

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 15

Job's three friends having in their turns attacked him, and he having given answer respectively to them, Eliphaz, who began the attack, first enters the debate with him again, and proceeds upon the same plan as before, and endeavours to defend his former sentiments, falling upon Job with greater vehemence and severity; he charges him with vanity, imprudence, and unprofitableness in his talk, and acting a part unbecoming his character as a wise man; yea, with impiety and a neglect of religion, or at least as a discourager of it by his words and doctrines, of which his mouth and lips were witnesses against him, (~~18151~~ Job 15:1-6); he charges him with arrogance and a high conceit of himself, as if he was the first man that was made, nay, as if he was the eternal wisdom of God, and had been in his council; and, to check his vanity, retorts his own words upon him, or however the sense of them, (~~18157~~ Job 15:7-10); and also with slighting the consolations of God; upon which he warmly expostulates with him, (~~18151~~ Job 15:11-13); and in order to convince him of his self-righteousness, which he thought he was full of, he argues from the angels, the heavens, and the general case of man, (~~18154~~ Job 15:14-16); and then he declares from his own knowledge, and from the relation of wise and ancient men in former times, who made it their observation, that wicked men are afflicted all their days, attended with terror and despair, and liable to various calamities, (~~18157~~ Job 15:17-24); the reasons of which are their insolence to God, and hostilities committed against him, which they are encouraged in by their prosperous circumstances, (~~18155~~ Job 15:25-27); notwithstanding all, their estates, riches, and wealth, will come to nothing, (~~18153~~ Job 15:28-30); and the chapter is closed with an exhortation to such, not to feed themselves up with vain hopes, or trust in uncertain riches, since their destruction would be sure, sudden, and terrible, (~~18151~~ Job 15:31-35).

Ver. 1. *Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite*, etc.] Or, who was of Teman, as the Targum, the first of Job's friends and comforters, the oldest of them, who first began the dispute with him; which was carried on by his two

other companions, who had spoken in their turns; and now in course it fell to him to answer a second time, as he here does,

and said, as follows.

Ver. 2. *Should a wise man utter vain knowledge*, etc.] As Job had been thought to be, or as he himself thought he was, which he might say sarcastically; or as he really was, not worldly wise, nor merely wise in things natural, but in things divine; being one that had the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, and wisdom itself; believed in Christ, and walked wisely and circumspectly before men; now it is not becoming such a man to utter vain knowledge, or such knowledge as is like the wind, or, as the Targum, windy knowledge; empty, not solid, nor satisfying, but swells and puffs up, and is knowledge falsely so called; but it does not appear that Job did utter such vain and fruitless things as deserved to be compared to the wind:

and fill his belly with the east wind; which is noisy and blustering, rapid and forcible, bearing all before it, and very infectious in hot countries; and such notions Job, according to Eliphaz, satisfied himself with, and endeavoured to insinuate them into others; which were nothing but great swelling words of vanity, and tended to subvert the faith of men, and overthrow all religion, and were very unwholesome, infectious, and ruinous to the minds of men, as suggested.

Ver. 3. *Should he reason with unprofitable talk?* etc.] That is, the wise man, such a man as Job; does it become him to talk such idle stuff? that which is false, and foolish, and frothy, that does not minister grace to the hearer, and is not for the use of edifying; as whatever is untrue, unwise, vain, and empty, must be useless and answer no good end; nothing is profitable but what tends to increase solid wisdom and spiritual knowledge, and to exercise grace, and influence an holy life; wherefore what are profitable to the souls of men are the doctrines of the word of God, and the experiences of the grace of God, communicated by his people one to another; and nothing but these, or what agrees with them, should come out of the mouth of a wise and good man; nor can such an one expect to convince men of their errors, or reprove them for their sins with success, who deals in words of no profit:

or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? but may do a great deal of hurt both to himself and others; but the same thing is here signified in different words,

Ver. 4. *Yea, thou castest off fear*, etc.] Not of man; a slavish fear of man is to be cast off, because that brings a snare, deters men from their duty, and leads into sin; though there is a fear and reverence of men which ought to be given to them, “fear to whom fear”, (^{<5337>}Romans 13:7); but here the fear of God is meant, which is to be understood of the grace of fear, of which Job was possessed; that could not be cast off, for this is not what is in a man naturally, or is by the light of nature, and arises from natural conviction, which may be cast off, as was by Pharaoh; but this is a blessing of the covenant of grace, sure and firm, and is one of the gifts of grace that are without repentance; it is a part of internal grace, which can never be lost; it is improved and increased by fresh discoveries of the grace and goodness of God, and is an antidote and preservative against apostasy: perhaps the whole worship of God may be meant, external worship, or outward religion in the form of it, which is sometimes signified by the fear of God: (^{<2124>}Ecclesiastes 12:14 ^{<2393>}Isaiah 29:13); and it is cast off when it is neglected and not attended to, or when men become profane, after they have made a profession of religion; but as neither of these can be thought to be the case of Job, rather the meaning of Eliphaz may be, that Job did not show that reverence to God he should, as his words may seem, in (^{<8330>}Job 13:20-22); or that by his way of talk and reasoning, and by the notions he had imbibed and gave out, and the assertions he laid down, all religion would be made void among men; for if, as he had said, God “destroys the perfect and the wicked, [and] the tabernacles of robbers prosper, [and] the just men are laughed to scorn”, (^{<8022>}Job 9:22 12:4,6); who would fear God? it might be inferred from hence, that it is a vain thing to serve him, and there can be no profit got by keeping his ordinances, and walking before him; this is the way to put an end to all religion, as if Eliphaz should say, and discourage all regard unto it:

and restrainest prayer before God; prayer is to be made to God and to him only, it is a part of religious worship, directed to by the light of nature, and ought to be performed by every man; it is a special privilege of the saints, who have a covenant God on a throne of grace to go to, and can pray in a spiritual manner for spiritual things; and especially is to be observed in times of trouble, in which Job now was, and never to be disused; now this charge either respects Job himself, that he left off praying, which can hardly

be supposed; or that he drew out prayer to a great length, as some understand the words ^{f617}, like the tautologies of the Heathen; or he diminished prayer, as others ^{f618}, lessened the times of prayer, and the petitions in it: or rather it may respect others; not that it can be thought he should lay his injunctions on those over whom he had any authority, forbidding his servants, or those about him, to pray; but that by his manner of reasoning he discouraged prayer, as Eliphaz thought, as an useless thing; for if God laughs at the trials and afflictions of the innocent, and suffers wicked men to prosper, who would pray to him, or serve him? (see ~~3802b~~ Job 9:23 12:6).

Ver. 5. *For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity*, etc.] Which was in his heart, and so was an evidence against him, and proved him perverse, and made good the above charges exhibited against him: or “thine iniquity teaches thy mouth” ^{f619}; the wickedness that was in his heart prompted his mouth to speak the things he did, (see ~~4023b~~ Matthew 12:34); and this, as it was an instance of his folly, (~~2050b~~ Proverbs 15:2); so a proof of his casting off the fear of the Lord; for if that had been before his eyes, he would have bridled his lips, and not uttered all the wickedness of his heart: for he that “bridleth not his tongue, this man’s religion is vain”, (~~3002b~~ James 1:26);

and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty; coloured over things under specious pretences of religion and godliness, so that the simple and ignorant took him for a holy good man, when he was at heart an hypocrite; in this light Eliphaz puts Job, as one that walked and talked in craftiness, and was a deceitful worker, and imposed upon men with false glosses and plausible pretences.

Ver. 6. *Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I*, etc.] Or shows thee to be a wicked person, guilty of things charged upon thee; out of thine own mouth thou art convicted, there needs no other evidence to be brought against thee, that is sufficient: and thou savest me, and any other, the trouble of passing the sentence of condemnation upon thee; thou hast done it thyself, thine own mouth is judge and jury, and brings in the verdict, and pronounces it, as well as is the witness, as follows, and is instead of a thousand witnesses, (~~3800b~~ Job 9:20);

yea, thine own lips testify against thee; and therefore there were no need of producing any other testimony; what he had said showed that his talk was vain and unprofitable, unbecoming a wise man, and tending to make

null and void the fear of God among men, to discourage all religious exercises, and particularly prayer before God.

Ver. 7. [*Art thou the first man [that] was born?* etc.] The first Adam, who was created in wisdom and knowledge, and had a large share of understanding in things natural, civil, and moral; knew much of God and his perfections, of the works of nature, and of the wisdom and power of God displayed in them; one instance of which is his giving names to the creatures; dost thou think thou art that selfsame individual person, the father of all mankind, who had such a stock and fund of knowledge, until, by seeking after more, and that unlawful, he lost much of what he had? dost thou imagine that thou hast lived ever since, and seen or known everything that was done in all ages from the beginning, and hast gathered a large share of knowledge from long experience, and by making strict observations on men and things in such a length of time? or, as the Targum,

“wast thou born with the first man, without father and mother?”

and hast thou existed ever since? or, “wast thou born before Adam?” before the first man ^{f620}? Art thou the wisdom and son of God, who was before Abraham, before Adam, before any creature whatever, was in the beginning with God, and was God? What dost thou make thyself to be, Job? thou, a mere man, dost thou make thyself to be the eternal God? for to be before the first man, or to be the firstborn of every creature, or to be born before every creature, is expressive of eternity, as is the following phrase:

or wast thou made before the hills? or existed before they did? as is said of the son of God, (³¹⁰⁸⁵Proverbs 8:25); what is before the hills and mountains is eternal; the eternal God and his eternity are thus described, (^{3910D}Psalm 90:2).

Ver. 8. *Hast thou heard the secret of God?* etc.] Or, “in the secret of God” ^{f621}, in his cabinet council, what was said and done there? hast thou stood in the council of God? hast thou been one of his privy council, or counsellors, and been let into all the secrets of God, of his purposes and providence, and into the reasons of all his administrations, that thou talkest so freely, and boldly, and confidently as thou dost? Indeed Christ, the son of God, was the Angel of the great council; the counsel of peace was between him and his Father; yea, he was in his bosom, and privy to all his

thoughts, designs, and decrees, and knew everything, what would be, and the reasons thereof; as well as the nature of his Father, his perfections, mind, and will, which he has declared: but could Job pretend to this, or anything like it? no, surely. Indeed there are some secrets of God which he makes known to his people, and no doubt, in some measure, Job was acquainted with them; such as the secrets of God's love, and of the covenant of his grace, which are with them that fear him; and such an one Job was, and with whom, in times past at least, the secret of God was, even his everlasting love in the open manifestation of it to him; which is a secret in the heart of God, till revealed and shed abroad in the hearts of his people; and so the "mysteries" of God, as some render the word, the doctrines of the Gospel, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the knowledge of them, is given to the sons of men; Job was acquainted with them, with the incarnation of Christ, redemption by him, and the resurrection of the dead; the secrets of Providence, though they may not always be known now, they will be hereafter; yea, God does nothing but he reveals his secrets to his servants the prophets (^{<3187>}Amos 3:7), as he did to Abraham his friend; and as for the purposes of God, which are the secret things that belong to him, and can never be known unless revealed, and when fulfilled, even those, such as relate to the election of men, their redemption by Christ, and the effectual calling, are made known by God's saving and calling them according to them:

and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? not keep it to himself without communicating it to others, which to do is to imprison the truth, and detain it in unrighteousness; as men have freely received, they should freely give; but he arrogated and ascribed wisdom to himself, monopolized it, and would allow no man to have any share of it but himself; he reckoned so highly of himself, as if he was the only wise man in the world; thus what he charged his friends with Eliphaz retorts upon himself, (^{<3182>}Job 12:2); as he does his own words in (^{<3185>}Job 15:9).

Ver. 9. *What knowest thou that we know not?* etc.] Which are pretty near the words of Job to his friends, (^{<3183>}Job 12:3 13:2); and to the same sense is what follows:

[what] understandest thou which [is] not in us? in our hearts, minds, and understanding; or among us, which one or other, or all of us, have not: yet all men have not knowledge alike; some that profess themselves to be wise, and to have a large share of knowledge, are fools; and such who think they

know something extraordinary, and more than others, know nothing as they ought to know; and such who have gifts of real knowledge have them different one from another; even of the things known there is not a like degree of knowledge, and particularly in spiritual things; some are little children in understanding, some are young men and know more, and some are fathers, and know most of all; an equality in knowledge belongs to another state, to the latter day glory, when the watchmen shall see eye to eye, and all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, and especially to the ultimate glory, when saints will know as they are known.

Ver. 10. *With us are both the grayheaded*, etc.] The grayheaded man, or one that is so, it is in the singular number; gray hairs are a sign of old age, and an emblem of wisdom, (see ^{<J8212>}Job 12:12); to which words Eliphaz may be thought to refer; Job there suggesting as if wisdom was with him, being an ancient man:

and very aged men; or “man” rather; Mr. Broughton renders it, and “all gray”, as if the other word only signifies one that has a mixture of gray hairs on him, but this one all whose hairs are turned gray:

much elder than thy father; or “greater”, as the same learned man renders it; and so Aben Ezra and Bar Tzemach say in the Arabic language the word signifies, and may design a third person. Ben Gersom thinks that Eliphaz was older than Job, and that his other two friends were younger than he, or Zophar only was younger than he; one of the Targums paraphrases the words thus,

“but Eliphaz who is gray, and Bildad who is aged, are with us, and Zophar who is greater in days than thy father;”

it appears that they were very old men by what Elihu says, (^{<J8316>}Job 32:6,7); though it may be Eliphaz may not barely have respect to themselves and their age, but to their ancestors, their fathers, from whom they had their knowledge, when they were but of yesterday, and knew little, and so pleads antiquity on their side; and it has been observed that Teman, from whence Eliphaz was, was famous for wisdom, and wise men in it, at least it was so in later times; and if so early, the observation would be more pertinent, and the sense might be thought to be, that we have at Teman men as ancient and as wise as at Uz, in the schools of the one as in the schools of the other, and so have the opportunity of gaining as much wisdom and knowledge as Job: or it may be the meaning only is this, that

we have on our side the question as many ancient and learned men, or more, than Job can pretend to; and thus, as before, antiquity is pleaded; but is not a sure rule to go by, at least by trusting to it men may be led aside; for though truth is the good old way, and is the oldest way, yet error is almost as old as truth; it follows so close upon the heels of it, that it is difficult, in some cases, to discern which is first, though truth always is: there is the old way which wicked men have trodden; and a pretence to antiquity, if not carefully observed, may lead into it, (see ³⁴⁶⁶Jeremiah 6:16) (~~3225~~Job 22:15).

Ver. 11. [*Are*] *the consolations of God small with thee?* etc.] Meaning either those which Eliphaz and his friends had administered, when, upon his repentance and reformation, they promised him great and good things that should befall him and his family, and that his latter end should be greater than his beginning; which Job slighted, took no notice of, nor entertained any hope concerning it; and these they called the consolations of God, not only because great, as things excellent have the name of God added to them, to express their excellency, but because they were administered in the name of God, and were according to the word and will of God, at least as they thought: Ben Gersom renders it, “the consolations of these”; these were Bildad and Zophar; so Bar Tzemach; or, as others, “these consolations”^{f622} which I and my friends have suggested; but not human, rather divine consolations are meant; and this is a fresh charge against Job, that he made light of such, even the consolations of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, who are each of them comforters; saints may and should comfort one another, and ministers of the Gospel are Barnabases, sons of consolation; but God is the great Comforter, it is he only can speak and apply comfort to purpose; and his consolations are not to be accounted “small”, if it be considered from whence they come, from the great God, the Creator, to creatures, dust and ashes, sinful ones, on whom they are bestowed, such as are undeserving of them, yea, deserving of the wrath of God, and the curses of his law; and also the nature of these comforts, as that they are strong consolations, and effectual through the power and grace of God, and are everlasting, the matter and foundation of them being so; and though they may be refused through unbelief, as being too great in the view of a sinful creature for himself yet they can never be accounted small, or slighted and despised by a gracious soul; nor can it be though they were by Job, since he was so distressed with the arrows of the Almighty, a

sense of divine wrath, and was so desirous of the divine Presence, and even begged he might take comfort a little:

is there any secret thing with thee? any secret wisdom and knowledge which they were strangers to; or any secret way of conveying comfort to him they knew not of; or any secret sin in him, any Achan in the camp, (^{<8071>}Joshua 7:11-13), that hindered him from receiving comfort, or put him upon slighting what was offered to him.

Ver. 12. *Why doth thine heart carry thee away?* etc.] To such conceit of thyself, and contempt of others, and even to slight the consolations of God; the heart, being deceitful and wicked, sometimes carries away good men to say and do those things which are unbecoming; and if, in any instance, this was Job's case, it was owing to his own heart, which carried him beyond due bounds; for whenever any man is "tempted" to do evil, "he is drawn away of his own lust", and enticed, (^{<5014>}James 1:14);

and what do thine eyes wink at; conniving at and shutting his eyes against his own sins and iniquities, unwilling to see them, and be convinced of them, and own them; or shutting them against the charges and reproofs of his friends, and all the light and evidence with which they came; or rather as carelessly attending to them, and scoffing and sneering at them: some render it, "what do thine eyes aim at" ^{f623}? as men, when they take an aim at a mark, wink with or shut one eye; what are thy designs? what hast thou in view? what wouldest thou be at, talking and behaving in such a manner as thou dost?

Ver. 13. *That thou turnest thy spirit against God,* etc.] Not against men, his friends only, but against God himself, being filled with wrath and indignation at him; showing the enmity of his heart unto him, and committing hostilities upon him, stretching out his hand, and strengthening himself against him, running upon him, on the thick bosses of his buckler, as after expressed:

and lettest [such] words go out of thy mouth? as in (^{<8022>}Job 9:22 10:3 12:6 13:22-27).

Ver. 14. *What [is] man, that he should be clean?* etc.] Frail, feeble, mortal man, or woeful man, as Mr. Broughton renders it; since he is sinful, whereby he is become such a weak and dying creature: this question, as well as the following, is put by way of contempt, and as lessening man in a comparative sense, and in order to abate any high conceit of himself; who

is not naturally clean, but the reverse, being conceived and born in sin; nor can he be so of himself, nor by any means he is capable of; and however clean he may be in his own eyes, or in the eyes of others, yet is not clean in the sight of God, and still less pure than him, his Maker, as in (^{<18047>}Job 4:17); and indeed cannot be clean at all, but through the grace of God, and blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin:

and [he which is] born of a woman; a periphrasis of man, (^{<18048>}Job 14:1);

that he should be righteous? as no man is naturally; there is none righteous, no, not one; though man originally was made righteous, yet sinning he lost his righteousness, and all his posterity are without any; nor can they become righteous of themselves, or by any works of righteousness done by them; and though they may trust in themselves that they are righteous, and may appear outwardly so before men, yet by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified or accounted righteous in the sight of God, and much less be more just than he, as in (^{<18047>}Job 4:17); nor can any of the sons of men be made or reckoned righteous but by the obedience of Christ, or by that justifying righteousness that is in him: what Eliphaz here says concerning the impurity, imperfection, and unrighteousness of men, are very great truths; but if he aims at Job, as he seems to do he misses his mark, and mistakes the man, and it is in vain with respect to him, or as a refutation of any notions of his; for Job asserts the corruption and depravity of human nature as strongly as it is expressed here, (^{<18049>}Job 14:4); nor does he ever claim, but disclaims, sinless perfection, (^{<18050>}Job 9:20); nor did he expect to be personally justified before God by any righteousness of his own, the imperfection of which he was sensible of, but by the righteousness of his living Redeemer, (^{<18051>}Job 9:30,31 19:25); but what he pleaded for was the integrity and uprightness of his heart in opposition to hypocrisy he was charged with; and the holiness and righteousness of his life and conversation, in opposition to a course of living in sin, or to his being guilty of some notorious sin or sins for which he was afflicted, as was insinuated. Eliphaz here recurs to his oracle, (^{<18047>}Job 4:17,18); and expresses it much to the same sense.

Ver. 15. *Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints*, etc.] In holy men, set apart for himself by his grace, whose sins are expiated by the blood of his Son, and whose hearts are sanctified by his Spirit, and who live holy lives and conversations, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; these, though he trusts many of them with much, as the prophets of old with the messages of his

grace and will, and the ministers of the word with treasure, in their earthen vessels, the sacred “depositum” of the glorious Gospel, with gifts of grace, fitting them for their work, and with the care of the souls of men; yet he trusts none of them with themselves, with the redemption and salvation of their souls, with the regeneration and sanctification of their hearts, and with their preservation to eternal glory; he has put those into the hands of his Son and Spirit, and keeps them by his power through faith unto salvation: the Targum renders it, in his saints above, in the saints in heaven, in glorified men; he is there their all in all; as their happiness, so their safety and protection; see an instance of his care and preservation of them after the resurrection, when in a perfect state, (⁽⁶¹¹⁸⁾ Revelation 20:8,9); or this may be understood of the angels, who sometimes are called saints, (⁽⁶³¹²⁾ Deuteronomy 33:2); who though they have been trusted with many things to impart to the sons of men, yet not with the salvation of men, nor even with the secret of it; they were not of God’s privy council when the affair was debated and settled; nor with other secrets, as the day and hour of the last judgment, the coming of the Son of Man: or the sense may be, “he putteth no perfection or stability”^{f624} in them, that is, perfection in comparison of his; for if theirs were equal to his, they would be gods, which it is impossible to be, or for God to make them such; and likewise such stability as to have been able to have stood of themselves, which it appears they had not, since many of them fell, and the rest needed confirming grace, which they have by Christ, the Head of all principalities and powers:

yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; heaven born men, partakers of the heavenly calling, whose hearts and affections are set on heavenly things, and have their conversation in heaven; yet these, in the sight of a pure and holy God, and in comparison of him, are impure and unholy; or they of heaven, as Mr. Broughton renders it, the inhabitants of heaven; the angels on high, as the Targum paraphrases it; these are charged by him with folly, and they, conscious of their imperfection with respect to him, cover their faces with their wings, while they celebrate the perfection of his holiness, who is so glorious in it; though the natural heavens may be intended, at least not excluded, and the luminous bodies in them, as Bildad seems to explain it, (⁽⁶²¹⁵⁾ Job 25:5,6); the stars are reckoned the more dense and thick part of the heavens, the moon has its spots, and by later discoveries it seems the sun is not without them, and the heavens are often covered with clouds and darkness, and the present ones will be purified

with fire at the general conflagration, which supposes them unclean, and they shall pass away, and new ones succeed, which implies imperfection in the former, or there would be no need of others; this is the proof Eliphaz gives of what he had suggested in (¹⁸⁵⁴Job 15:14).

Ver. 16. *How much more abominable and filthy [is] man*, etc.] In his natural, corrupt, and unregenerate estate; man, as a creature, was not abominable, but becoming sinful he is; he is so in himself, cast out to the loathing of his person, being full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores, yea, like a dead corrupted carcass, for he is dead in trespasses and sins, (⁴¹¹Ephesians 2:1); and he appears to be corrupt by the abominable works done by him, as all the works of the flesh are; yea, he is abominable to himself, when made sensible of his state and case; he then abhors himself, and repents of his sins, he loathes his sins, and himself for them; and must be much more so in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, as man is nothing else than a mass of sin, and therefore must be “filthy”; for sin is of a defiling nature, it defiles the body and all its members, and the soul with all its powers and faculties: man is naturally and originally filthy, being conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; nor can a clean thing be brought out of an unclean; he is internally and universally unclean, his heart is a sink of sin, desperately wicked, and wickedness itself; his mind and conscience are defiled, and there is no place clean; and this appears outwardly in his actions, in his life and conversation, which is filthy also: for if the ploughing of the wicked is sin, and the righteousnesses of men are filthy rags, how impure must the immoral actions of wicked men be? man is so impure, that nothing but the blood of Christ can purify his heart, and purge his conscience from dead works, and make white his outward conversation garment:

which drinketh iniquity like water; it is as natural to him to commit iniquity as it is for a man to drink water when he is thirsty, and he does it with equal gust, delight, and pleasure; as cold water is delightful to a thirsty soul, so is sin to a sinner, a sweet morsel he holds in his mouth; various lusts are various pleasures, though these pleasures are but for a season: sin, like water, is easy to be come at, it is near at hand, it easily besets men, and is all around them, and they easily give into it; everyone turns to his wicked course as readily as the horse rushes into the battle; and the phrase may be expressive of the abundance of sin committed, like large draughts of water greedily taken down by a man athirst, and repeated again and again; moreover, as water drank enters into men, and is taken down as an

harmless thing, yet often proves very hurtful and pernicious to them when drunk while they are hot, and occasions disorders, which issue in death; so sin, though it may seem harmless, and be pleasing and refreshing, going down like water, yet it works like poison, and is the gall of asps within a man, and ends in eternal death, if grace prevents not. This is the conclusion and application of the whole to man, arguing from the greater to the lesser, and so proving the impurity and imperfection of man, and that he cannot be clean and righteous before God of himself.

Ver. 17. *I will show thee, hear me*, etc.] Here Eliphaz proceeds to illustrate and make plain, to clear and defend, his former sentiment and proposition, and into which the rest of his friends came; that only wicked, and not righteous men, are afflicted of God, especially in such a manner as Job was; and he proposes to show things worthy of his regard, and not such vain and unprofitable things which Job had uttered; and, in order to stir up and engage his attention, he says what follows:

and that [which] I have seen I will declare; what he had been an eyewitness of himself; the same he had observed, (^{<1848>}Job 4:8); and such testimonies are most regarded, and reckoned most authentic and creditable, especially when they come from men of character; (see ^{<100>}Luke 1:1,2 ^{<100>}1 John 1:1).

Ver. 18. *Which wise men have told from their fathers*, etc.] Men wise in the best sense, not to do evil, but to do good; not worldly wise men, but such who have wisdom, sound wisdom in the inward parts; who are wise to salvation, and who are partakers of divine and spiritual wisdom; and such men, as they would never tell an untruth, so they would never report a false or a foolish thing they had heard, nor any thing but upon a good testimony, what they have received from their fathers, who were also wise and good men; and therefore such a testimony, though not ocular, but by tradition, deserves regard:

and have not hid [it]; their fathers did not hide it from them, and what they have received from their fathers they did not hide it from their children; and so it came to be handed down from one to another with great truth, exactness, and certainty, and to be depended upon, (see ^{<1940>}Psalm 44:1 78:3,4).

Ver. 19. *Unto whom alone the earth was given*, etc.] Who were intrusted with the government of whole kingdoms and nations; and therefore not

mean men, but persons of great consequence, and to be credited; being such as were appointed by God, and by him put into such an high office, for which they were qualified by him; and being observed to be such by men, were made choice of by them to take the government of them: this is not to be restrained to the land of Canaan, and to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom it was given, and to their posterity; and who it is very probable at this time did not yet enjoy it; but it respects more and larger tracts of land, and the rulers of them, and at a greater distance of time, and very likely Noah and his sons, to whom the whole earth was given, and by whom it was replenished, and among whom it was divided; this seems opposed to what Job had said, (~~3024~~ Job 9:24);

and no stranger passed among them; either there was no wicked man among them, a stranger to God and godliness; or an enemy that invaded them, passed through them, disturbed and dispossessed them of their power and substance; which shows how wise and good men are regarded by the Lord, and not distressed and afflicted as wicked men be; as well as serves to strengthen the credit of their character, and the report received and derived from them by tradition, and tacitly glances at Job's distress and disturbance by the Chaldeans and Sabeans; next follows the account of the things either seen by Eliphaz, or handed down from such credible persons now described.

Ver. 20. *The wicked man travaileth with pain all [his] days*, etc.] Either to commit iniquity, which he is at great pains to do, and even to weariness; and, agreeably to the metaphor used, he conceives it in his heart, he travails with it in his mind, and he brings forth falsehood and a lie, what disappoints him, and which issues in death, eternal death, (see ~~3074~~ Psalm 7:14-16 ~~3014~~ James 1:14,15); or to get wealth and riches, in obtaining of which he pierces himself through with many sorrows; and these being like thorns, in using them he gets many a scratch, and has a good deal of trouble, pain, and uneasiness in keeping them, insomuch that he cannot sleep comfortably through fear of losing them; wherefore he does not enjoy that peace, comfort, and happiness, it may be thought he does; and, besides all this, he has many an inward pain and gripe of conscience for his many sins and transgressions, which lie at the door of conscience, and when it is opened rush in, and make sad work, and put him to great pain and distress; for otherwise this cannot be said of every wicked man, that they are in outward pain and distress, or in uncomfortable circumstances, at least in appearance; for of some it is said, "they are not in trouble as other men,

neither are they plagued like other men”, (^{1973B} Psalm 73:5); they live wholly at ease, and are quiet, and die so, at least seemingly: some restrain this to some particular person whom Eliphaz might have in view; the Targum paraphrases it of wicked Esau, who it was expected would repent, but did not; others think that he had in his eye some notorious oppressor, that had lived formerly, or in his time, as Nimrod, the mighty hunter and tyrant, or Chedorlaomer, who held for some years several kings in subjection to him; but it is much if he does not design Job himself; however, he forms the description of the wicked man in such a manner, that it might as near as possible suit his case, and in many things he plainly refers to it: and this is a sad case indeed, for a wicked man to travail in pain all his days in this life, and in the world to come to suffer the pains of hell fire to all eternity; the pains of a woman, to which the allusion is, are but short at most, but those of the wicked man are for life, yea, for ever; and among the rest of his pains of mind, especially in this world, what follows is one, and which gives much uneasiness: and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor; Mr. Broughton renders it, soon numbered years; that is, few, as the years of man’s life at most are but few, and those of the oppressor fewer still, since bloody and deceitful men do not live out half the days of the years of man’s life, but are oftentimes cut off in the midst of their days; and be they more or fewer, they are all numbered and fixed, and the number of them is with God, and him only; they are fixed and settled by the decree of God, and laid up in his purposes, and reserved for the oppressor; but they are a secret to him, he does not know how long he shall live, or how soon he may die, and then there will be an end of his oppression and tyranny, and of his enjoyment of his wealth and riches unjustly got; and this frets him, and gives him pain, and makes him uneasy; whereas a good man is easy about it, he is willing to wait his appointed time, till his change comes; he is not so much concerned to know the time of his death as to be in a readiness for it. The Targum paraphrases this of Ishmael the mighty: the oppressor is the same with the wicked man in the preceding clause.

Ver. 21. *A dreadful sound [is] in his ears*, etc.] Or “a voice”, or “sound of fears”^{f625}, of what causes fears; and which are either imaginary; sometimes wicked men, fear when there is no cause or occasion for it; they fancy an enemy at their heels, and flee, when none pursues them; they are a “Magormissabib”, or “terror on every side”, a fear to themselves and all about them, (^{2018B} Jeremiah 20:3 *marg); like Cain, who fancied and feared that every man that met him would slay him (^{2043B} Genesis 4:13,14); such is

the effect of a guilty conscience: or real; and these either extraordinary sounds, such as were made in the ears of the Syrian host, which caused them to flee, and leave their tents, and all their substance in them, (^{<12076>}2 Kings 7:6,7); or ordinary, as the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war, wars and rumours which are very terrible, especially to some persons; or sounds of fears, reports of one calamity after another, which cause fears; and so may respect Job's troubles, and the dreadful sound of them in his ears, brought by one messenger of bad tidings after another: but there is a more dreadful sound than either of these, which is sometimes in the ears of wicked men; the terrors of the law of God broken by them, the menaces and curses of it, and a sound of hell and damnation, which continually rings in their ears, and fills the with horror and black despair; and so the Targum,

“the voice or sound of the fears in hell is in his ears;”

and among the rest of his fears what follows is one, and so some connect the words, that ^{f626}

in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him; either God the lawgiver, whose law he has transgressed, and who is able, as to save his people, so to destroy the wicked, soul and body, in hell; and destruction from the Almighty, Job himself says, was a terror to him, (^{<183123>}Job 31:23); or a destroying angel, such an one as went through the land of Egypt, and destroyed the firstborn, and into the camp of Israel, when they committed sin, and were destroyed of the destroyer; or some enemy, plunderer, and robber, such as the Sabeans and Chaldeans were, and to whom respect may be had; or even the devil himself, Apollyon, the destroyer of the souls of men, and who sometimes wicked men fear will come and carry them away, soul and body, to hell; or it may be death is meant, which kills and destroys all men; and wicked men are afraid that in the midst of all their peace and prosperity sudden destruction by death should come upon them, like a thief in the night, and remove them from all their enjoyments; and whether they are or no under any fearful apprehensions of this, it certainly will be their case.

Ver. 22. *He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness*, etc.] When he lies down at night he despairs of ever seeing the light of the morning, through fear of an enemy, a robber, a murderer, or of one disaster or another, (^{<18286>}Deuteronomy 28:66,67); or when he is in any affliction and calamity, which is often signified by darkness, he cannot persuade himself that he shall ever be delivered out of it, and restored to his former

condition again: and here Eliphaz seems to glance at Job, who had no hope of his being brought into such a state of prosperity he had been in; whereas good men, when in darkness, believe they shall be brought again to the light, as the church in (³⁰⁰⁸Micah 7:8,9); or the infidel, who knows he must be laid in the dark and silent grave; the Heathen man, such as were many of the neighbours of Eliphaz, the Idumeans, among whom he dwelt, who were without the hope of a glorious resurrection; and which is an article of pure revelation, and which the idolatrous Heathen were strangers to, and so believed it not, or any deliverance from the grave; or this may respect the blackness of darkness, the outer darkness, the darkness of hell, which when once a wicked man is cast into, and enveloped with, he despairs, as he well may, of ever being delivered out of it:

and he is waited for of the sword; or by them that kill with the sword, as the Targum, who lie in wait for him, to rob him, and kill him; or in his own apprehension he seems to have nothing but drawn swords about him, or a sword hanging over his head, or the judgments of God ready to fall upon him for his sins; for he, having killed others with the sword, must expect to be killed with it himself.

Ver. 23. *He wandereth abroad for bread*, etc.] Either as a plunderer and robber, he roves about to increase his worldly power and substance; or rather, being reduced to poverty, wanders about from place to place, from door to door, to beg his bread; which is a curse imprecated on the posterity of wicked men, (³⁹⁰⁰Psalms 109:10);

[saying], where [is it]? where is bread to be had? where shall I go for it? where lives a liberal man that will give it freely and generously? by this question it seems as if it was difficult for such a man to get his bread by begging; he having been cruel and oppressive to others, unkind and ungenerous in his time of prosperity, now finds but few that care to relieve him; and indeed a man that has not shown mercy to the indigent, when in his power to have relieved them, cannot expect mercy will be shown to him; this he does, wanders about, seeking food, “wheresoever he is”^{f627}:

he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand; either that a day of affliction and adversity is coming upon him, perceiving his affairs to grow worse and worse, or to be immediately and already on him, which obliges him to wander about for bread; or that the day of death is at hand, which he is made sensible of by one symptom or another; or rather it may be the day of everlasting darkness in hell, the wrath of God to the

uttermost he has deserved; he finds the day of judgment is at hand, and the Judge at the door, and in a short time he must receive the reward of eternal vengeance for the wicked deeds he has done; for so the words may be rendered, “that the day of darkness is prepared by his hand” ^{f628}; by the evil works his hand has wrought, and so has treasured up to himself wrath against the day of wrath, and righteous judgment of God.

Ver. 24. *Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid*, etc.] Either his present troubles shall frighten him, they being so very dismal, terrible, and distressing, and make him fear that others were coming on, more dreadful and formidable; or those troubles he fears will be his portion hereafter, these terrify him beyond measure, even that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, that shall come upon every soul of man that doeth evil, (^{<4118>}Romans 2:8,9);

they shall prevail against him as a king ready to the battle; that is, trouble and anguish shall prevail against him; he will be no more able to resist them than a very inferior force, or even a single man, is able to resist a warlike king, attended with a numerous army, and these set in battle array; such a man’s troubles will come upon him as an armed man, against which he cannot stand; the Targum is,

“they shall surround him as a king prepared for a footstool;”

who being taken by the enemy shall be used as a footstool to mount on horseback; and as the word has the signification of a globe or ball, (see ^{<2218>}Isaiah 22:18); some think it has respect to the manner of kings, when taken captive, put into an iron cage, as Bajazet was by Tamerlane; or into an iron hoop, bound hand and foot, and hung up in chains; or, as Ben Gersom thinks, to the manner of drowning persons, who used to be tied hand and foot, as if rolled up in the form of a globe, and so cast into the water; but rather the reference is to an army, besieging a place all around in the form of a ball or globe, so that there is no escaping them; or rather it may be to a king drawing up his army in such a form, ready to engage in battle; or putting it in such a position when encamped or entrenched, waiting the motion of the enemy; (see ^{<0215>}1 Samuel 26:5); and such are the troubles that surround and prevail against a wicked man, (see ^{<2318>}Isaiah 29:3); the reasons of the wicked man being brought into such a woeful condition follow.

Ver. 25. *For he stretched out his hand against God*, etc.] Being an hater of him, an enemy to him, yea, enmity itself against him; an enemy in his mind, which appears by his wicked works, which are so many acts of hostility against God; all sins are against God, his nature, his will, his law, and all his remonstrances, exhortations, cautions, and instructions; but some are more daring and impudent than others, or are committed in a more open, bold, and audacious manner, as were those committed by the inhabitants of Sodom, and those who are similar to them; especially such as strike at the being of God and his perfections, his providence and government of the world; and such as deny these may most truly be said to stretch out their hands against God, and strike at him: and this may regard not only sins committed against the light of nature and the law of God, but against the evangelic revelation, the doctrines of the Gospel, and the ordinances of it; for such who deny the one, and reject the other, openly oppose themselves to God, and expose themselves to his wrath and vengeance; for of how much sorer punishment shall such be thought worthy, who trample Christ and his blood under foot, despise and disobey his Gospel:

and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty; by hardening his heart against him as Pharaoh did; by putting on a bold and brazen countenance, by setting his mouth against God in heaven, and suffering, his tongue to walk through the earth, fearing neither God nor man; by entering into a friendship with the world, and making alliances with the enemies of God, even by making a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell; all which is egregious folly and madness: for a sinful man to oppose himself to God is to set briars and thorns to a consuming fire; for a weak feeble creature to set himself against the Almighty, who can crush him in a moment, and send him down to hell, is the height of folly; let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth, but not man with his Maker; who ever strengthened or hardened himself against him, and prospered?

Ver. 26. *He runneth upon him, [even] on [his] neck*, etc.] As a fierce and furious enemy runs upon another with great wrath and fury; as the he goat in Daniel's vision ran upon the ram, in the fury of his power, that is, Alexander upon Darius; which instance Bar Tzemach refers to; and as an adversary, who throws down his weapons, and goes in to closer quarters, and takes his antagonist by the throat, or round the neck, in order to throw him down to the ground; in such a bold and insolent manner does the wicked man encounter with God; he makes up to him, and flies in his face,

and most audaciously attacks him: or he runs upon him “with [his] neck” ^{f629}; with a stretched out neck, in the most haughty manner, with a neck like an iron sinew, and with a brow like brass:

upon the thick bosses of his bucklers; alluding to shields, embossed in the middle, where they are thicker than in the other parts, and used to have a spike of iron set in the middle; so that it was daring and dangerous to run upon them: these may design the perfections of God, denied by the wicked man; or his providential dispensations, despised by him; or his purposes and decrees ridiculed, replied unto, and disputed; or the flaming sword of justice, and the curses of a righteous law, in defiance of which wicked men go on in sin: or “with the bosses of his bucklers” ^{f630}; with all his family, as Schmidt; or employing all his wealth and riches, his power and authority, against God, and the interest of religion in the world. Some understand this of God, meeting the wicked man, stretching out his hand, and strengthening himself against him, as if he, God, ran upon the wicked man, and upon his neck, and took him by it, and shook him; as in (^{<18162>}Job 16:12); and upon the thick bosses of his buckler, his bones and nerves, as Mr. Broughton; or on his power and wealth, which are not able to secure him from the vengeance of the Almighty; but the former sense seems best.

Ver. 27. *Because he covereth his face with his fatness*, etc.] He has no fear of God, nor shame for his sin; he blushes not to rise up against God in the manner he does, because his eyes stand out with fatness; or rather his face is covered with it, that is, he abounds in riches, he enjoys great prosperity, a large affluence of all good things; and this makes him haughty and imperious, neither to fear God, nor regard man like Jeshurun, who, when he “waxed fat, [was] grown thick, and covered with fatness, kicked” against God, and his providences, sinned and rebelled against him; “forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation”, (^{<18215>}Deuteronomy 32:15); and to the same purpose is the following clause:

and maketh collops of fat in [his] flanks; a description of a very fat man, and one that pampers the flesh, and indulges himself in eating and drinking; and, figuratively, of one that abounds in the good things of this world, and which make him vain and proud, and lead him on to commit sin in a bold and daring way, promising himself impunity in it, but without any just ground for it, as the following verses show; perhaps some respect may be

had to Job's children feasting with one another in their prosperity, which led on to sin, and issued in their ruin, as Eliphaz would suggest.

Ver. 28. *And he dwelleth in desolate cities*, etc.] This is either a continuation of the account of the wicked man's prosperity, which makes him haughty; such is his might and power, that he destroys cities and palaces, built and enjoyed by others, and then out of the ruins of them builds greater cities and more noble palaces, to perpetuate his name to posterity; which sense agrees with (^{<88E4>}Job 3:14); and with the Targum,

“and he makes tabernacles in desert cities, that he may dwell in houses which were not inhabited;”

and so Ben Gersom: and hence because of his success among men, and the grandeur he lives in, his heart is lifted up, and his hand is stretched out against God; or else this may express the sinful course of life such a man lives, who chooses to dwell in desolate places, and deserts, to do harm to others, to seize upon travellers as they pass by, and rob and plunder them of their substance, sitting and waiting for them in such places, as the Arabians in the wilderness, (^{<24E2>}Jeremiah 3:2); which is the sense of some, as Aben Ezra observes; or rather this points at the punishment of the wicked man, who though for the present may be in great prosperity, possessed of large cities and stately palaces, “yet” or “but” ^{f631}, for so the particle may be rendered, “he dwelleth in desolate cities”; in such as shall become desolate, being destroyed by a superior enemy, that shall come upon him; or through his subjects forsaking him, not being able to bear his tyranny and cruelty; or he shall be driven from his dominions by them, and be obliged to fly, and dwell in desert places; or he shall choose to dwell there, through the horrors of a guilty conscience; or, best of all, he shall be reduced to such distress and poverty, that he shall not have a house fit to dwell in; but “shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited”, (^{<2476>}Jeremiah 17:6); as follows:

[and] in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps; such as have been deserted by their former inhabitants, because come to decay, and ready to fall down upon them, and become heaps of stones and rubbish.

Ver. 29. *He shall not be rich*, etc.] Though his heart is set upon it, he is determined at any rate to be rich; he labours for it with all his might and main, and yet shall not attain what he is so desirous of; many, who take a

great deal of pains to be rich, and even in a lawful way, and are men of understanding in trade and business, and yet riches are not their portion; and some who got a great deal, yet do not grow rich; what they get, they put into a bag of holes, and it drops through as fast as they put in; what they get in one sinful way they consume in another, and so are always poor; and others, though they have amassed together a vast substance, yet still are but poor men, not using what they have either for their own good, or the good of others; and not being content with what they have, but always craving more, and so are even poor in their own account, not having what they would have: however, such a man is not rich towards God; for in godly and spiritual things he is destitute of the true riches of grace, and has no title to the riches of glory; and as for his earthly riches, these shall not endure; though he may be rich for the present, he will not be always so; And this sense the next clause confirms:

neither shall his substance continue; or “his strength”^{f632} his power and might, a rich man’s wealth being his strong city, in which he places his trust and confidence; riches are called “substance”, though their are but a shadow, yea, mere nonentities, things that are not, in comparison of heavenly things; (see ⁴¹²¹⁵Proverbs 23:5 8:22); at least they are not an enduring substance; they are uncertain things, here today, and gone tomorrow; that make themselves wings, and fly away from the owners of them; or they are taken away front them, and are not like the riches of grace, which are durable riches; or like those of glory; but by one means or another are taken out of the hands of the possessors of them, and they are reduced to poverty: and this “their substance shall not rise”; or rather, “not rise again”^{f633}, as the word may be rendered; notwithstanding all the pains they may take, their substance shall not rise, grow, and increase; or not rise up to the former heights it did, but being fallen into poverty there they lie:

neither shall he prolong the perfection of it upon the earth; though, indeed, there is no perfection in the creature, nor in creature enjoyments, nor in outward riches and substance; such as have had the largest share of them, as David and Solomon, have declared they have seen an end of all perfection, and that all things, the highest enjoyments, are vanity and vexation of spirit; yet when men are got to the summit, and height, and perfection of outward happiness, as they or others may think, this is not prolonged, or continued long in the earth, or they continued in it; but often are suddenly cast down from the pinnacle of honour, wealth, and riches; hence some render the words, “and their prosperity shall not be fixed into

the earth”^{f634}; shall not take root, though it may seem to do, (^{2412D}Jeremiah 12:2); and so shall not spread itself as a tree well rooted does; and as does the spiritual prosperity, perfection, and fullness of good men, which they have in and by Christ; being rooted in the love of God, in the grace of Christ, and having the root of the matter in them, they cast forth their roots as Lebanon, and their branches spread, and they are full of the fruits and blessings of grace, (^{284B}Hosea 14:5,6).

Ver. 30. *He shall not depart out of darkness*, etc.] Out of the darkness of poverty, calamity, and distress he comes into, and, indeed, he despairs of it himself, as in (^{3852D}Job 15:22); and in a spiritual sense he departs not out of the darkness of sin, out of the dark state of unregeneracy; nor will he depart out of the blackness and darkness reserved for him hereafter, when he is once come into it:

the flame shall dry up his branches; alluding either to a violent drought and heat, which dries up pastures, herbs, and trees, and the branches of them; or to a wind, as the Septuagint, a burning wind, in the eastern countries, which consumed all green things; or to a flash of lightning, which shatters, strips, and destroys branches of trees: here it may signify the wrath of God, like a flame of fire consuming the wealth and substance, and families, of wicked men; whose children particularly may be compared to branches, and so respect may be had to Job’s children, who were suddenly destroyed by a violent wind, which threw down the house in which they were:

and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away; out of the world, a phrase expressive of death; either because of the breath of his own mouth, as some in Jarchi, because of his blasphemies against God and his people, because of his cursing and swearing his mouth is full of, and the many vain, foolish, and idle words which come out of it, and for which he will be condemned; or rather

“by the breath of the mouth of God,”

as the Targum; either according to his purpose and decree, and by his order, and the word that goes out of his mouth; the wicked man shall be obliged to depart out of the world at once, being struck dead by him, as Ananias and Sapphira were; or by his powerful wrath and vengeance, whose breath is as a stream of brimstone, and with which he will slay the wicked of the earth, and particularly will consume the wicked one,

antichrist, even with the spirit of his mouth, and with the brightness of his coming, (²³¹⁰⁴Isaiah 11:4 ⁵⁰⁸⁸2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Ver. 31. *Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity*, etc.] Every wicked man is deceived, either by Satan, who deceives the whole world, deceived our first parents, and deceives all their posterity, not only profane sinners, but many professors of religion also; or by their own hearts, which are deceitful and desperately wicked; or through the deceitfulness of sin, which promises profit, pleasure, and liberty, and issues in ruin, pain, and bondage; and through the deceitfulness of riches, which promise that satisfaction they do not give: and such as are deceived in this manner are prone to trust in vanity; in men, who in every state, high or low, are altogether vanity; and in creature enjoyments, in outward riches and wealth, which are all vanity and vexation of spirit; and in their own hearts, and the vanity of their minds, which to do is extreme folly; and in their righteousness and external privileges, which will be of no service to them, as to their acceptance with God, and eternal happiness; and therefore trust in whatsoever is vain and empty, and affords no solid satisfaction, real pleasure, and advantage, is here dehorted from; unless the words will be allowed to be justly rendered, as I think they may, “trust not in him that is deceived by vanity”^{f635}; by any of the above vain things, since he must himself be a vain man, and therefore not to be confided in; to which sense the Targum inclines;

“he will not (or should not) believe in a son of man (or in a man), who errs through falsehood;”

the reason dissuading from it follows:

for vanity shall be his recompence; all that a man gets by trusting in vanity, or by trusting in a man deceived, is nothing but emptiness and vanity; he gets nothing solid and substantial, that will be of any advantage to him here or hereafter; and yet this he will not easily believe; and so Beza reads the words, “he that is deceived by vanity will not believe that vanity shall be his recompence”.

Ver. 32. *It shall be accomplished before his time*, Either the recompence or reward of his trusting vanity, in vain persons or things, the punishment of such a trust, the sorrows and troubles following upon it; these shall come upon the wicked man “before his day”^{f636}, as it may be rendered; before the day of his death, even before his old age; before the evil days come in a course of nature, and those years in which he has no pleasure: or

his life, and the days of his life, “shall be filled up”^{f637}; or be at an end before his time; not before the time fixed in the decree and purpose of God, (^{<844>}Job 14:5); but before his own time, that he and his friends thought he might have lived, and as his healthful constitution promised; or before the then common term of human life; and so the phrase is expressive of an immature death:

and his branch shall not be green; but dried up and wither away; his wealth and riches, his children and family, be utterly extinct; instead of being like a branch, green and flourishing, shall be like a dry stick, useless and unprofitable, only fit for burning; (see ^{<850>}Job 15:30).

Ver. 33. *He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine*, etc.] Either the wicked man himself shall shake off or lose his substance; or God shall shake off from him all that was dear and valuable to him; or he shall be shaken by one providence or another, just as a vine is shaken by a violent wind and tempest, and its unripe grapes are battered off by an hailstorm, or plucked off by the hand, or drop off through rottenness; so it is signified by this metaphor, that a wicked man should be stripped of his wealth and riches in a sudden manner; or his children should be snatched from him in their youth, before they were well grown up to maturity, and so like the unripe grape; perhaps respect is had to Job’s case, both with regard to his substance and his family:

and shall cast off his flower, as the olive: which tree, when shaken in a violent manner, drops its flower, and so brings forth no fruit; it is observed by naturalists^{f638}, that these two trees, the vine and the olive, flourish much about the same time, and suffer much by storms and tempests, which destroy their fruits, and especially when rain falls in the time of their flowering; the same thing is intended in this clause as in the former.

Ver. 34. *For the congregation of hypocrites [shall be] desolate*, etc.] Hypocrites are such who seem to and would be thought to be, what they are not; they are outwardly righteous before men, but inwardly very wicked; have a form of godliness, but are destitute the power of it, (^{<886>}2 Timothy 3:5); pretend to much religion, and to be worshippers of God, when it is only in outward appearances, and not in reality and sincerity: and such as these have been in the congregations of the righteous, in all ages; but here Eliphaz speaks of a congregation of them, a society, a family of them; and very probably has his eye upon Job’s, and would represent hereby that he, the head of his family, and his children, when living, and his

servants and associates, were all hypocrites, and now become desolate, reduced to want and poverty, and in distressed circumstances: or were “solitary”^{f639} and alone, as the word is rendered in (^{<1887>}Job 3:7); destitute of friends, and of the comforts of life; and perhaps reference may be had to the future state of such, when they shall aloud be bid to depart from God, have no society with angels and saints, but shall have their portion with those of the same character with them, hypocrites, in the highest degree of torment and misery, (^{<1265>}Matthew 24:51);

and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery; either such tents, or houses, as were built with money taken as bribes; (see ^{<302>}Habakkuk 2:12); or where such who received bribes dwelt; unjust judges, who took a gift that blinds the eyes, to pervert justice. Job is afterwards by Eliphaz represented as if he was an oppressor, a wicked magistrate, and guilty of such like crimes as here pointed at, (^{<1826>}Job 22:6-9); and the “fire” said to consume the dwelling places of such may be understood either of material fire, such as came down from heaven, and destroyed Job’s sheep, (^{<1016>}Job 1:16); or figuratively, the wrath of God often compared to fire, which would appear in one way or another, to the utter ruin of such persons, their habitations, and those that dwelt in them.

Ver. 35. *They conceive mischief*, etc.] That is, such wicked persons as before described; they meditate sin in their minds, and contrive how to commit it, and form schemes within themselves to do mischief to others:

and bring forth vanity; or sin; for lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and that is vanity, an empty thing, and neither yields profit nor pleasure in the issue, but that which is useless and unserviceable, yea, harmful and ruinous; for sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death, even death eternal, (^{<3014>}James 1:14,15);

and their belly prepareth deceit; their inward part frames and devises that which is designed to deceive others, and in the end proves deceitful to themselves: the allusion is to a pregnant woman, or rather to one who seems to be so, and whose conception proves abortive, and so deceives and disappoints herself and others; (see ^{<1974>}Psalms 7:14).