

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 23

This and the following chapter contain Job's reply to the last oration of Eliphaz; in this he first declares his present sorrowful estate and condition, (~~1827B~~ Job 23:1,2); wishes he knew where to find God, as a judge sitting on a throne, before whom he might lay his cause, and plead it, and have his judgment and final decision passed upon it; when he doubted not but he would deal favourably with him, and both admit him and strengthen him, to plead his own cause, and would acquit him for ever from the charges laid against him, (~~1827B~~ Job 23:3-7); in order to which he sought for him everywhere, but could not find him, but contents himself with this, that God knew his way; and that, after trial of him, he should shine like pure gold, and appear to be no apostate from him, but one sincerely obedient to his commands, and a true lover of his word, (~~1827B~~ Job 23:8-12); and as for his afflictions, they were the result of the unalterable purposes and appointments of God: but what gave him the greatest uneasiness was, that there were more of that sort yet to come, which filled him with fears and faintings, with trouble and darkness, (~~1827B~~ Job 23:13-17).

Ver. 1. *Then Job answered and said.*] In reply to Eliphaz; for though he does not direct his discourse to him, nor take any notice of his friends; yet, as a proof of his innocence, against his and their accusations and charges, he desires no other than to have his cause laid before God himself, by whom he had no doubt he should be acquitted; and, contrary to their notions, he shows in this chapter, that he, a righteous man, was afflicted by God, according to his unchangeable decrees; and, in the next, that wicked men greatly prosper; so that what he herein says may be considered as a sufficient answer to Eliphaz and his friends; and after which no more is said to him by them, excepting a few words dropped by Bildad.

Ver. 2. *Even today [is] my complaint bitter,* etc.] Job's afflictions were continued on him long; he was made to possess months of vanity; and, as he had been complaining ever since they were upon him, he still continued to complain to that day, "even" after all the comforts his friends pretended to administer to him, as Jarchi observes: his complaints were concerning

his afflictions, and his friends' ill usage of him under them; not of injustice in God in afflicting him, though he thought he dealt severely with him; but of the greatness of his afflictions, they being intolerable, and his strength unequal to them, and therefore death was more eligible to him than life; and he complained of God's hiding his face from him, and not hearing him, nor showing him wherefore he contended with him, nor admitting an hearing of his cause before him: and this complaint of his was "bitter": the things he complained of were such, bitter afflictions, like the waters of Marah the Israelites could not drink of, (^{<D1523>}Exodus 15:23); there was a great deal of wormwood and gall in his affliction and misery; and it was in a bitter way, in the bitterness of his soul, he made his complaint; and, what made his case still worse, he could not utter any complaint, so much as a sigh or a groan, but it was reckoned "provocation", or "stubbornness [and] rebellion", by his friends; so some render the word ^{f874}, as Mr. Broughton does, "this day my sighing is holden a rebellion": there is indeed a great deal of rebellion oftentimes in the hearts, words and actions, conduct and behaviour, even of good men under afflictions, as were in the Israelites in the wilderness; and a difficult thing it is to complain without being guilty of it; though complaints may be without it, yet repinings and murmurings are always attended with it:

and my stroke is heavier than my groaning; or "my hand" ^{f875}, meaning either his own hand, which was heavy, and hung down, his spirits failing, his strength being exhausted, and so his hands weak, feeble, and remiss, that he could not hold them up through his afflictions, and his groanings under them, (see ^{<I9A75>}Psalm 102:5 ^{<S122>}Hebrews 12:12); or the hand of God upon him, his afflicting hand, which had touched him and pressed hard upon him, and lay heavy, and was heavier than his groanings showed; though he groaned much, he did not groan more, nor so much, as his afflictions called for; and therefore it was no wonder that his complaint was bitter, nor should it be reckoned rebellion and provocation; (see ^{<K60>}Job 6:2,3 19:24).

Ver. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him*, etc.] That is, God, who is understood, though not expressed, a relative without an antecedent, as in (^{<I870>}Psalm 87:1 ^{<2100>}Song of Solomon 1:2 ^{<I305>}John 20:15); Jarchi supplies, and interprets it, "my Judge", from (^{<I827>}Job 23:7); and certain it is Job did desire to find God as a judge sitting on his throne, doing right, that he might have justice done to him: indeed he might be under the hidings of God's face, which added to his affliction, and made it the heavier; in which

case, the people of God are at a loss to know where he is, and “how” to find him, as Mr. Broughton renders the words here; they know that he is everywhere, and fills heaven and earth with his presence; that their God is in the heavens, his throne is there, yea, the heaven is his throne; that he is in his church, and among his people, where they are gathered together in his name, to wait upon him, and to worship him; and that he is to be found in Christ, as a God gracious and merciful; all which Job knew, but might, as they in such circumstances are, be at a loss how to come at sensible communion with him; for, when he hides his face, who can behold him? yet they cannot content themselves without seeking after him, and making use of all means of finding him, as Job did, (~~23:8~~ Job 23:8,9); (see ~~2:10~~ Song of Solomon 3:1-3);

[that] I might come [even] to his seat; either his mercy seat, from whence he communes with his people, the throne of his grace, where he sits as the God of grace, dispensing his grace to his people, to help them in time of need; the way to which is Christ, and in which all believers may come to it with boldness, in his name, through his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; they may come up even to it, in the exercise of faith and hope, though the distance is great, as between heaven and earth, yet by faith they can come into the holiest of all, and by hope enter within the vail; and though the difficulties and discouragements are many, arising from their sins and transgressions: or else his judgment seat, at which no man can appear and stand, without a righteousness, or without a better than his own, by which none can be justified in the sight of God; who, if strict to mark iniquity, the best of men cannot stand before him, at his bar of justice; indeed, in the righteousness of Christ, a believer may come up to the judgment seat of God, and to him as Judge of all, and not be afraid, but stand before him with confidence, since that is sufficient to answer for him, and fully acquit him: but Job here seems to have a peculiar respect to his case, in controversy between him and his friends, and is so fully assured of the justness of his cause, and relying on his innocence, he wishes for nothing more than that he could find God sitting on a throne of justice, before whom his cause might be brought and heard, not doubting in the least but that he should be acquitted; so far was he from hiding himself from God, or pleasing himself with the thoughts that God was in the height of heaven, and knew nothing of him and his conduct, and could not judge through the dark clouds, which were a covering to him, that he could not see him; that

he was not afraid to appear before him, and come up even to his seat, if he knew but where and how he could; (see ^{<8212>}Job 22:12-14).

Ver. 4. *I would order [my] cause before him*, etc.] Either, as a praying person, direct his prayer to him, and set it in order before him, (see ^{<4918>}Psalm 5:3); or else as pleading in his own defence, and in justification of himself; not of his person before God, setting his works of righteousness in order before him, and pleading his justification on the foot of them; for, by these no flesh living can be justified before God; but of his cause, for, as a man may vindicate his cause before men, and clear himself from aspersions cast upon him, as Samuel did, (^{<4915>}1 Samuel 12:5); so he may before God, with respect to the charges he is falsely loaded with, and may appeal to him for justice, and desire he would stir up himself, and awake to his judgment, even to his cause, and plead it against those that strive with him, as David did, (^{<4911>}Psalm 35:1,23 43:1);

and fill my mouth with arguments; either in prayer, as a good man may; not with such as are taken from his goodness and righteousness, but from the person, office, grace, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, and from the declarations of God's grace, and the promises of his word; or else as in a court of judicature, bringing forth his strong reasons, and giving proofs of his innocence, such as would be demonstrative, even convincing to all that should hear, and be not only proofs for him, and in his favour, but reproofs also, as the word ^{f876} signifies, to those that contended with him.

Ver. 5. *I would know the words [which] he would answer me*, etc.] Being a God hearing and answering prayer, who always hears, and sooner or later answers the petitions of his people in his own way; and which when he does, they know, take notice, and observe it: or then he should know the reason why the Lord contended with him, and what were his sins and transgressions, which were the cause of his afflictions; things he had desired to know, but as yet had no answer, (see ^{<8811>}Job 10:2 13:22,23);

and understand what he would say unto me; what judgment he would pass upon him, what sentence he would pronounce on him, whether guilty or not, and by which judgment he was content to stand or fall; as for men's judgment, the judgment of his friends, or to be judged by them, he required it not, as he did not understand upon what ground they went, or that it was a good one; but the judgment of God he should pay a deference to, as being always according to truth, and the reason of which, when he should

have a hearing before him, and a decisive sentence by him, he should clearly perceive; (see ^{<KJB>}1 Corinthians 4:3).

Ver. 6. *Will he plead against me with [his] great power?* etc.] God will not plead against his people at all, but for them: much less will he plead against them with his great strength, use all his power to run them down, crush, and oppress them; for he is a great God, and of great power, he is mighty in strength, and there is no contending with him, or answering of him, (^{<KJB>}Job 9:3,9,19); nor will he deal with them according to the strict rigour of his justice, nor stir up all his wrath, nor contend for ever with them in such a way; for then the spirits would fail before him, and the souls that he has made; whatever he does with others, making known his power on the vessels of wrath, he will never act after this manner with the vessels of mercy:

no, but he would put [strength] in me: to pray unto him, and prevail with him to lay hold on him, and not let him go without the blessing, as Jacob did, (^{<KJB>}Hosea 12:3,4); or to stand before him, and plead his own cause with him, in such a strong and powerful manner as to bear down all the accusations and charges brought against him: or “he will set [his heart] upon me” ^{f877}; deal mildly and gently, kindly and graciously, and not with his great strength and strict justice; or “will not put [sins] upon me”, as Jarchi, or lay charges to him, however guilty of them, as his friends did, or impute such to him he never committed: God is so far from doing this to his people, that he does not impute their sins to them they have committed, but to his son, much less will he lay upon them more than is right, (^{<KJB>}Job 34:23). Some take the sense of the words to be this, in answer to the above question, “will he plead against me with his great power?” let him do it, “only let him not set upon me” ^{f878}, in an hostile way, and then I do not decline entering the debate with him; which expresses great boldness and confidence, and even too much, and must be reckoned among the unbecoming expressions Job was afterwards convinced of; but this he utters in his passion, in order the more clearly to show, and the more strongly to assert, his innocence.

Ver. 7. *There the righteous might dispute with him,* etc.] That is, at his seat, either at his mercy seat, where even God allows sinners to come and reason with him, for pardoning grace and mercy, upon the foot of his own declarations and promises, and the blood and sacrifice of his son, (^{<KJB>}Isaiah 1:18); or at his judgment seat, pleading the righteousness of

Christ, which is fully satisfactory to law and justice. Job most probably means himself by the righteous or upright man, being conscious to himself of his sincerity and integrity; and relying on this, he feared not to appear before God as a Judge, and reason his case before him, dispute the matter with him, and in his presence, which was in controversy between him and his friends, whether he was an hypocrite or a sincere good man:

so should I be delivered for ever from my Judge; either from those who judged harshly of him, and were very censorious in the character they gave of him; and from all their condemnation of him, and calumnies and charges they fastened on him; or “from him that judgest me”^{f879}, from anyone whatever that should wrongly judge him, friend or foe; or rather from God himself, his Judge, from whom he should depart acquitted; and so Mr. Broughton renders the words, “so should I be quit for ever by my Judge”; for, if God justifies, who shall condemn? such an one need not regard the condemnations of men or devils; being acquitted by God he is for ever instilled, and shall never enter into condemnation; God’s acquittance is a security from the damnatory sentence of others.

Ver. 8. *Behold, I go forward, but he [is] not [there]*, etc.] Job here returns to what he had said before, (~~K21B~~ Job 23:3); as Jarchi observes, where he expresses his earnest desire after God, that he might know where he was, and come up to his seat; here he relates the various ways he took to find him, and his fruitless search of him. Cocceius thinks, by these phrases “forward” and “backward”, are meant times future and past; and that the sense is, that Job looked into the future times of the Messiah, and the grace promised him, his living Redeemer, that should stand on the earth in the latter day; and that he looked back to the ages before him, and to the first promise made to Adam; but could not understand by either the reason why good men were afflicted; and by the “right” hand and “left”, the different dispensations of God to men, granting protection with his right hand, and distributing the blessings of his goodness by it; and with his left hand laying afflictions and evils upon them; and yet, neither from the one nor the other could he learn the mind and will of God concerning men, since love and hatred are not to be known by these things: but rather, with the Jewish commentators in general, we are to understand places by these various expressions; even each of the parts of the world, east, west, north, and south; which Job went through, and surveyed in his mind, to find God in, but to no purpose; for, when a man stands with his face to the rising sun, the east is before him, and, if he goes forward, he goes eastward; and

behind him is the west, and, if he goes that way, he goes backward; so the eastern sea is called the former sea, and the western, or Mediterranean sea, the hinder sea, (^{<3448>}Zechariah 14:8); and a man, in this position, will have the north on his left hand, and the south on his right; (see ^{<0139>}Genesis 13:9); now Job says that he went “forward”, that is, eastward; but, says he of God, “he [is] not [there]”, or “is not” ^{f880}; meaning not that he was not in being, did not exist; for he most firmly believed the existence of God, or that he was, but, as we rightly supply, he was not there, that is, eastward; and yet the greatest, the most glorious, and most gracious appearances of him were in the east; man was made in the east; the garden of Eden was planted eastward; here God appeared to Adam, both before and after his fall; and it was in the east, Christ, the second Adam, was born; his star appeared in it, and his Gospel was first preached in the eastern parts; in the east Job now lived, and had been the greatest man in it; but now God did not appear to him, as the Vulgate Latin version, not in a kind and gracious manner; nor could he find him at his throne of justice here, as he wished for; he was there, though Job saw him not; for he is everywhere; indeed he is not confined or limited to any place; for, as the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, so much less any part or corner of the earth:

and backward, but I cannot perceive him; or understand where he is, or get intelligence of him, and of the reason of his dispensations, especially concerning himself.

Ver. 9. *On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold [him],* etc.] The northern part of the world, where his seat is, or the circle of the earth, says Bar Tzemach, and who has stretched out the north over the empty place, (^{<3807>}Job 26:7). Jarchi’s note is, when he created it, he did not make it the place of his throne: God works everywhere in a way of providence, but in some places more eminently than in others; the northern part of the world is observed to be more inhabited than the southern, and the people of it to be more active in war and business than elsewhere; and more and greater things are done by God among them as instruments than among any other; and Mr. Caryl observes, that the Gospel has ever more generally and more clearly been preached here than in the southern parts of the world; and perhaps by the northern chambers in Ezekiel’s vision, (^{<3401>}Ezekiel 42:1), were designed the Protestant churches in the northern parts, as it is well known the Protestant doctrine is called the northern heresy: but what Job meant by God’s works in the north is not easy to say; but as this refers to some place where God had been used to work either in

the way of providence or grace, it was the most likely one to find him in, and yet Job could not behold him, or get any sight of him, either as on a throne of grace or justice:

he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see [him]; or “he covereth the right hand”^{f881}, the southern parts of the world; he covers the face of the south with his face, that I cannot see him, so Jarchi; this is said because the south is covered with the waters of the ocean, as Bar Tzemach observes; what we call the South sea: or rather the meaning is, that God covered himself on the right hand, or on the south, as with a garment, as the word signifies; wrapped himself up either in light inaccessible, as with a garment, or with clouds of darkness, that he could not be seen; and if he hides himself, as he often does from the best of men, who can behold him? (~~832~~ Job 34:29); (see ~~891~~ Job 9:11).

Ver. 10. *But he knoweth the way that I take*, etc.] This he seems to say in a way of solace to himself, comforting and contenting himself, that though he could not find God, nor knew where he was, or what way he took, nor the reasons of his ways and dispensations with the children of men, and with himself, yet God knew where he was, and what way he took; by which he means either the way he took, being directed to it for his acceptance with God, his justification before him, and eternal salvation; which was his living Redeemer, he looked unto by faith for righteousness and eternal life: or rather the way and manner of life he took to, the course of his conversation, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, in the paths of piety and truth, of righteousness and holiness; and this God knew not barely by his omniscience, as he knows all the ways of men, good and bad; his eyes are upon them, lie compasses them, and is thoroughly acquainted with them; but by way of approbation, he approved of it, and was well pleased with it, it being so agreeable to his revealed will, so pure and holy; thus the Lord knows the way of the righteous, (~~806~~ Psalm 1:6);

[when] he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold; as pure as gold, as free from dross as that, appear quite innocent of the charges brought against him, and shine in his integrity. He was as valuable and precious as gold, as all God's people are in his esteem, however reckoned of by others; they are precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold; not that they have any intrinsic worth in themselves, they are in no wise the better than others by nature; but through the grace of God bestowed on them, which is as

gold tried in the fire; and through the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, which is gold of Ophir, and clothing of wrought gold; and, on account of both, they are like a mass of gold, and are the chosen of God, and precious: this gold he tries, the Lord trieth the righteous; and which he does by afflictive providences; he puts them into the furnace of affliction, which is the fiery trial to try them; and hereby their graces are tried, their faith, hope, love, patience, etc. their principles and doctrines they embrace, whether they are gold, silver, and precious stones, or whether wood, hay, and stubble; the fire tries every man's work, of what sort it is, and whether they will abide by them and their profession also, whether they will adhere to it; and by this means he purges away their dross and tin, and they come out of the furnace as pure gold in great lustre and brightness, as those in (~~6713~~ Revelation 7:13,14); now Job was in this furnace and trying; and he was confident that, as he should come out of it, he should appear to great advantage, pure and spotless; though it may be he may have respect to his trial at the bar of justice, where he desired to be tried, and be brought under the strictest examination; and doubted not but he should be acquitted, and shine as bright as gold; nay, these words may be given as a reason why God would not be found by him as his Judge to try his cause, because he knew his uprightness and integrity, and that he must go from him acquitted and discharged; and therefore, for reasons unknown to him, declined the judging of him; to this purpose Jarchi interprets the words, which may be rendered, "for he knoweth the way that I take"^{f882}; and therefore will not be seen by me, nor appear to judge me: "he hath tried me"; again and again, and has seen the integrity of my heart, as Seforno interprets it, and well knows my innocence; (see ~~6713~~ Psalm 17:3); and if he would try me again, "I shall come forth as gold"; quite clear of all charges and imputations; I am able to stand the strictest scrutiny: this he said as conscious of his uprightness, and of his strict regard to the ways and word of God, as follows; but this was a bold saying, and an unbecoming expression of his to God; and of which he afterwards was ashamed and repented, when God appeared and spoke to him out of the whirlwind.

Ver. 11. *My foot hath held his steps*, etc.] Trod in the steps he has walked in; he followed God closely, imitated him in acts of holiness and righteousness, of mercy, kindness, and beneficence; and he continued therein; as he set his foot in the steps of God, which were to him for an example, he persisted therein; as he followed on to know him, so to imitate him, and walk worthy of him:

his way have I kept; the way he prescribed him, and directed him to walk in, the way of his commandments, which he observed constantly, and kept; though not perfectly, yet with great delight and pleasure, and so as not to be chargeable with any gross neglect of them, but in some sense to walk in all of them blameless, as not to be culpable before men:

and not declined: from the way of God, did not turn aside from it to the right or left, or go into crooked paths with wicked men, or wickedly depart from his God, his ways and worship, as David says, (^{<19821>}Psalm 18:21).

Ver. 12. *Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips*, etc.] From any of the commandments his lips had uttered; meaning not the ten commandments given to Israel, which perhaps as yet were not given, or had not come to the knowledge of Job; some speak of the seven commandments, given to the sons of Noah; (see Gill on “^{<40004>}Genesis 9:4”). It seems to design any and every commandment that God had given to Noah or Abraham, or any of the patriarchs, before the times of Job, and which he had knowledge of, and which he carefully observed, kept close to, and did not deviate from; but made it the rule of his walk and practice:

I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary [food]; the words of the Lord, the doctrines of grace that came from his mouth, are food for faith; there are in them milk for babes, and meat for strong men; they are savoury, salutary, and wholesome words, by which the people of God are nourished up unto eternal life; and they are esteemed by them more than the food that is necessary and convenient for their bodies; (see ^{<30018>}Proverbs 30:8); for as the soul is preferable to the body, so the food of the one is preferable to the food of the other, and is sweeter, as the words of God are, to the taste of a believer, than honey, or the honeycomb: or “I have hid or laid up, the words of his mouth” ^{f883}; he had laid them up in his heart, in order to meditate upon them, and receive comfort and spiritual nourishment from them when he should want it, as men lay up their food in a proper place against the time they want it for their support and refreshment; and Job was more careful to lay up the one than the other; (see ^{<99111>}Psalm 119:11); here Job meets with, and has respect unto, the advice of Eliphaz, (^{<48222>}Job 22:22); and signifies that he had no need to have given him it, he had done this already.

Ver. 13. *But he [is] in one [mind]*, etc.] Either with respect to his commandments, every precept remains in full force, he never alters the thing that is gone out of his lips, or delivers out other commandments

different from, or contrary to what he has given; and therefore Job thought it his duty to abide by them, and not decline from them; which is the sense of a Jewish commentator ^{f884}, connecting the words with the preceding: Or with respect to his dispensations towards Job in afflicting him; which he continued notwithstanding his innocence, because he is a sovereign Being, and does whatsoever he pleases; he is unchangeable in his purposes and decrees; he is not to be wrought upon by any means to alter his fixed course; he is not to be contradicted nor resisted; and this was the reason why he would not be found by him, though he sought him so earnestly and diligently, and why he would not hear him, and would not appear to try his cause, though he knew he was innocent, because he was determined to go on to afflict him; and he never changes his mind, or alters his counsels, on any account whatever. The Vulgate Latin version renders it, “for he [is] alone”: and so the Targum,

“if he is alone, or the only one;”

there is none with him to advise him, for “with whom took he counsel?” or to persuade him to be of another mind, and take contrary measures, who might be applied to, to use their interest with him to act it, a different manner; but he is alone, there are none with him that have any influence upon him, and can prevail with him to do otherwise than he does; some translate the words, “if he acts against one” ^{f885}; against a man in a hostile way, if he sets his face against him, and comes upon him as an enemy; and so Mr. Broughton, “yet when he is against me, who can stay him?” notwithstanding my innocence and integrity, though I keep his ways, and do not go back from his commandments. Some think there is a redundancy of a letter, which we translate “in”, and then the words wilt be read thus: “but he [is] one”; the one only living and true God; this is the voice of reason and revelation, “hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord”, (^(~~REB~~)Deuteronomy 6:4); for though there are three Persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, “these three are one [God]”, (^(~~REB~~)1 John 5:7); and so the words are expressive of the unity of the Divine Being; but this seems not to be Job’s sense: Aben Ezra says, the truth is, that the letter **b** is not added, is no redundancy, and should be read “he is in one”; but, says he, I cannot explain it, there is a great mystery in it: what the Jew understood not may be more clear and plain to us Christians, who are taught the mystery of the indwelling of the divine Persons in each other, the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, as they are divine Persons; though in what manner they are we are not able to explain;

besides, God was in Christ, as Mediator, reconciling the world, choosing his people in him, and blessing them with all spiritual blessings in him; though the true sense seems to, be what is before given, agreeably to our version, that God is in one mind, purpose, and design; that his decrees are unchangeable and invariable; that he always acts according to them, and never alters them:

and who can turn him? turn his mind, or cause him to change his counsel, and alter his purposes; or turn his hand, or stop and stay it from the execution of them; it is not to be done by force and power, there is no power equal to his, and much less superior to his; which must be the case, if any could turn him: and though he may be turned by the prayers of his people, and by the repentance of men, so as to repent himself, and not do what he has threatened to do; yet this is no change of his mind and counsels, only an alteration in the course of his providence, or a change of his outward dealings with men, according to his unchangeable will; (see ²³⁴⁷Isaiah 14:27 ²⁰⁴⁵Daniel 4:35);

and [what] his soul desireth, even [that] he doth: that is, what he himself desireth earnestly and vehemently; he has done all things in creation according to the good pleasure of his will; and he does all things in providence according to the counsel of it, and as seems best in his sight; and so he does all things in grace, chooses whom he will, predestinates to the adoption of children according to the good pleasure of his will: redeems whom he pleases, and calls by his grace, and brings to glory whomsoever he will be gracious to; (see ⁴⁸³³Psalm 115:3).

Ver. 14. *For he performeth [the thing that] is appointed for me,* etc.] The same word is used as at the end of (⁴⁸³²Job 23:12); where it is rendered, “my necessary food”; or appointed food a certain portion of it; food convenient, daily bread; and this has led some interpreters to take it in the same sense here, and render it, “he performeth my necessary things” ^{f886}, or things necessary for me; supplies me with the necessaries of life, to which agrees the Targum, and so Mr. Broughton;

“because he hath furnished me with my daily bread, and many such graces are with him;”

and which he did according to his unchangeable purposes and decrees, and according as his soul desired, and it pleased him; and this laid Job under greater obligation still to have regard to his commandments, and the words

of his mouth; but rather it is to be understood of the decrees and purposes of God relating to Job, to his person, case, and circumstances, throughout the whole course of his life hitherto: and indeed all things relating to every individual person, as to him, are appointed of God; and whatever he appoints he performs: all things relative to their temporal life, the birth of persons into the world, and their continuance in it; all the incidents in life, the places of their abode, their employments, callings, and occupations; their riches and poverty, prosperity and adversity; all their afflictions, and which Job has a special regard to, the kind and nature of them, their measure and duration, and the end and use of them; and death itself, which closes all things here, that is appointed of God, the time and circumstances of it, (see ~~2001~~ Ecclesiastes 3:1,2); and so all things relative to the spiritual and eternal salvation of men; to save men is the determinate will of God; the persons saved are appointed by him to it, and Christ is ordained to be the Redeemer and Saviour of them; whose coming into the world for that purpose was at the appointed time, called the fulness of time, and his going out of it, or his sufferings and death, by which salvation was accomplished, were in due time, and by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The conversion of men is according to the appointment of God; they that are called are called according to his purpose; the time of conversion, the place where, and means whereby, are all fixed in the decrees and purposes of God, and have their sure and certain accomplishment; and the several vicissitudes of distress and comfort in spiritual things are as God has determined; all the times of his people are in his hands, and disposed by him; times of temptation, darkness, and desertion, and times of peace, joy, and comfort; the everlasting happiness itself is a kingdom prepared in the purposes of God from the foundation of the world, and is an inheritance obtained according to the purpose of him who has predestinated unto it; and seeing God is all wise, all knowing, all powerful, faithful and true, what he appoints must certainly be performed:

and many such [things are] with him; besides what were appointed for Job, and performed upon him, there were innumerable instances in the world of God's appointments, and the performance of them, both with respect to good things and evil things, mercies and blessings, afflictions and troubles: or besides what God had performed with respect to Job, especially with regard to his afflictions and sufferings, there were still many more things to come, which were secret in his breast, and which he had decreed and appointed, and would in due time be performed, though Job

knew not as yet what they, were, whether good or evil things, though he supposed the latter.

Ver. 15. *Therefore am I troubled at his presence*, etc.] Not at his gracious presence, which he wanted, and every good man desires; but at his appearance as an enemy, as he apprehended him, laying and continuing his afflictive hand upon him, and indeed at his appearance as a Judge to try his cause; for though he had most earnestly desired it, yet when he thought of the sovereignty of God, and the immutability of his counsels, and of his perfect knowledge of all things; and he not knowing what he had with him, and to bring out against him, when he came to the point, might be troubled and shrink back, (see ^{<19718>}Psalm 77:3);

when I consider, I am afraid of him: when he considered his terrible majesty, his sovereign will, his unalterable purposes, his infinite wisdom, and almighty power, his strict justice, and spotless purity; he was afraid to appear before him, or afraid that since many such things were with him he had already experienced, there were more to be brought forth, which might be greater and heavier still.

Ver. 16. *For God maketh my heart soft*, etc.] Not tender as Josiah's was, (^{<12219>}2 Kings 22:19), or as the heart of every penitent is, when God makes it humble and contrite by his spirit and grace, or takes away the stony heart, and gives an heart of flesh; though Job had such an heart, and God made it so; but he means a weak, feeble, fearful heart, pressed and broken with afflictions, that could not endure and bear up under the mighty hand of God; but became as water, and melted like wax in the midst of him, and was ready to faint, and sink, and die away:

and the Almighty troubleth me; by afflicting him; afflictions cause trouble, and these are of God; or he "astonishes"^{f887}, amazes me, throws me into the utmost consternation, the reason of which follows.

Ver. 17. *Because I was not cut off before the darkness*, etc.] That is, it was amazing to him, and troubled him when he thought of it, that he was not cut off by death, before the darkness of afflictions, or this dark dispensation came upon him; as sometimes righteous ones are taken from the evil to come, as Methuselah was before the flood, (^{<10127>}Genesis 5:27); and Job wonders this was not his case, or at least he wishes it had been; for so Aben Ezra seems to understand and read the words, "why was I not cut off?" etc. as if it was a wish, and expressive of his desire, that this had been

done; which was what he had expostulated with God about at first, in the third chapter, and death was what he always desired, and still continued to wish for: or else the sense is, that he was amazed that he “was not cut off, because”, “at”, “through”, or “by darkness”^{f888}; by means of his afflictions; he wondered how he was supported under them, and carried through them, that they did not press him down to death; how such a poor wasted creature as he was, reduced to skin and bones, should ever be able to endure what he did;

[neither] hath he covered the darkness from my face; that I should not see and feel the afflictions I do; or rather, “he hath covered the darkness from my face”, for the word “neither” is not in the text, though repeated by many interpreters from the foregoing clause; and then the sense is though I am sensible of the darkness of affliction upon me, yet he has covered it so from me, that I cannot see an end of it, or any way to escape out of it; or, which is the sense Drusius gives, he hath covered death and the grave from me, which is a state of darkness, a land of darkness, or darkness itself, as he calls (~~81021~~ Job 10:21,22); that he could not see it, and enjoy it; he wished for death, but could not have it, it was hid from him. Cocceius renders the words very differently, he, that is, “God, hath covered himself with darkness from my face”; and interprets it of divine desertion, which troubled and terrified Job; and because he thus covered himself as it were with a cloud, this was the reason why he knew not where he was, and could not find him, when he made the most diligent search for him, and this grieved and astonished him, (see ~~2184~~ Lamentations 3:44).