aben Ezra observes, was not through the prepossessions of fear as before, nor merely in fancy as in many, or as exaggerated, and made greater than it is, which is often the case; but what was real and true, and matter of fact; it was what befell him, had happened to him, not by chance, but by the appointment and providence of God; and includes all his misfortunes, the loss of his cattle, servants, and children, and of his own health; and now to be added to them, the unkindness of his friends; and his desire is, that these might be taken up, and put together in the scales, and being put there, that the balances might be lifted up at once, and the true weight of them taken; and the meaning is, either that all his excessive grief, and passionate words, and extravagant and unwarrantable impatience, as they were judged, might be put into one scale, and all his afflictions in another, and then it would be seen which were heaviest, and what reason there was for the former, and what little reason there was to blame him on that account; or however, he might be excused, and not be bore hard upon, as he was; to this sense his words incline in (~~8RD~~ Job 23:2); or else by his grief and calamity he means the same thing, his grievous afflictions, which he would have put together in a pair of balances, and weighed against anything that was ever so heavy, and then they would

appear to be as is expressed in (^{<81B>}Job 6:3); Job by all this seems desirous to have his case thoroughly canvassed, and his conduct thoroughly examined into, and to be well weighed and pondered in the scale of right reason and sound judgment, by men of equal and impartial characters; but he tacitly suggests that his friends were not such, and therefore wishes that some third person, or other persons, would undertake this affair.

Ver. 3. *For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea*, etc.] Or “seas” ^{f238}; all sand is heavy in its own nature, (^{<17B>}Proverbs 27:3); especially the sand of the sea, that which is immediately taken out of it; for that on the shore is lighter, being dried by the winds and heat of the sun, but the other is heavier, through the additional weight of water; and much more especially how heavy must all the sand of the sea be, and of all the seas that are in the world: yet Job suggests by this hyperbolic expression, exaggerating his case, that his affliction was heavier than it all, a most intolerable and insupportable burden; the afflictions of God’s people are but light when compared with what their sins deserve, with the torments of the damned in hell, with the sufferings of Christ in their room and stead, and with everlasting, happiness, the eternal weight of glory, (^{<40H>}2 Corinthians 4:17); but in themselves they are heavy, and press hard; they are so to flesh and blood, and especially unless everlasting arms are put under men, and they are supported and upheld with the right hand of God’s righteousness; they are heavy when attended with the hidings of God’s face, and a sense of his wrath and displeasure, which was Job’s case, (see ^{<81B>}Job 13:24 23:2,3); some render “it more copious”, or “numerous” ^{f239}, and indeed the word has this signification, as in (^{<04B>}Numbers 20:20); and the metaphor is more frequently used to express a multitude, even what is innumerable, (^{<210>}Hosea 1:10); yet the notion of heaviness best agrees with the preceding figure of weighing in balances, and therefore at least is not to be excluded some learned men take in both, as the sense of the word, the number of afflictions, and the bulk and weight of them:

therefore my words are swallowed up; either by his friends, as Kimchi, who heard them, and put a wrong construction on them, without thoroughly examining the true sense of them; as men that swallow down their food greedily, do not chew it, nor take the true taste of it, and so are no judges whether it is good or bad; but this sense seems to have no connection with what goes before; rather they were swallowed up by himself, and the meaning either is, that such was the weight and pressure of his afflictions, that he wanted words to express it; his words “failed” him, as the Targum:

or they “come short”, as Mr. Broughton renders it; they were not sufficient to set forth and declare the greatness of his troubles; or he faltered in his speech, he could not speak out plainly and distinctly, because of his grief and sorrow, (see ^{<1970>}Psalm 77:4); what he had said was delivered amidst sighs and sobs, through the heaviness of the calamity on him; they were but half words, attended with groanings that could not be uttered; by which he would signify, that though his friends had charged him with speaking too much and too freely, he had not spoken enough, nor could he, by reason of the greatness of his affliction; and also to excuse his present answer, if it was not delivered with that politeness and fulness of expression, with that eloquence and strength of reasoning and discoursing he at other times was capable of: or rather the words may be rendered, “therefore my words break out with heat” ^{f240}; in a vehement manner, in a hot and passionate way I am blamed for; but this is to be imputed to the burden of affliction and sorrow upon me, which, if considered, some allowances would be made, and the charge be alleviated.

Ver. 4. *For the arrows of the Almighty [are] within me*, etc.] Which are a reason proving the weight and heaviness of his affliction, and also of his hot and passionate expressions he broke out into; which designs not so much outward calamities, as famine, pestilence, thunder and lightning, which are called the arrows of God, (^{<623>}Deuteronomy 32:23,24 ^{<356>}Ezekiel 5:16) (^{<915>}Psalm 91:5,6 18:13,14); all which had attended Job, and were his case; being reduced to extreme poverty, had malignant and pestilential ulcers upon him, and his sheep destroyed by thunder and lightning; and which were like arrows, that came upon him suddenly, secretly, and at unawares, and very swiftly; these arrows flew thick and first about him, and stuck in him, and were sharp and painful, and wounded and slew him; for he was now under slaying circumstances of Providence; but rather these mean, together with his afflictions, the inward distresses, grief, and anguish of his mind arising from them, being attended with a keen sense of the divine displeasure, which was the case of David, and is expressed in much the same language, (^{<381>}Psalm 38:1,2); Job here considers his afflictions as coming from God, as arrows shot from his bow; and as coming from him, not as a father, in a way of paternal chastisement, and love, dealing with him as a child of his, but accounting him as an enemy, and setting him up as a mark or butt to shoot at, (see ^{<871>}Job 7:20 16:12-14); yea, not only as the arrows of a strong and mighty man, expert in archery, who shoots his arrows with great strength and skill, so that they miss not, and return not in

vain, (see ^{<8004>}Psalm 120:4 127:4 ^{<810>}Jeremiah 50:9); but as being the arrows of the Almighty, which come with force irresistible, with the stretching and lighting down of his arm, and with the indignation of his anger intolerable:

the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; alluding to the custom of some people, that used to dip their arrows in poison, or besmear them with it; so the Persians, as Jarchi observes, and Heliodorus ^{f241} reports of the Ethiopians, that they dipped their arrows in the poison of dragons, and which made them inflammatory, and raised such an heat, and such burning pains, as were intolerable; and now, as such poison presently infected the blood, and penetrated into and seized the animal spirits, and inflamed and soon exhausted them; so the heat of divine wrath, and a sense of it, which attended the arrows of God, his afflictions on Job, so affected him, as not only to take away his breath, that he could not speak, as in (^{<806B>}Job 6:3), or rather, as to cause those warm and hot expressions to break out from him, but even to eat up his vital spirits, and leave him spiritless and lifeless; which was Heman's case, and similar to Job's, (^{<88B>}Psalm 88:3-5);

the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me; the Lord is sometimes compared to a man of war in arms, stirring up his wrath and jealousy, (^{<015B>}Exodus 15:3 ^{<2413>}Isaiah 42:13); and in this light he was viewed by Job, and so he apprehended him, as coming forth against him, and which was terrible; and his terrors were like an army of soldiers set in battle array, in rank and file, ready to discharge, or discharging their artillery upon him; and which sometimes design the inward terrors of mind, of a guilty conscience, the terrors of God's judgment here, or of a future judgment hereafter, of death and hell, and eternal damnation, through the menaces and curses of the law of God transgressed and broken; but here afflictive providences, or terrible things in righteousness, which surrounded him, attacked him in great numbers, and in a hostile military way, with great order and regularity, and which were frightful to behold; perhaps regard may be also had to those scaring dreams and terrifying visions he sometimes had, (see ^{<8714>}Job 7:14,15).

Ver. 5. *Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder?*] No, they neither of them do, when the one is in a good pasture, and the other has a sufficiency of provender; but when they are in want of food, the one will bray, and the other will low, which are tones peculiar to those creatures, and express their mournful complaints;

wherefore Job suggests, that should he make no moan and complaint in his sorrowful circumstances, he should be more stupid and senseless than those brute creatures: and he may have some respect to the different circumstances of himself and his friends; he himself, when he was in prosperity, made no complaints, as the wild ass brays not, and the ox lows not, when they have both food enough; but now, being in distress, he could not but utter his sorrow and trouble, as those creatures when in lack of food; and this may serve as an answer to his different conduct now and formerly, objected to him, (^{<1804B>}Job 4:3-5); and so his friends; they lived in great tranquillity and prosperity, as Aben Ezra observes, and roared and grieved not, which doubtless they would, were they in the same circumstances he was; though it became them, as things were, to have uttered words of condolence to their friend in distress, instead of sharp reproofs and hard censures.

Ver. 6. *Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?* etc.] As any sort of pulse, peas, beans, lentiles, etc. which have no savoury and agreeable taste unless salted, and so many other things; and are disagreeable to men, and not relished by them, and more especially things bitter and unpleasant; and therefore Job intimates, it need not seem strange that the wormwood and water of gall, or the bread of adversity and water of affliction, he was fed with, should be so distasteful to him, and he should show such a nausea of it, and an aversion to it, and complain thereof as he did: though some apply this to the words and speeches of Eliphaz, and his friends he represented, which with Job were insipid and foolish talk, and very unsuitable and disagreeable to him, yea, loathed and abhorred by him, not being seasoned with the salt of prudence, grace, and goodness, (see ^{<5046>}Colossians 4:6);

or is there [any] taste in the white of an egg? none at all. The same things are designed by this as the former. Mr. Broughton renders it, “the white of the yolk”; and Kimchi says ^{f242} it signifies, in the language of the Rabbins, the red part of the yolk, the innermost part; but others, from the use of the word in the Arabic language, interpret it of the froth of milk ^{f243}, which is very tasteless and insipid: but the first of the words we render “white” always signifies “spittle”; and some of the Jewish writers ^{f244} call it the spittle of soundness, or a sound man, which has no taste, in distinction from that of a sick man, which has; and the latter word comes from one which signifies to dream; and Jarchi observes, that some so understand it here; and the whole is by some rendered, “is there any taste” or “savour in

the spittle of a dream” or “drowsiness”^{f245}? such as flows from a person asleep, or in a dream; and so may fitly express the vain and empty words, as the Septuagint translate the phrase, of Job’s friends, in his esteem, which to him were no than the words of some idle and dreaming person, or were like the dribble of a fool or madman, as David mimicked, (^{<0213>}1 Samuel 21:13); and it is observed^{f246}, that the word “spittle” is very emphatically used, since it useless in judging of different tastes, and mixed with food, goes into nourishment, as the white of an egg.

Ver. 7. *The things [that] my soul refused to touch [are] as my sorrowful meat.*] Meaning either the above things, that which is unsavoury, and the white of an egg, of any other food, which in the time of his prosperity he would not touch with his fingers, much less eat, but now was glad of, and were his constant food in his present sorrowful circumstances; the sense given by some Jewish writers^{f247} is, that what he disdained to touch or wipe his hands with formerly, he was glad to make use of as a tablecloth to eat his bread of sorrow upon; but it rather intends the insipid and disagreeable words of his friends, their doctrines, instructions, and exhortations they gave him, but were refused and rejected by him; and which he before compares to unsavoury food, the white of an egg, or the spittle of a dreaming man, or the dribble of a fool; and which were as much loathed and nauseated by him, as his food that was “loathed” by him^{f248}, either because of his want of appetite, or because of the badness of it, such as were corrupt and “rotten”, and even as the “excrements” of food^{f249}; those he refused to receive with as much indignation as he could such sort of food offered him; and therefore we find, that notwithstanding all that had been said to him, he continued in the same sentiment and disposition of mind, to desire death rather than life, as follows.

Ver. 8. *And that I might have my request,* etc.] Or that it “might come”^{f250}; that it might go up to heaven, enter there, and come into the ears of the Lord, be attended to, admitted, and received by him, (see ^{<0816>}Psalm 18:6); or come to Job, be returned into his bosom, be answered and fulfilled; the same with the desire that “cometh”, which is, when the thing desired is enjoyed, (^{<0132>}Proverbs 13:12); or that what he had requested would come, namely, death, which is sometimes represented as a person that looks in at the windows, and comes into the houses of men, and seizes on them, (^{<0121>}Jeremiah 9:21); and this is what Job wishes for; this was his sole request; this was the thing, the one thing, that lay uppermost in his mind, and he was most importunately solicitous for:

and that God would grant [me] the thing that I long for! death, as the following words explain it; this is not desirable by nature, but contrary to it; it is itself a penal evil, the sanction and curse of the law; it is an enemy, and a very formidable one, the king of terrors; and, though a very formidable, one, is desired by good men from a principle of grace, and with right views, to be rid of sin, and to be with Christ; yet it often is done by persons in melancholy, sullen, and humorous fits, when they cannot have what they would, as in Rachel, Elijah, and Jonah, (~~0301~~Genesis 30:1 ~~1190~~1 Kings 19:4 Jon 4:8,9); and because of sore troubles and afflictions, which was the present case of Job; though it must be said that it was not, as is frequently the case with wicked men, through the horrors of a guilty conscience, which he was free of; and he had faith, and hope of comfort in another world, and in some degree he submitted to the will and pleasure of God; though pressed with too much eagerness, importunity, and passion: and it may be observed, that Job did not make request to men, to his servants, or friends about him, to dispatch him, as Abimelech and Saul did; nor did he lay hands on himself, or attempt to do it, as Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas: the wretched philosophy of the stoics was not known in Job's time, which not only makes suicide lawful, but commends it as an heroic action; no, Job makes his request to the God of his life, who had given it to him, and had maintained it hitherto, and who only had a right to dispose of it; he asks it as a favour, he desires it as a gift, he had nothing else to ask, nothing was more or so desirable to him as death.

Ver. 9. *Even that it would please God to destroy me,* etc.] Not with an everlasting destruction of body and soul; for destruction from the Almighty was a terror to him, (~~18123~~Job 31:23); but with the destruction of the body only; not with an annihilation of it, but with the dissolution of it, or of that union there was between his soul and body: the word ^{f251} used signifies to bruise and beat to pieces; his meaning is, that his body, his house of clay in which he dwelt, might be crushed to pieces, and beat to powder, and crumbled into dust; and perhaps he may have regard to his original, the dust of the earth, and his return to it, according to the divine threatening, (~~00319~~Genesis 3:19); a phrase expressive of death; and so Mr. Broughton renders it, "to bring me to the dust", to "the dust of death", (~~10215~~Psalm 22:15);

that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off! he had let loose his hand in some degree already; he had given his substance and his body into the hand of Satan; his own hand had touched him, but he had only gone skin

deep, as it were; he had smote him in his estate, in his family, and in the outward parts of his body; but now he desires that he would stretch out his hand further, and lift it up, and give a heavier stroke, and pierce him more deeply; strike through his heart and liver, and “make an end” of him, as Mr. Broughton translates the word, and dispatch him at once; cut him off like the flower of the field by the scythe, or like a tree cut down to its root by the axe, or cut off the thread of his life, (~~23812~~ Isaiah 38:12).

Ver. 10. *Then should I yet have comfort*, etc.] Either before death, and in the midst of all his pains and sorrows, being in view of it as near at hand, and sure and certain; could he but be assured of its near approach, he could exult in his afflictions; it would be an alleviation of his trouble, that he should be soon out of it; and he would sit and sing upon the brink of eternity, and say, “O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory?” (~~4155~~ 1 Corinthians 15:55); his sufferings being just at an end, and being comfortably persuaded of a happy future state, and a glorious resurrection, (see ~~48925~~ Job 19:25-27); or after death, when destroyed and cut off by it; and he hereby signifies as if he expected no comfort on this side death and the grave; that is, no temporal comfort, his comforts were gone, his substance, his children, and health, and he had no hope of the restoration of them, Eliphaz had suggested; but he believed, that though he now had his evil things, as Lazarus since, yet after death should be comforted with the presence of God, in which is fulness of joy; with the discoveries of his love, as a broad river to swish in; with a glory that should be on him, and revealed in him, with which “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared”, (~~48188~~ Romans 8:18); and with the company of angels, and glorified saints, as well as be freed from all bodily disorders and pains, and death itself, from all sin, and sorrow, from Satan’s temptations, divine desertions, doubts, and fears:

yea, I would harden myself in sorrow; meaning either upon the first news of death’s being near at hand, he would harden himself against all pains and pangs of death; when those should beset him around, and he should find trouble and sorrow through them, he would not regard them, but most cheerfully and patiently bear them, and most courageously go through them, not at all intimidated by them, or by death, and the most terrible agonies of it: or “though I should be hot, burn”, or “be burnt in sorrow” or “pain” ^{f252}, as some render it; or parched with pain, as Mr. Broughton; though I should be still more and more inflamed with these burning ulcers upon me, or be dried up with a burning fever, or my body cast into a fire,

and be scorched and burnt in the flames of it, I should not value it; I could bear the most excruciating pains, and sharpest torments, could I but be assured I should die. Some observe, that the word signifies to “leap”^{f253}; and so the Septuagint render it; and then the sense is, that he should leap for joy, as men do when they are elevated at good news, or possess what is exceeding grateful to them, was it certain to him he should die quickly; and so the Targum interprets it of exultation. The word in the Arabic language, as a good judge^{f254} of it observes, is used of the prancing and pawing of a horse, which makes the ground to shake; he strikes with his foot, and which as done in the midst of a battle, mocking at fear, at the rattling quiver, and glittering spear and shield, is most beautifully described in (<K92>Job 39:21-25) in like manner, Job suggests, he should rejoice in the view of death, and mock at the fear of it: or this may respect the happiness he should enjoy after death; for in the Syriac and Arabic versions the words are rendered, “and I shall be perfected in virtue”; and the word used has the signification of solidity, confirmation, stability, and perfection; and to this sense it is rendered by some^{f255}, though to different purposes; and after this suffering state is over, the saints will be established, settled and perfected in all virtue, in knowledge, holiness, and happiness: therefore

let him not spare; laying on his blows thicker and heavier, till he has beaten me to pieces, and utterly destroyed me, a petition the reverse of David’s, (<K93>Psalm 39:13); his desire is to have it done quickly and thoroughly, neither to spare him any longer, nor abate in measure, but strike him immediately, and that effectually, so as to dispatch him at once:

for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One; that is, of God, as some^{f256} supply it, whose name is holy, who is holy in his nature, and in all his works, and is eminently glorious in the perfection of his holiness; for though there are holy men and holy angels, there are none holy as the Lord: his “words” are the doctrines delivered out by him concerning Christ the promised seed, and salvation by him, which were spoken of by the mouth of all the prophets from the beginning of the world, of which Job had knowledge, (<K95>Job 19:25); (see <O915>Genesis 3:15) (<L970>Luke 1:70,71); and the duties of religion enjoined men in those early times; which Saphorno refers to the laws and commandments given to the sons of Noah; of which (see Gill on “<O904>Genesis 9:4”); Here everything is included, both with respect to doctrine and practice, then revealed unto the sons of men, all which Job had a special regard unto: he embraced, professed, and practised them; he did not hide them from himself, or shut his eyes to the

evidence of them, and smother within him the light he had; nor did he conceal them from others, but communicated the knowledge of them among his neighbours, as far as he could reach; he was not ashamed to profess the true religion of God; he held fast, and did not deny the faith in the midst of a dark and Heathenish country, and he lived up to his profession and principles in his life and conversation: now having a testimony of a good conscience within him, that he, through the grace of God, had acted a sincere and upright part in the affair of religion, and having knowledge of a living Redeemer, and faith in him, and in his justifying righteousness, he was not afraid of death, come when it would, and in whatsoever shape: and whereas his friends had suggested that he was a hypocrite and a wicked man, his conscience bore witness to the contrary; and to let them know they were mistaken in him, he signifies, he was not afraid to die, yea, he desired it; he cared not how soon he left the world, and appeared before God, the Judge of all, since the truth of grace was in him, and the righteousness of Christ upon him, and he had not, through the course of his profession of religion, departed wickedly from his God, his truths and ordinances. Some ^{f257} read this in connection with the first clause, putting the rest in a parenthesis: “this is yet my comfort (though or when I am burned or parched with pain, and he spares not), that I have not concealed the words of the Holy One”.

Ver. 11. *What [is] my strength, that I should hope?* etc.] For a perfect restoration of health, suggested by Eliphaz; since it was so sadly weakened by the present affliction, which made death more desirable than life lengthened out in so much weakness, pain, and sorrow; or “that I should bear” ^{f258}, such a weight and heavy load that lay upon him, and crushed him, and to which his strength was not equal; or continue and endure ^{f259};

what [is] mine end, that I should prolong my life? what end can be answered by living, or desiring a long life? His children were gone, and none left to take care of and provide for; his substance was taken away from him, so that he had not to support himself, nor to be useful to others, to the poor; he had lost all power, authority, and influence, among men, and could be no more serviceable by his counsel and advice, and by the administration of justice and equity as a civil magistrate; and as to religious matters, he was reckoned an hypocrite and a wicked man by his friends, and had lost his character and interest as a good man; and so for him to live could answer no valuable end, and, therefore, he desires to die; for what is here, and in (^{<8162>}Job 6:12,13) said, contain reasons of his above request.

Ver. 12. [*Is*] *my strength the strength of stones?* etc.] Is it like such especially which are foundation and corner stones that support a building? or like a stone pillar, that will bear a prodigious weight? no, it is not:

or [is] my flesh of brass? is it made of brass? or is it like to brass for hardness, or for sustaining any weight laid on it? it is not; and, therefore, it cannot bear up under the ponderous load of afflictions on it, but must sink and fail; it is but flesh and blood, and that flesh like grass, weak and feeble; and, therefore, death is better than life laden with such an insupportable burden.

Ver. 13. [*Is*] *my help in me?* etc.] Or “my defence”^{f260}, as some; is it not in my power to defend myself against the calumnies and reproaches cast upon me? it is; and, though one have no help in myself to bear my burdens, or extricate myself out of my difficulties, yet I have the testimony of a good conscience within me, that supports me; and I have the strength and force of reason and argument on my side, to defend me against all objectors:

and is wisdom driven from me? either sound doctrine, the law^{f261}, or, rather, the Gospel, the wisdom of God in a mystery, revealed in the words of the Holy One before mentioned; or wisdom in the hidden part, the fear of God, which is wisdom, true grace in the heart, which, when once implanted, can never be driven out; or natural reason and understanding, of which he was not bereaved; for, though his body was thus sorely afflicted, he retained his reasoning and intellectual faculties. The words, in connection with the former, may be read, “what, if help is not with me, is wisdom also driven quite from me?”^{f262} does it follow, because I am not able to help myself out of this afflicted and distressed condition in which I am, that I am deprived of my reason? or be it that I am such a weak impotent creature, and even distracted, as you take me to be, should I not then rather be pitied than insulted? so some^{f263} connect the words following.

Ver. 14. *To him that is afflicted pity [should be showed] from his friend,* etc.] An “afflicted” man is an object of pity, one that is afflicted of God; either inwardly with a wounded spirit, with a sense of God’s displeasure, with divine desertions, with the arrows of the Almighty sticking in him, the poison thereof drinking up his spirits; or outwardly with diseases of body, with want of the necessaries of life, with loss of near relations, as well as substance, which was Job’s case; or afflicted by Satan, shot at, sifted and buffered by him, distressed by his temptations, suggestions, and

solicitations; or afflicted by men, reproached and persecuted for righteousness sake: in all such cases and circumstances “pity” should be showed; which is an inward affection of the mind, a sympathy of spirit, a sensible feeling of the afflictions of others, and which is expressed by gestures, motions, and actions, as by visiting them in their affliction, speaking comfortably to them, and relieving their necessities according to ability, and as the case requires: and this may be expected from a “friend”, and what the law of friendship requires, whether it be in a natural and civil sense, or in a religious and spiritual one; the union between friends being so near and close, that they are, as it were, one soul, as David and Jonathan were; and as the people of God, members of the same body are, so that if one suffers, all the rest do, or should suffer and sympathize with it: and though this duty is not always performed, at least as it should be, by natural and spiritual friends, yet this grace is always shown by God, our best of friends, who pities his children and by Christ, who is a friend that loves at all times, a brother born for adversity, and that sticks closer than any brother, and cannot but be touched with the feeling of the infirmities of his friends. The words may be rendered, “to him that is melted” ^{f264}; afflictions are like a furnace or refining pot for the melting of metals, and are called the furnace of afflictions: and saints are the metal, which are put into it; and afflictions also are the fire, of fiery trials, which heat and melt, and by which means the dross of sin and corruption is removed, and the graces of the spirit are tried and made the brighter; though here it rather signifies the melting of the heart like wax or water through the affliction, and denotes the anguish and distress, the trembling and fears, a person is in through it, being overwhelmed and borne down by it, which was Job’s case: or “he that melts pity”, or “whose pity melts”, or “melts in pity to his friend, he forsakes” ^{f265}, etc. that is, he that fails in pity, is destitute of compassion, and shuts up the bowels of it to his friend in distress, has not the fear of God before his eyes; and this sense makes Job himself to be the friend in affliction, and Eliphaz, and those with him, the persons that are deficient in their mercy, pity, and compassion. Some render the words ^{f266}, “should reproach [be cast] on him that is afflicted, as that he forsakes the fear of the Almighty?” the word for pity is so used in (^{<204>}Proverbs 14:34); and the reproach on Job was, that he had cast off the fear of God, (^{<1806>}Job 4:6 15:4). This grieved him most of all, and added to his affliction, and of which he complains as very cruel usage; and very cutting it was that he should be reckoned a man destitute of the fear of God, and that because he was afflicted by him; though rather the following words,

but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty, are a charge upon his friend Eliphaz for not showing pity to him in his affliction, which was tacitly forsaking the fear of God. Job here recriminates and retorts the charge of want of the fear of God on Eliphaz himself; for to show mercy to an afflicted friend is a religious act, a part of pure and undefiled religion, a branch of the fear of God; and he that neglects it is so far wanting in it, and acts contrary to his profession of God, of fear of him, and love to him; (see ~~3026~~ James 1:26 ~~4187~~ 1 John 3:17); or “otherwise he forsakes”, etc. ^{f267}.

Ver. 15. *My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook*, etc.] Meaning his three friends, represented by Eliphaz, who were of the same sentiments with him, and behaved towards Job as he did: these were his brethren not by birth by blood nor by country, but by the profession of the same religion of the one true and living God in opposition to the idolatrous people among whom they dwelt; and this their relation to him is an aggravation of their perfidy and treachery, unfaithfulness and deceit, by which is meant their balking and disappointing him in his expectations; when they came to visit him as friends, he might reasonably expect they came to condole and sympathize with him, and comfort him; but, instead of this they reproached him and grieved him, and were miserable comforters of him; and this he illustrates by the simile of a “brook”, which he enlarges upon in the following verses: these friends and brethren of his he compares to a “brook”, not that was fed by a spring which continues, but filled with falls of water and melting snows from the hills, with which it is swelled, and looks like a large river for a while, but when these fail it is soon gone; hereby representing his friends in his state of prosperity, who looked big, and promised long and lasting friendship, but proved, in time of adversity, unfaithful and deceitful; and so it denotes the fickleness and inconstancy of their friendship:

[and] as the stream of brooks they pass away: or, “pass by” ^{f268}, as a stream of water, fed by many brooks, or flows of water like unto many brooks, which run with great rapidity and force, and are quickly gone and seen no more; thus his friends, as such, passed by him, and were of no use to him any more than the priest and Levite were to the man that fell among thieves, (~~2180~~ Luke 10:30,31).

Ver. 16. *Which are blackish by reason of the ice*, etc.] When frozen over, they look of a blackish colour, and is what is called a black frost; and these either describe Job and his domestics, as some ^{f269} think whom Eliphaz and

his two friends compared to the above streams water passed away from, or passed by and neglected, and showed no friendship to; who were in black, mournful and rueful circumstances, through the severe hand of God upon them. The word is rendered, “those which mourn”, (^{1851b} Job 5:11); or rather the friends of Job compared to foul and troubled waters frozen over which cannot be so well discerned, or which were black through being frozen, and which describes the inward frame of their minds the foulness of their spirits the blackness of their hearts, though they outwardly appeared otherwise, as follows:

[and] wherein the snow is hid; or “on whom the snow” falling, and lying on heaps, “hides” ^{f270}, or covers; so Job’s friends, according to this account, were, though black within as a black frost yet white without as snow; they appeared, in their looks and words at first as candid, kind, and generous, but proved the reverse.

Ver. 17. *What time they wax warm they vanish*, etc.] The ice and the snow, which, when the weather becomes warm, they melt away and disappear; and in like manner, he suggests his friends ceased to be friends to him in a time of adversity; the sun of affliction having looked upon him, they deserted him, at least did not administer comfort to him:

when it is hot they are consumed out of their place; when it is hot weather, and the sun has great strength then the waters, which swelled through the floods and fall of rain and snow, and which when frozen, looked black and big as if they had great depth in them, were quickly dried up, and no more to be seen in the place where they were; which still expresses the short duration of friendship among men, which Job had a sorrowful experience of.

Ver. 18. *The paths of their way are turned aside*, etc.] That is, the waters, when melted by the heat of the sun, and the warmth of the weather, run, some one way, and some another in little streams and windings, till they are quite lost and the tracks of them are no more to be seen; denoting that all appearance of friendship was quite gone, and no traces of it to be found:

they go to nothing, and perish: some of them are lost in little meanders and windings about, and others are exhiled by the heat of the sun, and go into “Tohu”, as the word is, into empty air; so vain and empty, and perishing, were all the comforts he hoped for from his friends; though some

understand this of the paths of travellers in the deserts being covered in the sand, and not to be seen and found; of which see Pliny ^{f271}.

Ver. 19. *The troops of Tema looked*, etc.] A city in Arabia, so called from Tema a son of Ishmael, (^{f02515}Genesis 25:15); these troops or companies were travelling ones, either that travelled to Tema, or that went from thence to other places for merchandise, (see ^{f29113}Isaiah 21:13,14); these, as they passed along in their caravans, as the Turks their successors now do, looked at those places where in the wintertime they observed large waters frozen over, and covered with snow, and expected to have been supplied from thence in the summer season, for the extinguishing of their thirst:

the companies of Sheba waited for them: another people in Arabia, which went in companies through the deserts, where being in great want of water for their refreshment, waited patiently till they came to those places, where they hoped to find water to relieve them, which they had before marked in the wintertime.

Ver. 20. *And they were confounded because they had hoped*, etc.] When they came to the places where they hoped to find water, finding none were ashamed of their vain hope, and reflected upon themselves for being so foolish as to raise their expectations upon such a groundless surmise:

they came thither, and were ashamed; which is the same thing expressed in different words; and aptly enough describes Job's disappointment in not meeting with that relief and comfort he expected from his friends, to whom he makes application of all this in the following words.

Ver. 21. *For now ye are nothing*, etc.] Once they seemed to be something to him; he thought them men wise, good, and religious, kind, bountiful, and tenderhearted; but now he found them otherwise, they were nothing to him as friends or as comforters in his distress; the "Cetib", or Scripture, is, as we read, and is followed by many; but the marginal reading is, "now ye are to it" ^{f272}; that is, ye are like to it, the brook whose waters he had been describing; so Jarchi interprets it; Mr. Broughton very agreeably takes in both, "so now ye are become like that, even nothing"; as that deceitful brook is no more, nor of any use to travellers fainting through thirst; so ye are like that, of no use and advantage to me in my affliction:

ye see [my] casting down; from a state of prosperity to a state of adversity; from a pinnacle of honour, from being the greatest man in the east, a civil magistrate, and the head of a flourishing family, to the lowest degree of

disgrace and dishonour; from wealth and riches to want and poverty; as well as saw the inward dejection of his mind, through the poisoned arrows of the Almighty within him:

and ye are afraid; of the righteous judgments of God, taking these calamities to be such, and fearing the same or the like should fall on them, should they keep him company; or however should they patronize and defend him; and afraid also of being too near him, lest his breath, and the smell of him, should be infectious, and they should catch a distemper from him; or lest he should be expensive and troublesome to them.

Ver. 22. *Did I say, bring unto me?* etc.] Or, “give unto me”^{f273}; did I invite you to come to me, and bring in your hands presents for me, to support me under my necessitous circumstances?

or give a reward for me of your substance? did I ever ask anything of you? if I had, it would have been but your duty to have given freely to me in my deplorable circumstances; and it might have been expected you would have given without asking, seeing my necessities so great: or did I desire you to communicate out of the great wealth and abundant riches you are possessed of to others on my behalf, to plead my cause among men, and to get a favourable sentence upon me, that I might not be traduced as a wicked man by censorious tongues? had I ever been troublesome to you in any respect, you might have been provoked to use me ill; but since nothing of this kind has ever been requested of you, you might have forborne ill language and hard words; which are often given to beggars; for when a man is fallen to decay, and becomes troublesome by his importunity, twenty things are raked up by his friends against his character; as that he has been lazy and indolent, or lavish and extravagant, etc. to save their money, and excuse them from acts of charity; but this was not the case here.

Ver. 23. *Or, deliver me from the enemies' hand?* etc.] Or, “out of the hand of straitness”^{f274}; out of tribulation and difficulties with which he was pressed on every side:

or redeem me from the hand of the mighty? fetch back his cattle out of the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, either by force of arms, as Abraham brought back Lot, and all his goods, when taken and carried away by the four king's, or by giving a ransom price for them. Job had asked no such favour of them; he had not troubled them with any such suits, and therefore

they had no reason to use him in the manner they did, as he apprehended; it would be soon enough to flout and fling at him when he applied to them for any relief.

Ver. 24. *Teach me, and I will hold my tongue*, etc.] Job having made his defence, and which he thought a sufficient one to acquit him of the charge against him; yet to show that he was not stubborn and flexible, but was open to conviction, and ready to attend and hearken to what might be further said, desires to be taught and instructed in the way of his duty; suggesting that, upon being convinced of his mistakes, he should ingenuously acknowledge them: good men are desirous of being taught both of God and men; they are not above instruction, or think themselves wiser than their teachers; they are willing to receive knowledge, not only from their superiors, but from their equals, and even from those that are inferior to them, as Job from his friends, though they had been unkind to him, and bore very hard upon him; and he promises that while they were speaking he would be silent, and not noisy, and clamorous, nor interrupt nor contradict them; but would patiently and attentively listen to what they said, and seriously consider it, and weigh it well in his mind; and, should he be convinced thereby, would no longer continue his complaints unto God, nor murmur at his providences; and would cease reflecting on them his friends, and no more charge them with deceit, perfidy, and unkindness; and by his silence would acknowledge his guilt, and not pertinaciously stand in an evil matter, but lay his hand on his mouth; hold his tongue, as our English phrase is, a Graecism ^{f275}; that is, be silent, as in Hebrew; and even take shame to himself, and in this way confess his iniquity, and do so no more:

and cause me to understand wherein I have erred; not that he allowed that he was in an error; for all that he says, both before and after, shows that he thought himself free from any; only, that whereas there was a possibility that he might be in one, he should be glad to have it pointed out; for he would not willingly and obstinately continue therein: error is common to human nature; the best of men are liable to mistakes; and those are so frequent and numerous, that many of them escape notice; “who can understand his errors?” (³⁹¹²Psalm 19:12); wherefore wise and good men will esteem it a favour to have their errors pointed out to them, and their mistakes rectified; and it becomes men of capacity and ability to take some pains to do this, since he that converts one that has erred, whether in principle or practice, saves a soul from death, and covers a multitude of

sins; (³¹⁵⁹James 5:19,20); Job is desirous, that if he had imbibed or uttered any error in principle, any thing unbecoming the Divine Being, contrary to his perfections, or to the holy religion which he professed, or was guilty of any in practice, in his conduct and behaviour, especially under the present providence, that it might be clearly made out unto him, and he should at once frankly and freely own it, retract and relinquish it.

Ver. 25. *How forcible are right words!* etc.] That are according to right reason; such as may be called strong reasons, or bony arguments, as in (²³⁴²Isaiah 41:21); there are strength and weight in such words, reasonings, and arguments; they bring evidence and conviction with them, and are very powerful to persuade the mind to an assent unto them, and have great influence to engage to a profession or practice of what they are used for; such are more especially the words of God, the Scriptures of truth, the doctrines of the Gospel; these are right words, (see ²¹⁸⁶Proverbs 8:6,8,9); they are not contrary to right reason, although above it; and are agreeably to sanctified reason, and received by it; they are according to the perfections of God, even his righteousness and holiness, and according to the law of God, and in no wise repugnant to it, which is the rule of righteousness; and they are doctrines according to godliness, and are far from encouraging licentiousness; and they are all strictly true, and must be right: and there is a force and strength in those words; they come with weight, especially when they come in demonstration of the Spirit and power of God; they are mighty, through God, for the pulling down the strong holds of sin, Satan, and self, and for the bringing of men to the obedience of Christ; to the quickening dead sinners, enlightening dark minds, softening hard hearts; renewing, changing, and transforming men into quite another temper and disposition of mind they formerly had; for the comforting and relieving souls in distress, and saints under affliction; and have so very wonderful an influence on the lives and conversations of those to whom they come, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, as to teach them to deny all sin and ungodliness, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly: or, “how forcible are the words of an upright man!” ^{f276} that is, sincere, impartial, and faithful; which Job suggests his friends were not: some think Job has respect to his own words, and render the clause, “what hardness”, or “harshness”, have “right words!” ^{f277} Such as he believed his own were, and in which there were nothing hard and harsh, sharp and severe, or which might give just offence; such as his cursing the day in which he was born, or charging his friends with treachery and deceit:

but rather he tacitly reflects upon the words and arguments of his friends; intimating, that though there is force and strength in right words, theirs were neither right nor forcible, but partial and unjust, and weak and impotent; which had no strength of reasoning in them, nor carried any conviction with them, as follows:

but what doth your arguing reprove? their arguments they had used with him had no strength in them; they were of no avail; they did not reprove or convince of any evil he had been guilty of, or any mistake he had made; they were weak, impertinent, and useless, and fell with no weight upon him, nor wrought any conviction in him.

Ver. 26. *Do ye imagine to reprove words,* etc.] Or with words; with bare words, without any force of reasoning and argument in them? put a parcel of words together without any sense or meaning, or however without any cogency in them, and think to run me down with them? or is your scheme and device only, and which you pursue, to catch at and lay hold on some words of mine uttered in my distress, and make me an offender for a word, or for a few words, supposing they have been rashly and passionately spoken? have ye no facts to charge me with, before or since these calamities befell me? is the charge of hypocrisy and want of the fear of God to be supported by producing some hasty expressions, without pointing at one single action in my life and conversation?

and the speeches of one that is desperate, [which are] as wind? that is, do ye imagine to reprove them? or, are; your thoughts wholly and solely intent on them? are these only the strong reasons you have to produce to fix the sin of hypocrisy upon me? for by him that is “desperate” he means himself; not that he despaired of his everlasting salvation; he was far from despair; he was a strong believer, and determined that, though he was slain, he would trust in the Lord; he was well assured he should be justified, both here and hereafter; and full well knew that his Redeemer lived, and that though he died, he should rise again and be happy in the vision of God for ever: but he despaired of a restoration to outward happiness, which Eliphaz had suggested, should he behave well; but, alas! his condition was forlorn and miserable, and there was no hope with him of being better; his children were dead, his substance in the hands of robbers, his health so extremely bad that he had no expectation of a recovery to his former state; and therefore it was very unkind and ungenerous to lay hold upon and aggravate the speeches of such an one, and improve them against him; and

especially as they were only “for refreshment”^{f278}, as some choose to render the words, (see ^{<8521>}Job 32:20); they were uttered to give vent to his sorrow and grief, and not with any ill design against God or men; or the sense of the whole is, that they imagined that their words were right and fit to reprove with, and that there were force and strength in them, and had a tendency to work conviction and bring to confession; but as for the words of Job, they treated them “as wind”; as idle, vain, and empty, and useless and fruitless as the wind.

Ver. 27. *Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless*, etc.] Meaning himself; who was like a fatherless child, stripped of all his mercies, of his children, his substance, and his health; and was in a most miserable, helpless, and forlorn condition; and, moreover, deprived of the gracious presence and visible protection of his heavenly Father, being given up for a while into the hands of Satan; and now it was unkind and barbarous to overwhelm such a man, who was overwhelmed with overmuch sorrow already: or, “ye cause to fall upon the fatherless”; either their wrath and anger, as the Targum and many others^{f279} instead of doing him justice; or a wall, or any such thing, to crush him, as Aben Ezra; or a lot, as Simeon bar Tzemach; (see ^{<2483>}Joel 3:3); or rather a net, or a snare to entrap him in, seeking to entangle him in talk, so Mr. Broughton, which agrees with what follows:

and ye dig [a pit] for your friend; contrive mischief against him; sought to bring him to ruin; and which is aggravated by his having been their old friend, with whom they lived in strict friendship, and had professed much unto, and still pretended to have respect for; the allusion is to digging of pits for the catching of wild beasts: some render it, “ye feast upon your friend”^{f280}; so the word is used in (^{<1163>}2 Kings 6:23 ^{<1846>}Job 41:6); this sense is taken notice of by Aben Ezra and Bar Tzemach; and then the meaning is, you rejoice at the misery of your friend; you mock him and that, and insult him in his distress, with which the Septuagint version agrees; which was cruel usage.

Ver. 28. *Now therefore be content*, etc.] Or, “may it now please you”^{f281}; Job addresses them in a respectful manner, and entreats them they would be so kind as to look favourably on him, and entertain better thoughts of him; and give a fresh and friendly hearing of his case, when he doubted not he should be acquitted by them of the charge of iniquity, and that his cause would appear to be a righteous one:

look upon me: upon my countenance; and see if you can find any traces of fear and falsehood, of dishonesty and hypocrisy, of shame and blushing; and observe if there is not all the appearance of an honest mind, of a good conscience within, that has nothing to fear from the strictest examination; or look upon my body, covered all over with boils and ulcers, and see if there is not occasion for those expressions of grief, and those heavy complaints that I have made; or rather, look upon me with an eye of pity and compassion, with affection, favour, and benevolence, and not bear so hard upon me:

for [it is] evident unto you if I lie; or, it is “before your faces”^{f282}; should I attempt to deceive you by telling you a parcel of lies, you would soon discern the falsehood in my countenance; you would easily find it out in my words, which would issue in my shame and confusion; I could not expect to go undetected by men of such sagacity and penetration; but I am not afraid of the most diligent scrutiny that can be made into my words and actions.

Ver. 29. *Return, I pray you*, etc.] From the ill opinion you have of me, and from your hard censures, and entertain other sentiments concerning me: or it may be, upon these words of Job his friends might be rising up as usual to take their leave of him, and break off conversation with him; and therefore he entreats they would return to their seats, and resume the debate, and give a friendly hearing of his case:

let it not be iniquity; either let it not be reckoned an iniquity to return and go on hearing his case; or he entreats that they would take care not to sin in their anger and resentment against him, nor go on to charge him with iniquity: or it may be rendered, “there is no iniquity”^{f283}; that is, it should be found that there was no such iniquity in him as he was charged with; not that he was free from all sin, which no man is, but from that which his friends judged he was guilty of, hypocrisy:

yea, return again; he most earnestly importunes them to return and patiently hear him out:

my righteousness [is] in it; in the whole of this affair before them, and which was the matter of controversy between them; meaning, not his justifying righteousness before God, but the righteousness of his cause before men; he doubted not but, when things were thoroughly searched into, that his righteousness would be as clear as the light, and his judgment

as the noonday; that he should appear to be a righteous man, and his cause a just one; and should stand acquitted and free from all charges and imputations.

Ver. 30. *Is there iniquity in my tongue?* etc.] Meaning in his words; either those which he uttered when he cursed the day on which he was born, or in charging his friends with unkindness and falsehood; otherwise the tongue is a world of iniquity, and the best of men are apt to offend both God and men in word:

cannot my taste discern perverse things? which is to be understood not of his natural taste, which very probably through his disease might be greatly vitiated, and incapable of relishing his food as in time of health, and of distinguishing good from bad; but of his intellectual taste, or of his sense and reason, his rational and spiritual taste; he had his senses exercised to discern good and evil; he could distinguish between right and wrong that was said or done, either by himself or others; he had the use of his rational powers and faculties, and therefore not to be treated as a mad or distracted man, but as one capable of carrying on a conversation, of opening his true case, and defending himself; (see ^{<8121>}Job 12:11).