

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 9

This and the following chapter contain Job's answer to Bildad, and in this he asserts the strict justice at God; which is such, that no man can be just in his sight, not being able to answer to one charge, or for one sin, of a thousand he is guilty of, (^{<RB01>}Job 9:1-3); and that such are his wisdom and power, that the most daring man cannot expect to succeed in an opposition to him, (^{<RB04>}Job 9:4); instances are given of his power in the works of nature and providence, (^{<RB05>}Job 9:5-10); notice is taken of the imperceptibleness of his actions and motions, and of his sovereignty in all his ways, (^{<RB11>}Job 9:11,12); and of his fierce wrath and anger, which is such as obliges the proudest of men to stoop under him; and therefore Job chose not to contend in a judicial way with him, but in a suppliant manner would entreat him, since his hand was so heavy upon him, (^{<RB13>}Job 9:13-21); he affirms, in direct opposition to Bildad and his friends, and insists upon it, that God afflicts both the righteous and the wicked; yea, gives the earth to the latter when he slays the former, (^{<RB22>}Job 9:22-24); he then observes the shortness of his days, and complains of his heavy afflictions, (^{<RB25>}Job 9:25-28); and concludes, that it was in vain for him to expect his cause to be heard before God, there being no daysman between them; and wishes that the dread of the Divine Majesty might be taken from him, and then he would freely and without fear speak unto him, (^{<RB29>}Job 9:29-35).

Ver. 1. *Then Job answered and said.*] Without taking notice of Bildad's harsh expressions and severe censures, or his unfriendliness to him; he enters directly into the argument, grants some things, confutes others, and defends himself and his conduct.

Ver. 2. *I know [it is] so of a truth,* etc That is, that God is just, and does not pervert justice and judgment, as Bildad had observed, (^{<RB8>}Job 8:3); Job was a man of great natural parts and capacity; he had a large share of knowledge of things, natural, civil, and moral; and he was a good man, in whom the true light of grace shined; and being, enlightened by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of divine things, he knew much of God, of his being and perfections, and of the methods of his grace,

especially in the justification of men, as appears by various passages in this chapter; he knew that God was just and holy in all his ways and works, whether of providence or grace; and this he kept in sight amidst all his afflictions, and was ready to acknowledge it: he knew this “of a truth”; that is, most certainly; for there are some truths that are so plain and evident that a man may be assured of, and this was such an one with Job; he had no need to be instructed in this article; he was as knowing in this point, as well as in others, as Bildad or any of his friends; nor did he need to be sent to the ancients to inquire of them, or to prepare himself for the search of the fathers, in order to acquire the knowledge of this, to which Bildad had advised; yet, though this was so clear a point, about which there was no room for further contest; but then the matter is,

how should man be just with God? if not angels, if not man in his best estate, in which he was vanity when compared with God; then much less frail, feeble, mortal, sinful men, even the best of men, considered in themselves, and with respect to their own righteousness: for, to “be just” is not to be so through an infusion of righteousness and holiness into men, which in the best of men is their sanctification and not their justification; but this is a legal term, and stands opposed to condemnation, and signifies a man’s being condemned and pronounced righteous in a judiciary way; so a man cannot be adjudged, reckoned, or accounted by God upon the foot of works of righteousness done by him; since his best works are imperfect, not answerable to the law, but very defective, and so not justifying; are opposite to the grace of God, by which, in an evangelic sense, men are justified; these would encourage boasting, which is excluded in God’s way of justifying sinners; and could justification be by them, the death of Christ would be in vain, and there would have been no need of him and his justifying righteousness: especially, it is a certain thing, that a man can never be “just”, or “justified with God”, in such a way, or through any righteousness wrought out by him; that is, either he is not and cannot be just in comparison of God; for, if the inhabitants of the heavens are not pure in his sight, the holy angels; and if man, at his best estate, was altogether vanity when compared with him, what must sinful mortals be? or not be just at his bar; should he mark their iniquities, enter into judgment with them, or an action against them, summon them before him to answer to charges he has to exhibit; they could not stand before him, or go off acquitted or discharged: or in his account; for his judgment is according to truth; he can never reckon that a perfect righteousness which is an

imperfect one: or in his sight; for, though men may be just in comparison of others, or at an human bar, in an human court of judicature, and in the account of men, and in their sight, to whom they may appear outwardly righteous, as well as in their own sight; yet not in the sight of God, who sees all things, the heart and all in it, every action, and the spring of it; (see ^{<491D>}Psalm 143:2) (^{<491D>}Romans 3:20); in this sense, a man can only be just with God through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, accounting that to him, putting it upon him, and clothing him with it, and so reckoning and pronouncing him righteous through it; and which is entirely consistent with the justice of God, since by it the law is fulfilled, magnified, and made honourable, and justice satisfied; so that God is just, while he is the justifier of him that believes in Jesus, (^{<491B>}Romans 3:26).

Ver. 3. *If he will contend with him*, etc.] If God will contend with man, so Saphorno; enter into a controversy with him, litigate and dispute the point in law, whether he is just or not, man cannot answer to the allegations he will produce; or if man should contend with God, a potsherd strive with its maker, to what purpose would it be? he could never avail himself by such a procedure; the match is unequal, there is no striving or contending with God in a judicial, way:

he cannot answer him one of a thousand; which some understand, that God will not answer men; he will not vouchsafe to give an answer to such that plead with him, or talk with him of his judgments in providence, or pretend to vindicate themselves, their ways, and their works, before him; but this sense seems contrary to (^{<241D>}Jeremiah 12:1,5 ^{<248D>}Ezekiel 18:25); but the meaning is, that man cannot answer God; either not one man out of a thousand, that is, none at all; unless, by one of a thousand, is meant the interpreter, one among a thousand, even the Messiah, the chiefest among ten thousand; the one man of a thousand Solomon found upon search; (see ^{<283D>}Job 33:23 ^{<215D>}Song of Solomon 5:10 ^{<207D>}Ecclesiastes 7:28); he indeed has made himself responsible for his people, as their surety, and was able to answer for them; and he has answered for them, and made satisfaction for their sins; it was exacted, or required, that is, a full payment of their debts, or a plenary satisfaction for their sins, “and he answered”, according to (^{<283D>}Isaiah 53:7); but rather the sense is, that a man cannot answer, either one time of a thousand ^{f368}, or one argument to one article exhibited, or to one objection or charge of a thousand brought against him by the law or justice of God; that is, for one sin of a thousand he has committed; so Mr. Broughton renders it, “to one thing of a thousand” ^{f369}; this suggests that

the sins of men are numerous; their debts are many, they are more than ten thousand talents, which they are not able to answer to, or pay off, no, not one of them; their iniquities are more than the hairs of their head, they cannot be understood or reckoned: and now a man cannot answer for one of a thousand, or the millions of sins he is guilty of; he cannot deny them, he cannot excuse them, he cannot make satisfaction for anyone of them; they are committed against an infinite Being, and require an infinite satisfaction, which man cannot give; they are violations of a law, and injuries to divine justice, that no man is able to atone for; whatever obedience he is capable of, or does perform, God has a prior right unto it, and therefore can never answer for former transgressions; this being the case, sinful man cannot be just with God upon the foot of his works, which is the thing this observation is made to illustrate: man's obedience is so short, and God's commandment or law so very broad, that these two can never be brought to meet, agree together, or answer to one another; and therefore it may be strongly concluded that a man is justified, if ever he is justified at all, in the sight of God, by faith in Christ and his righteousness, without the deeds of the law, (~~see~~ Romans 3:28).

Ver. 4. [*He is*] *wise in heart*, etc.] Originally, essentially, truly, really, and perfectly so; he is the only, and the all wise God; his understanding is infinite; he is able to traverse all the schemes of men, in things civil or religious, and disappoint all their devices; for though there be ever so many of them, or be ever so deeply laid, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand; for there is no wisdom, understanding, or counsel against him; and therefore it is in vain to contend with him: he is so wise and knowing, that he sees and knows all that is in man, or is done by him, whether in public or in private; there is not a thought in his heart, nor a word on his tongue, nor an action in his life and conversation, but what he is thoroughly acquainted with; and everyone of these he will bring into judgment: how therefore is it possible that sinful men should be just in the sight of such a wise and holy Being, upon the score of his own righteousness?

and mighty in strength; he is the most mighty; he is the Almighty; he has a mighty arm and strong hand; and unless a man had a strong arm like him, his own right hand can never save him, or his own righteousness justify him; wherefore, to what purpose is it for a feeble man to contend and strive with him? and since he is not a man, as he is, how should they come together in judgment? and what a vain thing must it be to set a time for it,

since, if we speak of strength, lo, he is strong? (see ~~309~~ Job 9:19,32 ~~309~~ Job 40:9-14);

who hath hardened [himself] against him, and hath prospered? either by behaving proudly and insolently to him, as Pharaoh, Sennacherib, and others, by speaking hard words against him, as the Jews in the times of Malachi; and such hard speeches ungodly sinners utter against God, Christ, his Gospel, ordinances, people, ways, and worship, of which they will be convinced, and for which they will be condemned at the last judgment; and by bold and daring acts of sin, running upon the thick bosses of his buckler, giving themselves up to commit all uncleanness with greediness, and making a covenant with hell and an agreement with death, and so think themselves safe and secure at all events; but such never prospered and succeeded as they promised themselves, but came to ruin and destruction: or “had peace” ^{f370}, or “found quietness”, as Mr. Broughton: there is no peace to wicked men, true, solid peace, either here or hereafter; when they cry “Peace”, or promise themselves much of it, destruction comes; and if God sets home the guilt of sin upon their consciences, the lead of it is intolerable; it sinks them into despair, and what then will be the worm that dieth not?

Ver. 5. *Which removeth the mountains*, etc.] This and what follow are instances of the power of God, and are full proofs of his being mighty in strength; and may be understood, either literally, not only of what God is able to do if he will, but of what he has done; and history ^{f371} furnishes us with instances of mountains being removed from one place to another; and Scheuchzer ^{f372} makes mention of a village in Helvetia, called Plurium, which, in 1618, was covered with the sudden fall of a mountain, and swallowed up in the earth, with 1800 inhabitants, and not the least trace of it to be seen any more; and in the sacred Scriptures is a prediction of the mount of Olives being removed from its place, one half to the north and the other to the south, (~~304~~ Zechariah 14:4); and Josephus ^{f373} gives a relation much like it, as in fact; besides, Job may have respect to what had been done in his times, or before them, and particularly at the universal deluge, which covered the tops of the highest mountains and hills, and very probably washed away some from their places: or else it may be understood proverbially, of the Lord’s doing things marvellous and surprising, and which are impossible and impracticable with men; (see ~~073~~ Matthew 17:20 ~~433~~ 1 Corinthians 13:2); or rather figuratively, of kingdoms and mighty kings, as the Targum, comparable to mountains for

their height and strength, who yet are removed by God at his pleasure; (see ^{<384E>}Zechariah 4:7 ^{<663D>}Revelation 16:20);

and they know not; when they are removed, and how it is done; it is imperceptible; either the mountains are not sensible of it, or the inhabitants of the mountains, as Bar Tzemach; or men, the common sort of men, the multitude, as Gersom: R. Saadiah Gaon interprets it of removing the men of the mountains, and they know it not:

which overturneth them in his anger; for the sins or men, which was the case of the old world: Mr. Broughton renders it, “that men cannot mark how he hath removed them out of their place in his anger”.

Ver. 6. *Which shaketh the earth out of her place*, etc.] Can do it, and will do it at the last day, when it shall be utterly broken down, clean dissolved, and reel to and fro like a drunkard, and be removed as a cottage, and which John in a vision saw flee away from the presence of him that sat upon the throne, (^{<234E>}Isaiah 24:19,20 ^{<661E>}Revelation 20:11); for this cannot be understood of earthquakes in common, which are only partial, and do not remove the earth out of its place, only shake some parts of it; and this may also refer to the time of the flood, when the earth received some change and alteration in its situation, as Mr. Burnet in his Theory of the Earth observes; and the Apostle Peter suggests something of this kind, when he distinguishes the present earth from the former, which he says stood out of the water and in it, but the present earth not so, but is reserved for fire, (^{<648E>}2 Peter 3:5-7);

and the pillars thereof tremble; the centre or lower parts of it, (see ^{<497E>}Psalms 75:3).

Ver. 7. *Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not*, etc.] Either he could do it if he would, by a word speaking, as he ordered it to stand still in the times of Joshua, (^{<600E>}Joshua 10:13), and caused the shadow to return ten degrees it had gone back in the dial of Ahaz, in the times of Hezekiah, (^{<420E>}2 Kings 20:11 ^{<238E>}Isaiah 38:8); or else the sense is, it rises not at any other time and place but when and where he commands it; or he commands it not to rise in the same place at one time of the year as at another, and it rises not; or this may be understood of eclipses, or of its being covered with clouds in tempestuous weather for a considerable time together, when it seems as if it was not risen: some think this respects the three days’ darkness in Egypt, when the Israelites were there, (^{<402E>}Exodus 10:22),

which was a little before, or about the time of Job; or rather it refers to the general flood, in the times of Noah, when it rained forty days and forty nights, (^{<0072>}Genesis 7:12), during which time the sun appeared not, and so seemed as if it was not risen; (see ^{<0089>}Amos 8:9); Herodotus ^{f374} relates, from the memoirs of the Egyptians, that the sun rose four times out of its usual course; twice it rose where it now sets, and twice it set where it now rises:

and sealeth up the stars: either by the light of the sun in the daytime, which hides them that they are not visible, or by dark clouds and tempestuous weather in the night; such a season as that was in which the Apostle Paul and the mariners with him were, when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, (^{<0271>}Acts 27:20), and so the Targum paraphrases it, and

“sealeth up the stars with clouds;”

this may also refer to the time of the flood, during the rain of forty days and nights, (^{<0074>}Genesis 7:4-12); or to the annual motion of the sun through the ecliptic, which makes the point of the sun’s rising and setting vary, and is the reason why some stars appear in summer and are sealed up in winter, and others that are seen in winter are not visible in summer; and so Cocceius interprets it.

Ver. 8. *Which alone spreadeth out the heavens,* etc.] The expanse, or what we commonly translate “firmament”; but has its name in the Hebrew language from its being expanded, spread, and stretched out, over the earth and all around it; and seems chiefly to design the ether or atmosphere, which is a fine thin matter and substance spread around us, and which is sometimes spread with clouds; this is said to be stretched out like a curtain and a tent to dwell in, tents being made of curtains spread out, (^{<0341>}Isaiah 40:21); and the allusion may be to a military tent, the pavilion of a general of an army, as Pineda observes, from whence Jehovah plays his artillery upon his enemies, thunder, lightning, hailstones, and coals of fire; (see ^{<0931>}Psalms 18:11-14); this respects not so much the first creation, or spreading of the air or the heavens, as the continuance thereof; God continues to spread them, or to keep them spread, that they may not be rolled up as a scroll; or folded up as a garment, as they will be, (^{<0012>}Hebrews 1:12); and this he does alone, without the help of any creature, angels or men; any piece of tapestry or carpet, that is large, is not easily spread alone; but what power must the vast expanse of the heavens require, to be spread alone and continued so? nothing less than infinite;

(see ²³⁴²⁴Isaiah 44:24); some render it, “which boweth the heavens” ^{f375}, as the same word is rendered in (¹⁹⁸⁹Psalm 18:9); which he does when he fills them with clouds, so that they seem to hang low, and to be inclined towards the earth:

and treadeth upon the waves of the sea ^{f376}; which he did at the first creation, when the waters that covered the face of the earth were, by his order, collected into one place, and there shut up, and restrained from overflowing the earth; and which restraint, as it is an act of power over them, is designed by treading upon them, and a continued act may be the rather meant here; (see ¹⁰⁰⁸Genesis 1:8,9 ¹⁸⁸⁰Job 38:10,11 ²⁴⁶²Jeremiah 5:22); and when the waves of it are lifted up as high as they sometimes are, by strong and stormy winds, the Lord on high is mightier than they, he treads upon them and represses them; he rules their raging, stills their noise, and makes them smooth, calm, and quiet, (¹⁹⁶⁷Psalm 65:7 89:9) (¹⁹⁸⁸Psalm 93:3,4); this none but God can do: the Egyptian hieroglyphic of doing a thing impossible was a man’s walking upon water ^{f377}; the Heathens chose not to describe even their god of the sea, Neptune, by walking on it, as being too great for him, but by swimming ^{f378}; of Christ’s walking upon the sea, (see ¹⁰²⁵Matthew 14:25); it may be rendered, “the high places of the sea”: the waves of it, when mounted to a great height by the wind; so Mr. Broughton, “the high waves of the sea”, (see ¹⁹⁷²Psalm 107:25,26); there is a copy, as the lesser Massorah observes, which reads, “upon the high places of the cloud” ^{f379}, (see ²³⁴⁴Isaiah 14:14); and Gersom interprets these high places, of the heavens, and of God’s giving rain from thence.

Ver. 9. *Which maketh Arcturus*, etc.] By which is meant not a single star, but a collection of stars, as Bar Tzemach and Ben Melech, a constellation; hence we read of Arcturus and his sons, (¹⁸⁸²Job 38:32). Aben Ezra understands it of the seven stars, but these are thought to be meant by the Pleiades, later mentioned; this constellation is about the Arctic or northern pole, in the tail of the Bear, appears in the beginning of September, and brings stormy weather, when winter is at hand ^{f380}:

Orion and Pleiades; the former of these also is not a single star, but a constellation; by the help of a telescope no less than two thousand are numbered, and in Hebrew it is called “Cesil”; hence the month “Cisleu” has its name, which answers to part of November and part of December, at which time this constellation is seen, and is attended with stormy weather; hence Virgil calls it Nimbosus Orion ^{f381}: and the latter are what we call the

Seven Stars, sometimes by writers called Vergiliae, because they appear in the spring; and have their name of Pleiades from sailing, because at this time of year mariners go out with their ships; though some say this constellation is not favourable to them, causing rains and tempests ^{f382}; these three divide the whole year:

and the chambers of the south: the stars in the southern hemisphere, about the Antarctic, or southern pole; and called “chambers”, as Aben Ezra observes, because hidden, and are not seen by those in the other hemisphere, as if they were in a chamber: now the making of these is rightly ascribed to God, who made all the stars, (^{<0016>}Genesis 1:16); though this may rather regard the continuance of them in their being, who calls them by name, brings out their host by number, directs their course, keeps them in their orbs, and preserves their influence.

Ver. 10. *Which doth great things past finding out*, etc.] In heaven and earth; great as to quantity and quality, not to be thoroughly searched out so as to tell their numbers, nor explain and express the nature of them to the full; even what he has done, and does in creation, providence, and grace:

yea, and wonders without number; such as are amazing to men, who cannot account for them, and so many that they cannot number them. The same things are said by Eliphaz, (see Gill on “^{<0019>}Job 5:9”); and which Job here repeats, to show that he agreed with him, and was ready to own what was truth, whenever expressed by him or his friends, and especially such as made for the glory of the Divine Being.

Ver. 11. *Lo, he goeth by me, and I see [him] not*, etc.] This is expressive of the invisibility of God; for though the angels in heaven always behold his face, and men, in the works of creation, may see his eternal power and Godhead, and other perfections of it displayed therein; and saints by faith have a comfortable and delightful view of him, of his countenance, his love, grace and mercy in his word and ordinances, and especially in the face and person of Christ, the image of the invisible God, and will in heaven most clearly see him as he is, in the greater display of his glory and his grace; yet his essence is invisible, not only not to be seen with corporeal eyes, but not to be comprehended in the mind:

he passeth on also, but I perceive him not; this “going [and] passing on”, as, ascribed to God, must be understood in consistence with his omnipresence; he cannot be thought to move from place to place who is

everywhere, who fills heaven and earth with his presence, and there is no going from it: local motion cannot be said of him; but this respects the operations of his providence; he is continually working all around us, by supporting us in being, and supplying us with what we want, and so is near us, and yet we see him not: Job experienced the bounties of his providence, as well as the blessings of his grace, in the time of his prosperity, and now he felt the weight of his afflicting hand upon him; but yet, as to his essence, he could not see him; he was sensible that he was nigh him, and find a concern in all that befell him, but he could neither see nor comprehend him, nor account for his dealings with him: he had “passed by” him in his state of nature, and had looked graciously on him, and had said unto him, Live; he had “passed on” from him, and hid his face so that he could not see him, nor find him backward nor forward, on the right hand, nor on the left, where he used to work, (see ~~1878~~ Job 23:3,8,9).

Ver. 12. *Behold, he taketh away*, etc.] There are some things God never takes away from his people; he never takes away his love from them, he always rests in that towards them, let them be in what condition they will; he never takes away his grace from them, when once bestowed on them, or wrought in them; he never takes away his special gifts of grace, particularly the unspeakable gift of his son Christ Jesus, which is that good part, when chosen, which shall not be taken away; nor any of the spiritual blessings wherewith they are blessed in Christ; these are irreversible and irrevocable: but temporal blessings he takes away at pleasure; so he had taken away the children, the servants of Job, his substance, wealth, and riches, and also his bodily health, to which he may have a particular respect; yea, when it pleases him, he takes a man out of the world, as the Targum and Gersom interpret it:

who can hinder him? he does what he pleases in heaven and earth; his will is irresistible, his power is uncontrollable; there is no turning his mind, nor staying his hand, nor turning it back; when he works, none can let or hinder. Mr. Broughton translates it, “who shall make him restore?” ^{f383} if a man takes away what he has no right to, he may be obliged by law to restore it; but whatever God takes away he has a right unto, be it relations and friends, health or wealth; if he pleases he can restore, and does; and as he did to Job, to whom he after gave twice as much as he had before; but then he is not obliged to do it, none can force him to it:

who will say unto him, what doest thou? not one that knows what God is, or that knows himself a creature of his; no person will choose or dare to ask what God does, or why he does this and not another thing, or why this in the manner he does it; for he gives no account of his matters to the sons of men, nor is he obliged to it, and it would be insolent in them to require it, (see ^{<1831>}Job 33:13 ^{<2045>}Daniel 4:35); this expresses his sovereignty.

Ver. 13. [*If God will not withdraw his anger*, etc.] Or “God will not withdraw his anger” ^{f384}; he is angry, or at least seems to be angry with his own people, in their apprehension, when he afflicts them and hides his face from them, or does not immediately appear to their relief and assistance; but this does not always last, he does not retain or keep anger for ever; but shows great mercies to them, and with everlasting kindness has mercy on them, by discovering his love to them, applying his pardoning grace and mercy, and comforting them with the consolations of his spirit; but then he is angry with the wicked every day, for their continual transgressions; and he never withdraws his anger from them, neither here nor hereafter, but punishes them with everlasting destruction, and casts them into everlasting fire, to which his wrath and anger are compared: the consequence of which is,

the proud helpers do stoop under him; or “the helpers of pride” ^{f385}, or helpers of proud men; proud, wicked, and ungodly men, who combine together and help one another against God, his people, cause and interest; men of power, rule and government, as Aben Ezra explains it; civil magistrates, men in authority, who, instead of being terrors to evil doers, encourage them, and help them forward in their wickedness; but though both those that help, and those that are helped, may continue for a while, and be supported, yet they shall sooner or later fall under the mighty hand of God, his power and wrath, and be crushed by it. Some regard may be had either to the giants, the men of the old world, who filled the earth with violence, and were swept away with the flood, (^{<0663>}Genesis 6:13); or rather to the builders of Babel, who helped one another to build a tower to make them a name, and secure themselves, and in opposition to God; but he being angry with them, made them desist, and they bowed under him, (^{<0110>}Genesis 11:4,8). Some render it, “the helpers of Rahab”; that is, of Egypt ^{f386}, Rahab being a name of Egypt, (^{<1850>}Psalms 87:4 ^{<2510>}Isaiah 51:9). The devils are meant, whose sin was pride, and by which they fell, and which they have endeavoured to promote and cherish among men; but these proud spirits are cast out of heaven and into hell, where they are

reserved in chains of darkness to the great judgment, (~~from~~ Jude 1:6); and are obliged, whether they will or not, to stoop to the Lord, and even to the son of God in human nature, which their proud stomachs cannot well bear; but are forced to it, the anger of God lying upon them, and his wrath, which will never be withdrawn from them.

Ver. 14. *How much less shall I answer him*, etc.] Who is wise in heart, and mighty in strength, and has done and does the many things before related; who is invisible, passes by, and onwards insensibly; so that there is no knowing where to speak to him, or how to guard against him, since he can come on on every side, at an unawares, and unseen; and who is a sovereign Being, who can do, and does, whatever he pleases; and therefore there is no such thing as disputing any point with him, or calling him to an account for anything done by him: and if the great men of the earth, proud and haughty tyrants, and those prouder spirits, if possible, the infernal principalities and powers, are obliged to bend and stoop to him; how should such a poor, weak, feeble creature as Job was, enter the lists with him, contend with God, and argue with him about his dispensations, or answer to any argument, objection, charge, or article exhibited against him? here Job speaks humbly and meanly of himself, as he in the whole context before speaks highly of God, between whom there was no comparison:

[and] choose out my words [to reason] with him? suggesting, that should he pick out words the most fit and proper to be used, and put them together in the most exact order, and which had the greatest force of persuasion and strength of reasoning in them, yet they would be of no avail with God; these could have no influence upon him to turn his mind, or alter either his purposes or his providences; and therefore concluded it was best for him to be silent and make no reply; but if he said anything, to do it in a supplicating way, as follows.

Ver. 15. *Whom, though I were righteous, [yet] would I not answer*, etc.] This is not to be understood of the righteousness of his cause, that Job made no supposition of, but strongly asserted and determined to hold it fast as long as he lived; nor of his evangelic righteousness, the righteousness of faith he was acquainted with, even the righteousness of his living Redeemer, by which he knew he was, and should be, justified; and by which righteousness he could and did answer God, as every believer may, who, making mention of this righteousness, and of this only, such an one

may plead the righteousness of Christ with God as his justifying one, and hold it up against all charges brought against him; yea, by presenting this to God by faith, he answers all the demands of the law of God, both with respect to the precepts and penalty of it, it being magnified and made honourable hereby, and all that the justice of God can require, and with which it is entirely satisfied; yea, this righteousness will answer to God for him in a time to come, in the last judgment: but Job speaks of his own legal and civil righteousness, as a good man, and a good magistrate; as the latter, he put on righteousness, and it clothed him; as the former, having grace, the root of the matter, in him, as he calls it, it taught him to live soberly, righteously, and godly; he was a man that feared God, and eschewed evil; and his sense is, that though he should so well behave in every respect, and so order his conversation aright before men that they could have nothing to lay to his charge, yet he would not bring such a righteousness before God, and pretend to answer him with it; for he knew that such a righteousness is no righteousness in the sight of God, in the eye of his law, and in the account of divine justice, being not only imperfect, but impure; not only rags, but filthy ones, attended with many sins, as well as imperfections; wherefore no good man will put his cause before God on such an issue, however he may before men; nay, Job seems to carry this point yet further, that though he had a sinless righteousness of his own, and were as righteous as Adam before his fall, or the holy angels in heaven, yet he would not insist upon such a righteousness before God, or pretend to answer him with it; for he knew that the inhabitants of the heavens, and so man in his paradise on earth, in his best estate, were not pure in his sight, but chargeable with folly and imperfection, in comparison of him: and when he says he could not “answer” him, his meaning is not that he would not answer to a question that was asked him, but that he would not answer him in a judicial way; that, if he should prefer a bill against him, he would not put in at answer to it, though he knew nothing by himself, and could not charge himself with anything wrong in thought, word, or deed; yet if God charged him with it, he would not reply against him, he would not contradict him, he would not answer again, or litigate the point with him, but give it up; because, though he might not know he had done any thing amiss, or there was imperfection in him, yet God, who was greater than his heart, and knows all things, is the heart searching and rein trying God, he knew better than he did, and therefore was determined to submit to him, and be set down by him what he was:

[but] I would make supplication to my Judge: that is, to God, the Judge of the whole earth; and who is particularly the Judge of his own people, their Patron and Defender, their Judge and Lawgiver, who will save them; for though he is a just God, and a righteous Judge, yet a Saviour; and it is one of the privileges of his people that they can come to him, not only as the God of all grace, and as their God and Father in Christ, but to him as to God the Judge of all, (^{<8123>}Hebrews 12:23); and lay their case before him, and entreat his protection; and this Job chose to do rather than contend with him; for by “supplication” prayer is meant, as it frequently is in both Testaments; and it signifies such prayer as consists of petitions for grace and mercy, or for things to be bestowed in a way of grace and mercy; not according to merit, but mercy; not for works of righteousness done, but through the favour and good will of God; and which prayer is put up in an humble supplicant manner, acknowledging a man’s unworthiness, that he is not deserving of the least of mercies, nor expects any on account of any worth or worthiness in him, or his services; and in such a way a man prevails more with God, and is most likely to succeed, than by contending with him in a judicial way. Jacob had power with God and prevailed, but it was by weeping and supplication, (see ^{<8124>}Hosea 12:4); so Mr. Broughton reads the words,

“my would crave pity of my Judge.”

Some render it, “my adversary” ^{f387}, the opposite party in a court of judicature, whom he would not contest with, but supplicate, and in the way make up matters with him. Job seems resolved to take such a method Christ advises to in civil cases, (^{<4153>}Matthew 5:24,25).

Ver. 16. *If I had called, and he had answered me,* etc.] Mr. Broughton reads the words, “if I cry, will he answer me?” as if Job had some doubt upon his mind whether God would vouchsafe to answer him, though he should make his supplication to him, as he proposed; seeing he had so sorely afflicted him, and still continued his hand upon him; or the words may be rendered, “though I have called, and he has answered” ^{f388}, in times past. Job was a praying person, he had often prayed to God in his closet, and in his family, for himself, and for his children, and for his friends, and he had found God to be a God hearing and answering prayer, but seems to question whether he would answer him now, if he did pray to him:

[yet] would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice, or “would hearken” ^{f389}, at this time, and under the present circumstances; or should

he, the mercy would be so great, that he could hardly believe it; so sometimes through joy men cannot believe what they hear and see, as the apostles, when Christ appeared to them after his resurrection; or as it was with the Jews returned from Babylon, they were like them that dream, they could scarcely tell whether their deliverance was a real fact, or whether they only dreamed of it, (see ^{◀241}Luke 24:41 ^{◀301}Psalm 126:1); so Job intimates, that should he pray to God, and be heard and delivered, it would be so astonishing and transporting, that at first he should not be able to give credit to it; or, however, he should not believe that it was for his prayers and supplications, for any worth and value, virtue and efficacy, there was in them, that he was heard; but it must be purely for his mercy's sake, for the sake of the mediation of Christ, and because these prayers were the breathings of his own spirit: or else the sense is, that though he had heard and answered him formerly, when he prayed in a supplicating way, yet if he should contend with him in a judicial way, and insist upon his own righteousness, and present his supplication to God on that account, he could never expect to be heard; and, indeed, he could not believe he should be heard on any account, so long as his present sufferings lasted; which seems to be the sense of what follows, where he gives his reasons for such belief, or rather unbelief.

Ver. 17. *For he breaketh me with a tempest*, etc.] Which rises suddenly, comes powerfully, and carries all before it irresistibly; hereby signifying the nature of his present sore afflictions, which came upon him at once, pressed him down, and utterly destroyed him, against which there was no standing: perhaps he may have some reference to the storm of wind that blew down the house, by which his children were destroyed. Schultens renders it, “a burning tempest” ^{f390}, such as is common in the eastern countries, which Thevenot ^{f391} often makes mention of; which kills a man at once, and his flesh becomes as black as a coal, and comes off of his bones, and is plucked off by the hand that would lift him up; with which a man is broken to pieces indeed, to which Job may allude:

and multiplieth my wounds without cause; referring, it may be, to the many boils and ulcers upon his body; though it may also respect the multiplicity of ways in which he had wounded or afflicted him, in his person, in his family, and in his substance, and which he says was done “without cause”; not without a cause or reason in God, who does nothing without one, though it may not be known to men; particularly in afflicting men, it is not without cause or reason; it he punishes men, it is for sin; if he rebukes and

chastises his people, it is for their transgressions; to bring them to a sense of them, to humble them for them, to bring them off from them, or to prevent them, or purge them away, and to try their graces, wean them from the world, and fit them for himself: but Job's afflictions were without any such cause intimated by his friends; it was not hypocrisy, nor any notorious sin or sins he had been guilty of, and secretly lived and indulged himself in, as they imagined. Job here suggests his innocence, which he always insisted upon, and refers his afflictions to the sovereign will of God, and to some hidden cause in his own breast, unknown to himself and others: however, so long as he dealt with him after this manner, he could not believe his prayers were heard by him.

Ver. 18. *He will not suffer me to take my breath*, etc.] Which some think refers to Job's disease, which was either an asthma, or a quinsy in his throat, which occasioned great difficulty in breathing: I should rather think the allusion is to the hot burning winds in those countries before mentioned, which sometimes blew so strongly as almost to take away a man's breath; so the above traveller ^{f392} reports, that between Suez and Cairo (in Egypt) they had for a day's time and more so hot a wind, that they were forced to turn their backs to it, to take a little breath. The design of Job is to show, that his afflictions were continued, and were without any intervals; they were repeated so fast, and came so thick upon him, one after another, that he had no breathing time; the import of the phrase is the same with that in (~~3079~~ Job 7:19);

but filleth me with bitterness; to the full, to satiety, to loathing, as a man may be with a bitter potion, with wormwood drink, and water of gall, with bitter afflictions comparable to such, whereby Job's life was embittered to him, (see ~~2495~~ Jeremiah 9:15 ~~2585~~ Lamentations 3:15,19).

Ver. 19. *If [I speak] of strength, lo, [he is] strong*, etc.] Or think of it, or betake myself to that, and propose to carry my point by mere force, as some men do by dint of power and authority they are possessed of; alas! there is nothing to be done this way; I am a poor, weak, feeble creature in body, mind, and estate; I am not able to contend with so powerful an antagonist on any account, in any way: God is strong, he is the "most strong" ^{f393}, as some render it; he is mighty, is the Almighty; the weakness of God is stronger than men; there is no disputing with God upon the foot of strength:

and if of judgment, who shall set me a time [to plead]? If I think and propose to put things upon the foot of justice, to have the cause between us issued in that way, I cannot expect to succeed by right, any more than by might; he is so strictly just and holy, that no righteousness and holiness of, mine can stand before him; he is God, and I a man, and therefore not fit to come together in judgment; and he a pure and holy Being, just and true, and without iniquity, and I a sinful polluted creature; and besides, there is none superior to him, that I can appeal unto, none that can appoint a place, or fix a time, for the hearing of the cause between us, or that can preside in judgment and determine the matter in controversy; nay, there is not one among the creatures that can be a daysman, an arbiter or umpire; yea not one that can be so much as employed as council, that can take the cause in hand, and plead it, and be a patron for me, and defender of me; so that, let me take what course I will, I am sure to be nonsuited and worsted, (see ~~2409~~ Jeremiah 49:19).

Ver. 20. *If I justify myself*, etc.] Seek for justification by his own righteousness, trust in himself that he was righteous, say that he was so, and pronounce himself a righteous man, what would it signify?

mine own mouth shall condemn me; the words of it being sinful, vain, idle, and frothy; and if a man is to be justified, and condemned by his words, he may be sure of the latter: indeed, “if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man”, (~~318D~~ James 3:2); but let a man be as careful as he can, and keep ever such a guard upon his lips, such is the imperfection of human nature, that, though a Moses, he will speak unadvisedly with his lips, at one time or another, and in many things will offend; which would be his condemnation, if there was no other way to secure from it; nay, for a sinful man to justify himself, or to say that he is a righteous man by his own righteousness, and insist upon this before God, if he is tried upon it he must be condemned; yea, saying he is so is a falsehood, abominable to God, and enough to condemn him; and besides, a man that knows himself, as Job did, must be conscious of much sin within him, however externally righteous he may be before men; so that, should he say he was righteous, his conscience would speak, or cause his mouth to speak and contradict and condemn him:

[if I say], I [am] perfect; not in an evangelical sense, as he was; but in a legal sense, so as to be free from sin, which no man that is perfect in a Gospel sense is; as Noah, Jacob, David, and others, who were so, yet not

without sin; if therefore a man should assert this, he would not say that which was right, but what was perverse, as might be proved:

it shall also prove me perverse; to be a wicked man; either he, God, shall prove, or it, his mouth, as in the preceding clause; for to say this is to tell a lie, which to do is perverseness, (see ^{<600>}1 John 1:8).

Ver. 21. [*Though I [were] perfect*, etc.] Really and truly so, not conscious of any sin in thought, word, or deed; this is only a case supposed:

[yet] would I not know my soul; I would not own myself to be so before God; I would not insist upon such perfection in his presence, as what would justify me before him; since I am sensible the highest perfection of a creature is imperfection when compared with him: or the sense may be, should I say I were “perfect, I should not know my own soul”; I should plainly appear to be ignorant of myself, as all perfectionists are; they do not know their own souls, the plague of their hearts, the evil of their thoughts, the vanity of their minds; they do not take notice of these things, or do not look upon them as sinful; they know not the nature of sin, and the exceeding sinfulness of it:

I would despise my life; even if ever so innocent, perfect, and just; his meaning is, that he would not insist upon the continuance of it on that account; he had no such value for it, such a love of life as to contend with God upon the foot of justice about it; nor did he think it worth asking for, so mean an opinion had he entertained of it, (see ^{<1876>}Job 7:16).

Ver. 22. *This [is] one [thing]*, etc.] Or “one thing [there] is” ^{f394} in the world, as Jarchi adds; or “one measure”, as the Targum, to good and bad men; one event alike to the righteous, and to the wicked, (^{<2002>}Ecclesiastes 9:2); so that, as others render it, “it is all one” ^{f395}, whether a man righteous and perfect, or whether he is not, he is equally liable to be afflicted and distressed: and “this is one thing, [very] singular” ^{f396}, amazing and astonishing, and very unaccountable; but so it is, and which he differed from his three friends about; as to the justice of God, he agreed with them in that; yea, he believed he was righteous in whatever he did, and even in this, which was so strange and surprising, though he could not account for it: and “this is uniform”, as Mr. Broughton translates it; either God acts uniformly in what he does, treating all men alike, good and bad men; or Job was uniform in his sentiments, he was all of a piece, steady and constant,

retaining the same sense of things, from which he had not departed, nor could he depart:

therefore I said [it]; with the greatest confidence and assurance, because he believed it, and would say it again, seeing no reason at all to alter his judgment; the thing was quite clear to him, of which he had, at least as he thought, unquestionable evidence; and the thing he has respect to is as follows:

he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked; this is thought by some to be a very bad expression, bordering on blasphemy, and contrary to the nature and perfections of God, and to the methods of his providence, (^{<01823>}Genesis 18:23-25); and that Job speaks in the person of one destitute of the grace of God: but nothing is more certain than that this was the real sentiment of his mind, his firm belief, nor could he be persuaded to the contrary; indeed it may be understood in a good sense: by a “perfect” man we are to understand a truly good man, one that has received the grace of God in truth, and is perfectly justified and pardoned through the blood and righteousness of Christ; and by a “wicked” man one that is under the influence of his lusts, is abandoned to them, and never easy but while he is serving them, which he is continually doing. Now the destruction of these is not to be interpreted of everlasting destruction; this indeed will be the case of wicked men, but not of perfect and good men: God by his grace has made a difference between them in this world, and so he will in the next; the one will go into everlasting punishment, the other into everlasting life, and will never come together in the same place or state; nor will the perfect man be destroyed at all in such sense; the grace of God within him, and the righteousness of Christ upon him, will eternally secure him from everlasting wrath and ruin: but it is meant of temporal destruction; sometimes indeed a remarkable distinction is made between the one and the other in a time of general calamity, as Noah, a perfect man, was saved, when the world of the ungodly were destroyed by water, (^{<00723>}Genesis 7:23 ^{<0085>}2 Peter 2:5); and Lot, a righteous man, when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire, (^{<01929>}Genesis 19:29); but frequently they fall together in the same common distress; good and bad men, among the Jews were alike carried captive into Babylon, signified by Jeremiah’s good and bad figs, (^{<0242>}Jeremiah 24:2); of good men, Ezekiel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, are instances; though indeed it is on different accounts, and with different views, that the one and the other are destroyed with a temporal destruction, in their persons, their health, their families, or

in their estates; such calamities upon good men are not as punishments for their sins, as on the wicked; but as fatherly chastisements, and for the trial of their graces, for their spiritual and eternal good, and that they might not be condemned with the world. Job's view in saying this is to observe, that a man's state God-ward is not to be judged of by his outward circumstances, whether he is a good man or a bad man, since they may both be in the same afflictions and distress, and which he opposes to the sentiments and sayings of Eliphaz and Bildad, (~~804~~ Job 4:7 8:20).

Ver. 23. *If the scourge slay suddenly*, etc.] Not Satan, as Jarchi and Bar Tzemach; but any sore calamity which surrounds a man, lashes, cuts, and distresses him, as a whip or scourge; such as any of God's sore judgments, the sword, famine, pestilence, or evil beasts, which sometimes come suddenly, unawares, unthought of, and unexpected; and are sometimes only chastisements in love, the scourgings of a father, though generally in wrath and hot displeasure, and are an overflowing scourge, which carry all before them; and therefore some restrain it to wicked men, as the Septuagint version; and some understand it as if they were more mildly and gently dealt with, by being suddenly and at once slain with such a scourge, in their persons, families, and substance, while others have their afflictions protracted, and linger long under them, as in the next clause:

he will laugh at the trial of the innocent; not that are free from sin entirely; for there are none such, no, not newborn infants; though they may be comparatively so, yet they are not in an absolute sense, being conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity: besides, here it means adult persons, good men, that are truly gracious, sincere, upright, harmless in their lives and conversations, whose afflictions are "trials" of their faith and patience, and other graces; and when God is said to "laugh" at them, who seems to be designed here, this must be understood consistent with his pity to his people, his sympathy with them under all their afflictions, he not willingly afflicting or grieving the children of men; nor can it be thought that he has them in derision and contempt, or laughs at their calamities, or in reality, as he does at wicked men; but that he carries it so oftentimes, in the dispensations of his providence, as if he made no difference between them, but mocked at the one as well as the other; seemingly giving no heed to their cries; not hastening to their help and deliverance, but lengthening out their troubles for the trial of their graces; and so indeed is greatly delighted with the exercise of them under them, and with seeing them bear them with so much patience, courage, and greatness of mind and submission to his

will. Some interpret this of a wicked man laughing at the calamities of the righteous, as the Ammonites and Edomites rejoiced at the destruction of the Jews; the church's enemy at her fall, and as the Papists will at the witnesses being slain; but the former sense seems best; rather the scourge itself laughs at the trial of the innocent; so Schultens.

Ver. 24. *The earth is given into the hands of the wicked*, etc.] Either the wicked one, Satan, as Jarchi and Bar Tzemach, who is the god of this world; or some wicked tyrant, as Nimrod, or some other known by Job in his time, to whom he may have respect; or wicked men in general, who for the most part have the greatest share of the earth, and earthly things, and of power, dominion, and authority in it; and this they have of God, the powers that be are ordained by him, and therefore to be obeyed; and what any have of the earth, and the fulness of it, they have it from him, whose it is, and who has a right to dispose of it, and therefore being given by him, they have a proper right unto it; but then it is only the things of this world which are given them; they have their portion here, and that is their all; wherefore, as the giving of these is no proof of a man's goodness, so the taking of them away is no evidence of his wickedness; love or hatred are not to be known by these things; this is Job's scope and drift in this and (~~18023~~ Job 9:23):

he covereth the face of the judges thereof; not Satan, who blinds the minds of such, that they should not understand justice, and do it, as the above Jewish writers interpret it; nor the wicked man that is possessed of riches and wealth, power and authority, who by his substance bribes the judges, and blinds their eyes, or by his power and authority awes them, keeps them from executing true judgment, or discourages persons fit for such an office, and will not advance them, but lets them lie in, and covers them with, obscurity; or such who are honest and faithful, and are not to be bribed and browbeaten, these he either removes from their post, and covers their faces with shame, or takes them away by death, condemns and executes them as malefactors; it being usual in former times, as well as in ours, to cover the faces of such as are executed: but rather this is to be understood of God, who delivers the earth into the hands of the wicked, suffers them to have the rule over it, and permits such things to be done, as already observed; and besides, gives up the judges of the earth to judicial blindness, so that they cannot discern what is right and just, and do it, (see ~~23910~~ Isaiah 29:10);

if not, where [and] who [is] he? if it is not so as I say, where is the man, and who is he, that can disprove me, and make me a liar? as Aben Ezra; let him come forth and appear, and confute me, and teach me otherwise if he can; or name the place of his abode, and say who he is; or if God does not do this, give the earth into the hands of wicked men, and cover the faces of the judges of it, and suffer wicked men to prevail, and the causes of good men to be subverted, the one to flourish, and the other to be crushed; who does do it? where is the man that has done or can do it? certain it is, that it is done; and who but that God that superintends all things, sits in the heavens, and does whatsoever he pleases, can do such things as these? or could they be done without his will and permission? by such mediums Job proves his assertion, that God destroys the perfect and the wicked; and therefore, by the face of things in providence, no judgment is to be had of a man's character, good or bad, and then instances in himself in the following verses.

Ver. 25. *Now my days are swifter than a post*, etc.] Or “than a runner”^{f397} in a race, in order to obtain the prize; or than one that rides post, or runs on foot to carry a message, such as were Cush and Ahimaaz; and such are generally swift of foot, or ride on swift horses, who are so employed; and yet Job says his days are swifter, or passed away more swiftly than such; meaning either his days in general; or rather particularly his prosperous days, as Mr. Broughton interprets it; these no sooner came but they were gone:

they flee away; like a shadow, or a dream, or a tale that is told:

they see no good; or he saw, perceived, or enjoyed no good in them; not but that he did see and enjoy much good, even much temporal good, which is what is intended; but this was no sooner had than it was taken away, that it was as if it had never been; the evil days of trouble and sorrow, in which he had no pleasure, came so quick upon him.

Ver. 26. *They are passed away as the swift ships*, etc.] Those that are lightest built, and run swiftest. Bar Tzemach thinks such vessels as are rowed with oars are meant, which may be called “ships of will or desire”^{f398}, as the words may be rendered, because they may be rowed at pleasure, and be carried to any place where and when a man thinks fit; whereas those that are not depend upon the wind, and that must be waited for; or they design such ships that are so swift in their motion, that they arrive to the haven as soon as men can well wish for and desire. Some render it “pirate

ships”, or “ships of enmity”^{f399}; such as are designed for spoil and plunder, and which are light ones, not loaded with goods, and therefore move swiftly: the Targum is,

“ships burdened with precious fruits;”

and the Vulgate Latin version is,

“ships carrying apples:”

now ships loaded with such sort of goods, with perishing commodities, are obliged to make their port as soon as possible. Some leave the word untranslated, and call them “ships of Ebeh”^{f400}; which, according to Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and others, is either the name of a place, or of a river in Arabia, which ran with a rapid stream, and in which ships were carried with great celerity. Bolducius relates from a traveller of his acquaintance, who finished his travels in 1584, that he saw such a river about Damascus, not far from the sepulchre of Job; but that must be the river Chrysorrhoeas, now called Barrady; but there were two rivers of this name Ebeh; one near Cufa, and another in Wasith, a country of Babylon, as Golius observes^{f401}. Others take the word to have the signification of reed or papyrus, which grew on the banks of the Nile, and of which ships were made, (see Gill on “~~<3808>~~ Isaiah 18:1”); and render the words “ships of reeds” or “of papyrus”^{f402}, and which, being light, were very swift:

as the eagle [that] hasteth to the prey; the eagle is the swiftest of birds, and therefore persons and things exceeding swift are compared unto them, (see ~~<3808>~~ Habakkuk 1:8 ~~<3849>~~ Lamentations 4:19); and it flies the most swiftly when being hungry, and in sight of its prey, and is nearest to it, and flaps upon it, which is the thing referred to, and so may be rendered, “that flies upon the prey”^{f403}. Job uses these metaphors, which are the most appropriate, to show how fleeting his days of prosperity were, and how soon gone: and a climax may be observed in the words; a runner, though he runs swiftly, a ship moves faster than he, and an eagle, just about to seize its prey, flies swifter than that.

Ver. 27. *If I say, I will forget my complaint*, etc.] The cause of it, the loss of his children, servants, substance, and health, and endeavour to think no more of these things, and cease complaining about them, and attempt to bury them in oblivion, and change his note:

I will leave off my heaviness; his melancholy thoughts, words, airs, and looks; or “forsake my face”^{f404}, put on another countenance, a more pleasant and cheerful one; the Jewish commentators generally interpret it, “my anger”, either at the dispensations of Providence, or at his friends:

and comfort [myself]; that things were not worse with him than they were; or strengthen^{f405} himself, as the word is rendered in (~~<318B>~~Amos 5:9); against his fears, and troubles, and dejection of mind, determining to take heart, and be of good courage, and not sink, and succumb, and faint under his burdens: none but God, Father, Son, and Spirit, can give comfort to distressed ones, whether on temporal or spiritual accounts; but good men may make use of means for comfort, such as hearing the word, reading the Scriptures, prayer, meditation, and conversation with good men.

Ver. 28. *I am afraid of all my sorrows*, etc.] That they would return upon him, and surround him, and overwhelm him, so that he should not be able to stand up against them, or under them; that they would increase and continue with him, and so he should never be released from them:

I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent: a sudden apostrophe to God as near him; the meaning is not, that he was confident that God would not justify him but condemn him in a spiritual sense; Job did not despair of his everlasting salvation, he knew and believed in his living Redeemer; he knew he should be acquitted and justified by his righteousness, and not be condemned with the world; but he was certain of this, as he thought that God would neither “cleanse”^{f406} him, as some render the word, from the worms his flesh was clad with, and from the filthy boils and ulcers he was covered with; nor clear him so as that he should appear to be innocent in the sight and judgment of his friends; but go on to treat him as if he was a guilty person, by continuing his afflictions on him, even unto death; he had no hope of being freed from them, and so of being cleared from the imputation of his friends, who judged of him by his outward circumstances.

Ver. 29. [*If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain?*] If he was that wicked person, that hypocrite, Bildad and his other friends took him to be, it was in vain for him to make his supplications to God, as they advised him; so Gersom gives the sense of the words; since God hears not sinners, such as live in sin, regard iniquity in their hearts, and practise it in their lives, at least secretly, as it was suggested Job did; if he was such an one, it must be all lost labour to pray to God to show favour to him, and deliver him out of his troubles, since he might reasonably expect he would shut his

eyes and stop his ears at such a man, and regard not his cries; seeking to him must be in vain; prayer may be fitly enough expressed by labour, it is a striving and wrestling with God, and especially when it is constant, importunate, and fervent: but rather the sense is, that if he was a wicked man in the account of God, or was dealt with as one; if God would not hold him innocent, as he asserts in the latter part of (~~3028~~ Job 9:28); then it was a vain thing to labour the point in the vindication of himself; since he could never think of succeeding against God, so wise and powerful, so holy, just, and pure. The word “if” is not in the original text, and may be left out, and the words be rendered, “I am wicked”^{f407}; not in any notorious manner, as having lived a scandalous life, or been guilty of some gross enormities, as his friends insinuated, but in common with other men; he was born a sinner, had been a transgressor from the womb, and though he was renewed and sanctified by the spirit of God, yet sin dwelt in him, and through the infirmity of the flesh he was daily sinning in thought, word, or deed; nor did he expect it would be otherwise with him while in this world; yea, it was impossible for him to be without sin, as Bar Tzemach observes to be the sense of the phrase; and therefore if God would not clear him, or hold him innocent, unless he was entirely free from sin, as it was labouring in vain to attain to such perfection, so it must be to no purpose, and is what he chiefly intends, to attempt to vindicate himself before God: or “I shall be wicked”, or “ungodly”^{f408}; I shall be treated as such not only by his friends, who would reckon him a very wicked man so long as those afflictions continued on him, let him say what he would; but by the Lord himself, who he believed would never release him from them as long as he lived, which in the eye of men would be a tacit condemnation of him; so the Targum,

“I shall be condemned,”

and therefore it was labour in vain, striving against the stream, to go about to vindicate himself; nor was it possible that he could make himself out so clear and pure and perfect, that such an holy Being as God was could find no fault in him, in whose sight the heavens, and the inhabitants of them, were not clean; this is further evinced in the following words.

Ver. 30. *If I wash myself with snow water*, etc.] As it came from heaven, or flowed from the mountains covered with snow, as Lebanon, (see ~~4184~~ Jeremiah 18:14); or was kept in vessels for such use, as being judged the best for such a purpose; so it was used by the ancients^{f409}, as being

what whitens the skin, and strengthens the parts by contracting the pores, and hindering perspiration; it signifies, in a figurative sense, that let him take what methods he would to cleanse himself from sin, they were all in vain, his iniquity would be seen, and remain marked before God; and indeed there is nothing that a man can do that will make him pure and clean in the sight of an holy God; this is not to be done by ceremonial ablutions, such as might be in use in Job's time, before the law of Moses was given, and to which he may have some reference; these only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, or only externally, but could not purify the heart, so as to have no more conscience of sin; nor by moral duties, not by repentance, as Saphoro; a fountain, a flood, an ocean of tears of humiliation and repentance, would not wash away sin; if, instead of ten thousand rivers of oil, so many rivers of brinish tears could be produced, they would be of no avail to cleanse the sinner; nor any works of righteousness done by man, for these themselves need washing in the blood of the Lamb; for nothing short of the blood of Christ, and the grace of God, can do it:

and make my hands never so clean; the hands are what men work with, (^{<2090>}Ecclesiastes 9:10); and so may design good works, which are sometimes called clean hands; (see ^{<1204>}Psalm 24:4); compared with (^{<1915>}Psalm 15:1,2); and may be said to be so when they are done well, from a pure heart, and faith unfeigned, without selfish and sordid views, with a single eye to the glory of God; which is doing them as well, and making the hands as clean, as well can be; yet these are of no avail with respect to justification before God, and acceptance with him, or with regard to salvation, which is all of grace, and not of works, be they what they will; some render the words, "and cleanse my hands with soap"^{f410}, which cleanses them best of anything, (see ^{<2472>}Jeremiah 2:22).

Ver. 31. *Yet shall thou plunge me in the ditch*, etc.] In the filthy ditch of sin, the pit wherein is no water, the horrible pit, the mire and clay, in which all unregenerate men are, and to which hypocrites return, as the swine to its wallowing in the mire; and in which impurity self-righteous persons are, and are sooner or later made to appear, notwithstanding all their outward righteousness, holiness, purity, and perfection they boast of; and though Job was neither of these, not an unregenerate man, nor an hypocrite, nor a self-righteous person; yet he knew that, in comparison of the perfect purity and holiness of God, he should appear exceedingly impure; and that God would treat him as such, and hold him out to the view of others as the filth

of the world, and the offscouring of all things, by continuing his afflictions, from whence it would be concluded that he was the most impure person; and indeed by the ditch may be meant the ditch of afflictions, as Sephorno, either his present ones continued, his filthy ulcers and scabs, with which his body was covered all over, or new afflictions he would bring him into, where he would sink in deep mire, there being no standing, (^{<391D>}Psalm 69:2); some understand this of the grave, the ditch or pit of corruption, into which he should be cast, and there putrefy and rot: but the other senses seem best:

and mine own clothes shall abhor me; not his clothes in a literal sense; either while living, his filthy ulcers being such, that were his clothes sensible of them, they would loathe and abhor to touch him, and cover him; or when dead, his sepulchre garments, his shroud, or winding sheet, would disdain to cover such a filthy body, overspread with worms and dust; or as Vatablus paraphrases it, clothes do not become a dead body; or as Mr. Broughton,

“when I go naked to the grave, as though my clothes loathed me:”

but the words are rather to be understood figuratively, either of some of his friends that were as near and as close to him as his clothes, or had been, but now were estranged from him, and loathed and abhorred him, (see ^{<3913>}Job 19:13-19); or better, of his best works of righteousness, which he put on as a robe, (^{<3914>}Job 29:14); and which are a covering to the saints before men, and are ornamental to them, though not justifying in the sight of God; and indeed in themselves, and compared with the holy law, and holy nature of God, are imperfect and impure; and if God was to enter into judgment with men, they would be so far from justifying them in his sight, or rendering them acceptable to him, that they would cause them to be abhorred by him, as all self-righteousness and self-righteous persons are, (see ^{<3917>}Proverbs 21:27 ^{<3914>}Luke 16:14 18:14); yea, even the best works of men are but dung in the judgment of a good man himself, what then must they be in the account of God? (^{<3918>}Philippians 3:8); Job here, and in (^{<3919>}Job 9:30,32), has most exalted ideas of the purity, holiness, and majesty of God, so that no creature, nor creature holiness, be they ever so perfect, can stand before him, or be pure in his sight.

Ver. 32. *For [he is] not a man, as I [am]*, etc.] For though the parts and members of an human body are sometimes ascribed to him, yet these are to be understood by an anthropopathy, speaking after the manner of men,

there being something in him, which in a figurative sense answers to these; otherwise we are not to conceive of any corporeal shape in him, or that there is any likeness to which he is to be compared: he is a spirit infinite, immortal, immense, invisible, pure and holy, just and true, and without iniquity; whereas Job was but a man, a finite, feeble, mortal creature, and a sinful one; and therefore there being such a vast disparity between them, it was in vain to litigate a point with him, to plead his cause before him, or attempt to vindicate his innocence; the potsherd may strive and contend with the potsherd of the earth their equals, but not with God their Creator, who is more than a match for them; he sees impurity where man sees it not, and can bring a charge against him, and support it, where he thought there was none, and therefore it is a vain thing to enter the lists with him:

[that] I should answer him; not to questions put by him, but in a judicial way to charges and accusations he should exhibit; no man in this sense can answer him, for one of a thousand he may bring, and men are chargeable with; wherefore Job once and again determines he would not pretend to answer him, as he knew he could not, (see ~~KUB~~ Job 9:3,14,15);

[and] we should come together in judgment; in any court of judicature, before any judge, to have the cause between us heard, and tried, and determined; for in what court of judicature can he be convened into? or what judge is there above him, before whom he can be summoned? or is capable of judging and determining the cause between us? there is the high court of heaven, where we must all appear, and the judgment seat of Christ, before which we must all stand; and God is the judge of all, to whom we must come, and by whose sentence we must be determined; but there is no court, no judge, no judgment superior to him and his; there is no annulling his sentence, or making an appeal from him to another; there is no coming together at all, and much less “alike”^{f411}, as some render it, or upon equal terms; the difference between him and his creatures being so vastly great.

Ver. 33. *Neither is there any daysman betwixt us,* etc.] Or “one that reproves”^{f412}; who upon hearing a cause reproves him that is found guilty, or is blameworthy, or has done injury to another; but there is no such person to be found, among angels or men, capable of this, supposing, as if Job should say, I should appear to be the injured person; or there is no “umpire” or “arbitrator”^{f413}, to whom the case between us can be referred; for, as Bar Tzemach observes, he that stands in such a character between

two parties must be both more wise and more mighty than they; but there is none among all beings wiser and mightier than God:

[that] might lay his hand upon us both; and restrain them from using any violence to one another, as contending persons are apt to do; and compromise matters, settle and adjust things in difference between them, so as to do justice to both, and make both parties easy, and make peace between them. Herodotus ^{f414} makes mention of a custom among the Arabians,

“when they enter into covenants and agreements with each other, another man stands in the midst of them both, and with a sharp stone cuts the inside of the hands of the covenanters near the larger fingers; and then takes a piece out of each of their garments, and anoints with the blood seven stones that lie between them; and while he is doing this calls upon a deity, and when finished the covenant maker goes with his friends to an host or citizen, if the affair is transacted with a citizen; and the friends reckon it a righteous thing to keep the covenant.”

To which, or some such custom, Job may be thought to allude. Now, whereas Christ is the daysman, umpire and mediator between God and men, who has interposed between them, and has undertaken to manage affairs relating to both; in things pertaining to God, the glory of his justice, and the honour of his law, and to made reconciliation for the sins of men, and to make peace for them with God by the blood of his cross; which he has completely done, being every way qualified for it, inasmuch as he partakes of both natures, and is God and man in one person, and so could put his hand on both, and make both one; or bring them who were at variance to an entire agreement with each other, upon such a bottom, as even the strict justice of God cannot object unto. Now, I say, Job must not be understood as if he was ignorant of this, for he had knowledge of Christ as a Redeemer and Saviour, and so as the Mediator and Peacemaker; the Septuagint version renders it as a wish, “O that there was a mediator between us!” and so it may be considered as a prayer for Christ’s incarnation, and that he would appear and do the work of a mediator he was appointed to, which Job plainly saw there was great need of; or, as others ^{f415}, “there is no daysman yet”; there will be one, but as yet he is not come; in due time he will, which Job had faith in and full assurance of: but there is no need of such versions and glosses: Job is here not speaking of

the affair of salvation, about which he had no doubt, he knew his state was safe, and he had an interest in the living Redeemer and blessed Mediator; but of the present dispensation of Providence, and of the clearing of that up to the satisfaction of his friends, so that he might appear to be an innocent person; and since God did not think fit to change the scene, there was none to interpose on his behalf, and it was in vain for him to contend with God.

Ver. 34. *Let him take his rod away from me*, etc.] Not his government over him, of which the rod or scepter is an ensign, Job did not want to be freed from that; but, his rod of affliction, or stroke, as the Targum, the stroke of his hand, which, though a fatherly chastisement, lay heavy upon him, and depressed his spirits; so that he could not, while it was on him, reason so freely about things as he thought he could if it was removed, and for which he here prays:

and let not his fear terrify me; not the fear of him as a father, which is not terrifying, but the fear of him as a judge; the terror of his majesty, the dread of his wrath and vengeance, the fearful apprehensions he had of him as a God of strict justice; that would by no means clear the guilty, yea, would not hold him innocent, though he was with respect to the charge of his friends; being now without those views of him as a God gracious and merciful; to these words Elihu seeks to have respect, (~~1831b~~ Job 33:6,7).

Ver. 35. *[Then] would I speak, and not fear him*, etc.] With a servile fear, though with reverence and godly fear; meaning either at the throne of grace, having liberty of access, boldness of spirit, and freedom of speech through Christ the Mediator, and in the view of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; for when the rod of his law and the terror of his justice are removed, and his grace and favour in Christ shown, a believer can speak boldly and freely to God, and not be afraid before him: but rather Job's sense is, that were the rod of his anger taken off and the dread of his majesty, which so awed him that he could not tell his case as it was, and use the arguments he might to advantage; he should speak without fear, and so as to defend himself, and make his cause to appear to be just; to this the Lord seems to refer in (~~1831b~~ Job 38:3 40:7); being bold and daring expressions, which Job blushed when made sensible of it, (~~1801b~~ Job 42:5,6);

but [it is] not so with me; there was no daysman between the Lord and him; the rod was not taken off his back, nor the dread and terror of the Almighty removed from him; and so could not speak in his own defence, as otherwise he might: or it was not so with him as his friends thought of him;

he was not the wicked hypocritical man they took him to be, or as the afflictive dispensations of God made him to appear to be, according to their judgment of them: or the words may be rendered, “I am not so with myself”^{f416}; that is, he was not conscious to himself that he was such a person they judged him; or such were the troubles and afflictions that were upon him, that he was not himself, he was not “compos mentis”, and so not capable on that account, as well as others, of pleading his own cause: or “I am not right in” or “with myself”^{f417}; not in his right mind, being distracted with the terrors of God, and the arrows of the Almighty that stuck in him; or he was not righteous in himself; for though he was clear of hypocrisy he was charged with, he did not pretend to be without sin, or to have such a righteousness as would justify him before God; and therefore desires things might be put upon the foot of grace, and not of strict justice.