

CHAPTER 29

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 29

In this chapter Job gives an account of his former and wishes it was with him now as then; and which he describes with respect to his own person, and the favours he personally enjoyed, whether temporal or spiritual, (~~1891~~ Job 29:1-4); with respect to his family and domestic affairs, (~~1895~~ Job 29:5,6); with regard to the esteem he had from men of every age and station, (~~1897~~ Job 29:7-11); the reasons of which were the mercy and compassion he showed to the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, and the justice he administered in the execution of his office as a magistrate, (~~1899~~ Job 29:12-17); in which honour and prosperity he expected to have lived and died, (~~1903~~ Job 29:18-20); and which he further describes by the respect he had among men, and the power and authority he exercised over them, (~~1907~~ Job 29:21-25).

Ver. 1. *Moreover, Job continued his parable*, etc.] Or “added to take [it] up”^{f1023}, that is, he took it up again, and went on with his discourse; he made a pause for awhile, waiting to observe whether any of his three friends would return an answer to what he had said; but perceiving they were not inclined to make any reply, he began again, and gave an account of his former life, in order to show that he was far from being the wicked man, or being so accounted by others, as his friends had represented him:

and said; as follows.

Ver. 2. *Oh that I were as [in] months past*, etc.] Which is either an earnest wish for restoration to his former state of outward prosperity; which he might desire, not through impatience and discontent under his present circumstances, or from a carnal and worldly spirit; but either that the present reproach he lay under from his friends might be taken off, he observing that they accounted him a wicked man and an hypocrite, because of his afflictions; wherefore he judged, if these were removed, and he was in as prosperous a condition and in as good circumstances as before, they would entertain a different opinion of him; or, that his words might be better attended to, as they were by men, both young and old, and even

princes and nobles before, it being a common case, that what a poor and distressed man says is not regarded; or that he might be in a capacity of doing good to the poor and fatherless, the widow and the oppressed, as he had formerly; or, this wish is only made to introduce the account of his former life, by which it would appear, that he was not the man his friends had represented him to be, from the favour he was in with God, and from the respect shown him by men, and the many good things done by him: but since, by various expressions, which before had dropped from his lips, it appears, that he had no hope nor expectation of ever being restored to his former outward happiness; this may be considered as a wish for the return of spiritual prosperity, wishing he was in as good frames of soul, and as much in the exercise of grace, and was as holy, as humble, as spiritual, and heavenly minded, as he was when he had so much of the world about him; and that he had but the like communion with God, and his gracious presence with him, as he had then. The state of the Lord's people, Godward, is always the same; his election of them stands sure; the covenant of grace with them is unalterable; their interest in a living Redeemer always continues; grace in them is a principle, permanent and perpetual; but there may be, and often is, an alteration in their frames, and in the exercise of their graces, and in the open regard of God unto them; their graces may be low in exercise; there may be a decay of the life and power of godliness; their frames may change, and the presence of God may be withdrawn from them, and they may have no view of interest in salvation, at least not have the joys of it; wherefore, when sensible of all this, may be desirous it might be with them as it was before; that God would turn them again, and cause his face to shine upon them, that they might be comfortable; the particulars of Job's former case follow, which he desires a renewal of:

as [in] the days [when] God preserved me; either in a temporal sense; God having set an hedge of special providence about him, whereby he and his, his family and substance, were remarkably preserved; but now this was plucked up, and all were exposed to ravage and ruin; or in a spiritual sense, as he was both secretly and openly preserved, and as all the Lord's people are, in Christ, and in his hands, and by his power, spirit, and grace: the Lord preserves their souls from the evil of their own hearts, sin that dwells in them, that it shall not have the dominion over them; from the evil that is in the world, that they shall not be overcome by it, and carried away with it; and from the temptations of Satan, so as not to be devoured and destroyed by him, and from a final and total falling away; he preserves

them in his own ways, safe to his kingdom and glory; but sometimes all this does not appear so evident unto them, as it might not to Job at this time; who observed the workings of his corruption, and the breaking out of them, in passionate words, wishes, and curses, and the temptations of Satan, who was busy with him to go further lengths, even to blaspheme and curse God; so that he might fear that God his defence was departed from him, the return of which he was desirous of; (see ^{<3014>}Isaiah 49:14-16).

Ver. 3. *When his candle shined upon my head*, etc.] Which may be understood either of outward prosperity, sometimes signified by a candle, (^{<3015>}Job 18:5,6 21:17); and may be called the candle of the Lord, because it is from him, it is of his lighting and setting up; and its shining on his head may denote the large measure and degree of it possessed by him, in allusion to torches carried on high to light with; or lamps, or candles, set up in the higher part of the house to give the more light; or to the sun in the firmament, and especially when in its meridian, and shines clearest right over our heads, and casts no shadow: or else it may be understood of light in a figurative sense, not of the light of nature in men, which, though called the candle of the Lord, (^{<3016>}Proverbs 20:27); yet, in man's fallen state, shines not clearly; and with respect to this there was no difference in Job than heretofore; but rather it is the light of grace, the true light, which had shone upon him and in him, but now not so clearly as formerly, and as he could wish for; or else the word of God, which is a light unto the feet, and a lamp to the path; or it may be, best of all, the favour of God, the light of his countenance he had before enjoyed, having had a comfortable display of his love, a clear view of interest in it, and had the blessings of it bestowed upon him, and enjoyed by him; and nothing was more desirable by him, as is by every good man, than the return of the light of God's countenance; and that he might be remembered with his special favour, as his people are, and as he had been in times past:

[and when] by his light I walked [through] darkness; that is, either by the light of outward prosperity he had escaped those calamities, distresses, and dangers, and got over those difficulties which attended others, though now surrounded with them; or by the light of divine grace, or of the word of God, and especially by and in the light of God's countenance, he walked cheerfully and comfortably, without any fear of the darkness of affliction and calamities, or of the dark valley of the shadow of death, or of the prince of darkness, or of the darkness of hell and damnation; but now clouds of darkness being about him, and he without the light of God's

countenance, could not see the way in which he walked and therefore wished that that again might be lifted up upon him.

Ver. 4. *As I was in the days of my youth*, etc.] Either taken literally, he being one like Obadiah, that feared God from his youth upward, (^{<1188>}1 Kings 18:3,12); or figuratively, for his former state of prosperity, when he was like a tree in autumn laden with ripe and rich fruit, and in great abundance; and so some render the words “in the days of my autumn”, or “autumnity”^{f1024}; though it may respect the time of his first conversion, the infancy and youth of his spiritual state, who, when first regenerated, was as a newborn babe, and then became a young man, and now a father in Christ, his living Redeemer: and Job wishes it was with him as in his youth, or in the early days of his conversion, at which season, generally speaking, there are great zeal and fervency of spirit, a flow of love and affection to God and the best things; large discoveries of his love, much sensible communion with him, and enjoyment of his presence; wherefore such returning seasons are desirable; (see ^{<311>}Jeremiah 2:2,3);

when the secret of God [was] upon my tabernacle; either the secret power and providence of God, which was upon his house and family, and all that belonged to him; or the secret of his love, which was manifested to him, and is from everlasting to everlasting on them that fear the Lord, as Job did; who had secret communion with God, his fellowship was with him; he dwelt in the secret place of the Almighty, and was taken into his secret chambers, where he had the greatest familiarity with him, (see ^{<4254>}Psalm 25:14). Some observe the word for “secret” is used for an “assembly”^{f1025}, and take the sense to be, that the assembly of the saints and people of God was in his tabernacle or house; there they met together for religious worship, and where Job had often a comfortable opportunity, and wishes for the same again, (see ^{<391>}Psalm 42:1-4).

Ver. 5. *When the Almighty [was] yet with me*, etc.] Not merely by his powerful and providential presence, as he is with all men; but in a special manner by his gracious presence, which is a wonderful and distinguishing favour; but sometimes the people of God are without it, at least they think so, and which was now Job’s case, (see ^{<821>}Job 23:2,3,8,9); and therefore he desires he would return to him, and show him his face and favour:

[when] my children [were] about me; as olive plants about his table, in their youth; when he looked at them with great delight and pleasure, as his growing hopes; and, when grown up, and were not far from him, but were

round about him, and lay near his heart, and whose welfare, temporal and spiritual, he was solicitous for; but now they were all taken away from him, and were no more: the word for “children” signifies also “servants” ^{f1026}, and may take in them, of whom he had many to do his work and business; to attend upon him, to wait his orders, and execute them, and guard his person; but now many of them were slain by the Sabeans and Chaldeans, and by fire from heaven; and those he had were very disrespectful to him, (see ~~<K915>~~ Job 19:15,16).

Ver. 6. *When I washed my steps with butter*, etc.] Not the steps of his house or palace; for to have done this, or his servants by his orders, as it would have been a very great impropriety, so a piece of great prodigality, which Job could never have been guilty of; but either his footsteps, the prints of his feet; and the sense be, that his cattle produced such a vast quantity of milk, that when his servants brought it from the fields to the dairy, their milk pails ran over in such abundance, that Job could not step out of his house, and take a walk in his fields, but he stepped into puddles of milk, of which butter was made: this is an exaggerated phrase, like that by which the land of Canaan is described as “flowing with milk and honey”; or rather this is to be understood of the washing of his feet, which are the instruments of stepping or walking. It was usual in those times, in the eastern countries, to wash their feet upon travelling, or at festivals; but then this was commonly done with water, not with butter, (see ~~<I184>~~ Genesis 18:4 19:2 ~~<I174>~~ Luke 7:44); and the meaning can only be, that Job had such abundance of milk, or butter made of it, that he could, if he would, have washed his feet in it; indeed, they had used to anoint the feet with ointment; but whether cream or butter was any ingredient in it, and so the part is put for the whole, is not certain, (see ~~<I178>~~ Luke 7:38) (~~<K123>~~ Job 12:3); besides, that would have been more properly expressed by anointing than washing; it seems to be an hyperbole, an expression like that of Zophar, in (~~<K107>~~ Job 20:17); signifying the vast abundance of the increase and produce of Job’s kine; who is said to wash his feet in milk or butter, as Asher is said to dip his feet in oil, because of the great plenty of it, (~~<E134>~~ Deuteronomy 33:24); the spiritual meditation upon the words may be this; the feet of the best of saints need washing, there being many failings and infirmities in their walk and conversation; in which they gather much pollution and faith daily; the proper wash for this is the blood of Christ, of which the laver in the tabernacle and temple was a type, at which the priests washed their hands and feet; but the word of God, called the sincere milk of the word, is

the instrument or means of washing, or of directing souls to the fountain opened to wash in; so that with respect to that, the feet of saints, as the eyes of Christ, may be said to be washed with milk:

and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; another hyperbolical expression, like that in (⁴⁸²¹³Deuteronomy 32:13), where honey is said to be sucked out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; as honey may be got out of a rock, because bees may make their nests and hives there, where it is laid up by them; so oil, in like manner, may be had from the flinty rock, olive trees growing on hills, mountains, and rocks, which yield oil in great abundance; near Jerusalem was a mount called Olivet, from thence: the land of Edom, or Idumea, where Job lived, abounded with cragged mountains and rocks; and there might be in Job's estate such on which olive trees grew in great plenty, as to produce vast quantities of oil: it is a very fanciful thought of Bolducius, that this rock was no other than a stone vessel, in which was oil, somewhat like the alabaster box in (⁴⁸¹⁶Matthew 26:7); and which was plentifully poured on Job, when he was anointed high priest; and another learned man ^{f1027}, though he rejects the notion of its being a vessel for sacred use, yet is willing to allow it was an oil vessel for common use: as to the spiritual sense, it may be observed, that a rock in Scripture often signifies a divine Person, (⁴⁸⁰⁴1 Corinthians 10:4); it is an emblem of Christ, as oil also is of the Spirit of God and his grace, (⁴⁸¹⁸Matthew 25:3,4); and which flows from Christ, who is full thereof, and that in such great abundance, as to be expressed by rivers; (see ⁴⁸¹⁴John 1:14,16 7:38).

Ver. 7. *When I went out to the, gate through the city*, etc.] Job having described his former state of happiness by the personal favours he enjoyed, and by the prosperity of his family, and his abundance of plenty at home, proceeds to give an account of the honour and respect he had from men of every age and rank abroad: though he had an affluence of the things of this world, he did not indulge himself at home in ease and sloth; but went abroad to take care of the public welfare, maintain public peace, and administer public justice among his neighbours; performing the office of a civil magistrate, which is often expressed in Scripture by going in and out before the people: Job went out from his own house to the gate of the city, where a court of judicature was kept, as it was usual in those times and countries to hold them in the gates of the city; (see ³⁸¹⁶Zechariah 8:16); and to which he passed through the city, very probably, in great pomp and splendour, suitable to his office and character, which drew the eyes and attention of the people to him; by which it should seem that his house was

on one side of the city, and the gate where justice was administered was on the other; though it may be rendered, “over the city” ^{f1028}, and the sense be, that he passed along as he that was over the city, the chief man in it, and president of the court of justice, (see ^{<12015>}2 Kings 10:5);

[when] I prepared my seat in the street; where he sat, not as a teacher, though he was an instructor, not only of his family, but of his neighbours, as Eliphaz himself testifies, (^{<804B>}Job 4:3,4); and it was usual for such to have seats to sit upon, as those had who succeeded Moses, and are said to sit in his chair; and it was usual to call to men and instruct them in open public places; hence Wisdom is said to utter her voice in the streets, in the opening of the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors, (^{<310D>}Proverbs 1:20,21 8:3); but Job here speaks of himself as a civil magistrate, as a judge upon the bench, who had a seat or throne erected for him to sit upon, while he was hearing and trying causes; and this was set up in the street under the open air, before the gate of the city, where the whole city might be convened together, and hear and see justice done to their neighbours; in such a street, before the gate of the city, Ezra read the law to Israel; and in such an one Hezekiah got the people of Israel together, and spoke comfortably to them when invaded by Sennacherib; (see ^{<401D>}Nehemiah 8:2,3 ^{<4316>}2 Chronicles 32:6); and the Arabs, to this day, hold their courts of justice in an open place under the heavens, as in a field, or in a market place ^{f1029}; and it is right that courts of justice should be open and accessible to all.

Ver. 8. *The young men saw me, and hid themselves*, etc.] Through a veneration of him; which was much, since young men, through a vain conceit and opinion of themselves, are apt to treat their superiors in age with slight, neglect, and contempt; or through fear, lest he should spy them, and call them to him, and examine them closely concerning their conduct and behaviour, and reprove them for their youthful follies he might have knowledge of:

and the aged arose [and] stood up; as he passed by them, to show their respect unto him; or when he came into court, they rose up, and continued standing until he had took his seat; and even then kept the same posture, attending to his counsel and instruction, to his definitive sentence and decision of matters in debate; though they were venerable persons themselves, and such as before whom young men were to arise, (^{<819D>}Leviticus 19:32); and were also men of wisdom and prudence, (^{<812D>}Job

12:12); yet these men rose and stood up, paying a deference to Job's superior sense and judgment.

Ver. 9. *The princes refrained talking*, etc.] Who were in court before Job came in, and were either talking with one another about indifferent matters, or were giving their opinion in a case before them; but no sooner did Job make his appearance, but they left off talking, and would not proceed any further; they laid a restraint upon their words, and curbed themselves from speaking any more till they had heard his opinion:

and laid [their] hand on their mouth; as a token of silence, (^{<07189>}Judges 18:19).

Ver. 10. *The nobles held their peace*, etc.] These may be in some respects inferior to the others; not princes of the blood, or sons of kings, who were properly princes, and yet great personages, of a noble extraction, and of considerable families: some think the leaders and generals of armies are meant, commanders and captains, and such like military officers, those sons of Mars, who are generally bold and daring, boisterous and blustering, and full of talk; and yet even these held their peace in the presence of Job:, or their "voice [was] hid" ^{f1030}; it could not be heard:

and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth; so that they had no use of it, and it was as if they had none, (see ^{<2436>}Ezekiel 3:26). Here are various expressions made use of, signifying the profound silence of great personages while Job was present; and this silence was owing either to a consciousness of their own weakness, and lest they should, by speaking before him, betray it, and he should expose them; or to the desire they had of hearing Job's opinion first, which was as an oracle to them, and usually determined matters in debate before them; such high sentiments did they entertain of Job's good sense and abilities.

Ver. 11. *When the ear heard [me], then it blessed me*, etc.] The ear of the common people assembled together to hear causes tried, and how they would go; when they heard Job give his opinion in court, or the definitive sentence passed by him as a judge, they all applauded his wisdom and justice; they highly praised and commended him; in which sense the word "blessed" is used, (^{<2128>}Proverbs 31:28); or they wished a blessing on him; they prayed for his welfare, as it becomes people to do for those that are in authority, especially wise and faithful magistrates; or they accounted him a blessed man, and called him so, (^{<0148>}Luke 1:48); as he was, both in a

temporal sense, being blessed with a great plenty of earthly things, and also blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, with an abundance of grace, and with a title to eternal glory; as well as he was blessed as a magistrate, with great wisdom, and with great integrity and uprightness in the discharge of his office:

and when the eye saw [me], it gave witness to me: of his gracefulness and gravity, of his honesty and faithfulness, of his good behaviour among his neighbours, and of his wise conduct in the courts of judicature.

Ver. 12. *Because I delivered the poor that cried,* etc.] This honour and esteem he had not because of his grandeur and riches, because of his worldly wealth and substance, but because of the goodness of his disposition, and because of the good he did to men, his acts of pity and compassion to the poor, and of the justice he did to all men; the poor and the afflicted, when they cried to him for help, he delivered them out of the hands of their oppressors:

and the fatherless; the care and defence of which belongs to judges and civil magistrates, (see ³⁸⁰¹Psalm 82:1-4);

[and him that] had none to help him; as the poor and fatherless seldom have; there is power on the side of the oppressors of them, but they have few or none to take their parts, and to be their comforters, (²⁰⁰¹Ecclesiastes 4:1); in these instances Job imitated God, and was a follower of him, as a dear child of his; who, when this and the other poor man cries unto him, he hears, saves, and delivers out of all their troubles; he is the helper, yea, the father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widow; and, when there is no help from men, he is a present help in times of need.

Ver. 13. *The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me,* etc.] That were ready to perish through the oppression of others, or through want of the necessaries of life, or through false charges brought, and through false witness bore against them, and so liable to a sentence of condemnation to death, or having it passed upon them; but Job taking their part, and searching thoroughly into their cause, not only respited them from destruction, but cleared them from the charges laid against them, and which brought the blessing of those persons on him; who blessed God for him, and blessed him, wished a blessing on him in their prayers to God, who had been such a happy instrument of their deliverance from ruin and destruction; (see ¹²⁴¹Proverbs 24:11,12 31:5,6);

and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy; by relieving her wants, defending her cause, and punishing those that oppressed her; which is the reverse of the character Eliphaz gives of Job, (~~Job~~ Job 22:9).

Ver. 14. *I put on righteousness, and it clothed me*, etc.] Not the righteousness of his living Redeemer, the robe of righteousness and garment of salvation he had from him; though he had put on that by faith, and it was his clothing in the sight of God, which covered his person, and covered all his sins from the avenging eye of divine justice; and in which he was presented before God unblamable and irreprovable in his sight, and with which he was adorned and beautified, being made perfectly comely through it, and completely justified by it; but legal righteousness in the administration of his office as a magistrate; he put it on, that is, he exercised it, and he exercised it constantly from morning to night, and day after day; as a man puts on his clothes in a morning, and keeps them on all the day, and which he is always repeating; and it was as visible in him, and to be seen and observed by all, as the clothes on his back; and it covered him all over as a garment does; no blemish was to be seen in him, or blame to be cast upon him, throughout the whole course of his administration; and this was a fence unto him against all calumny and reproach, as garments are against the inclemency of the weather; (see ~~1 Samuel~~ 1 Samuel 12:3-5); so a godly conversation in the exercise of graces and virtues, and in the performance of duties both to God and man, is sometimes expressed by a putting them on, as garments are put on; (see ~~Ephesians~~ Ephesians 4:24 ~~Colossians~~ Colossians 3:10,12,14); and these are an outward clothing to appear in before men, and should be shown forth with meekness and wisdom, so as to be beheld by men; and should be continually exercised and constantly performed; and then they are a covering with respect to men, and they appear harmless, blameless, and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; and thus, by well doing, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and such to the blush, those who falsely accuse their good conversation: and this in every sense was Job's case:

my judgment [was] as a robe and diadem; such as the high priest among the Jews wore in the execution of his office, which made him look grand and majestic; and it was usual in Job's time, as it is in ours, and has been the custom in all ages and countries, for judges and civil magistrates to be clothed in a different manner from others, as it is proper they should, to command an awe and reverence of them among the common people, and make them respectable to them: but Job did not so much regard his purple

robe he was clad in, or the distinguishing turban he wore on his head, or whatever it was, and which might bear some resemblance to a mitre or a diadem; as it was his great concern to administer justice, which he reckoned his greatest honour, and was more ornamental to him than all the showy ensigns of his office; and it was this which gave him honour and esteem among all sorts of men, high and low: and his regard to the poor, before observed, did not arise from a foolish commiseration of them as poor men, and in order to get himself a name for his pity to them, but proceeded upon a principle of justice and equity, which he made the rule of his administration; he did not countenance the poor in his cause right or wrong; not the quality of the person, but the righteousness of his cause, was what he attended to; and he took his part not merely because he was a poor man, but seeing his cause was just.

Ver. 15. *I was eyes to the blind*, etc.] Either in a literal sense: there was a law in Israel against putting a stumbling block before the blind, and a curse pronounced on those that caused them to wander out of the way; which implied that they ought to remove all impediments out of their way, and should lead, guide, and direct them in the right way; and this Job might do, if not in his own person, yet by his servants, and so was as eyes unto them, and especially by taking care of and providing for persons in such circumstances: or rather in a civil sense; such who were in perplexity and distress, oppressed by their neighbours, but did not know how to get justice done them, what steps to take, or methods to pursue, to obtain their right or secure it; these Job instructed with his good advice and counsel, and put them into a way of proceeding whereby they could be extricated out of their difficulties, and peaceably enjoy their own, (see ~~CHUB~~ Numbers 10:31), and it might be true of him in a spiritual sense; that he was eyes to his blind Heathen neighbours among whom he dwelt; who were ignorant of God, and of the living Redeemer, and of the way of life and salvation by him, and of their miserable and lost estate, and of their need of a Saviour; not being acquainted with the nature of sin, and the sad consequences of it, and with the way of atonement for it, nor with the mind and will of God, and the worship of him; all which he might be a means of enlightening their minds with: Eliphaz owns he instructed many, (~~CHUB~~ Job 4:3); thus ministers of the Gospel are eyes to the blind; for though they cannot give eyes, or spiritual sight to men, which is only from the Lord, yet they may be instruments of opening blind eyes, and of turning men from darkness to light, as the word preached by them is a means of “enlightening the eyes”,

(~~4038~~ Acts 26:18 ~~4908~~ Psalm 19:8); whereby men come to see their lost estate, and the way of salvation by Christ:

and feet [was] I to the lame; either in a literal sense, as David was to Mephibosheth, when he sent for and maintained him at his own table, so that he had no occasion to seek for his bread elsewhere, (~~4003~~ 2 Samuel 9:13); and Job might make a provision in some way or another for such sort of persons: or rather in a civil sense, such who were engaged in law suits, and had justice on their side, but for want of friends or money, or both, could not carry them on; these Job supported and supplied, and carried them through their suits, and got their cause for them.

Ver. 16. *I [was] a father to the poor*, etc.] Not in a literal sense; for his children were rich as well as himself, while he had them; but in a civil sense, he was the patron of the poor; he was an advocate for them, he took their part, he pleaded their cause, defended their persons, and secured the little property they had; he had the pity and compassion of a father for them, and supplied their wants; he fed them and clothed them; he did not eat his morsel alone, but gave them part of it, and warmed them with the fleece of his flock:

and the cause [which] I knew not I searched out; any cause that was brought before him, he knew thing of before, and which, upon the opening of it, did not appear plain and easy, but had its difficulties; this he closely examined, and searched thoroughly into the merits of, till it appeared plain to him on which side the truth and justice of it lay; he did not hurry it over, and pass sentence, having only in a superficial manner considered it, as is too often the case; but after a long examination of the contending parties, and of the witnesses on both sides, to whom he gave an impartial hearing, he pronounced the decisive sentence; (see ~~4180~~ Proverbs 25:2 29:7). Some think this refers to his diligent search and inquiry after causes that were not brought before him; he did, not wait for application to be made to him, but hearing of, or upon inquiry finding, that there were persons oppressed and distressed by cruel men, he of himself voluntarily offered his assistance, searched into their cause, made himself master of it, and freed them from their distresses; so different were his behaviour and character from that of the unjust judge, (~~4280~~ Luke 18:1-7); though others, choose to render the words, “the cause of him that I knew not”, etc. ^{f1031}; of a stranger, of one that he had never seen before, of one that was most unknown to him in the world; the cause of such an one he took as, much pains with to get the true

knowledge of, and do justice to, as of the dearest relation, the nearest neighbour, and the most intimate friend and acquaintance that he had.

Ver. 17. *And I brake the jaws of the wicked,* etc.] Their jaw teeth, or grinders, alluding to beasts of prey, who have such teeth, very large; the meaning may be, that Job confuted the arguments which wicked men made use of in their own defence, and against the poor, exposed the weakness of them, and made them ineffectual to answer their purposes; disabled tyrants and cruel oppressors from doing any further hurt and damage to the fatherless and helpless; was an instrument in the hand of God of breaking the power, and weakening the hands of such persons, and hindering them from doing the mischief they otherwise would; (see ~~1804~~ Proverbs 30:14 ~~1805~~ Psalm 3:7 58:6);

and plucked the spoil out of his teeth; as David took the lamb out of the mouth of the bear and lion that came into his father's flock, and carried it off: thus Job delivered the poor out of the hands of such monsters in nature, comparable to beasts of prey, and saved them from being utterly ruined by them, and obliged them to restore unto them what they had in an unrighteous manner taken from them.

Ver. 18. *Then I said, I shall die in my nest,* etc.] Job, amidst all his prosperity, knew he should die, death and the grave being appointed for all men; and he often thought of it, and of the manner of it; but he concluded that death was as yet some distance from him, as appears from the following clause; and that, when the time was come, he should not die on the ground, but in the city in which he lived ^{f1032}, in his house, and on his bed; that he should die with all his children about him, like a bird in its nest full of young; whereas now he was stripped of them all, and likely to die childless; that he should die amidst all his outward enjoyments, in an affluence of good things, in honour, credit, and esteem among men; whereas now he was deprived of all his substance, and had in contempt by friends and foes; and that he should die in great tranquillity of mind and peace of soul, in the enjoyment of the divine Presence, and under rich discoveries of his love and grace; whereas now God had hid himself from him, and the arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in him. Job now had dropped his former confidence, and yet after all he did die in all the circumstances he believed he should; (see ~~1820~~ Job 42:10-17); and this confidence might rise not from any mercenary spirit in him, as if this would be the fruit and reward of his integrity and uprightness, justice and

faithfulness, and as due to him on that account; but from the promises of God, which to the patriarchs were usually of temporal blessings, as types of spiritual ones; though it may be there was in this somewhat of the infirmity of the flesh, as in David, (~~39107~~Psalm 30:7); and an inattention to the uncertainty of all temporal enjoyments; nor might he then be so well acquainted with the doctrine of the cross he now had an experience of:

and I shall multiply [my] days as the sand; which is not to be numbered; an hyperbolical expression, to denote the long life he expected to enjoy, and which was promised to good men; and which Job, notwithstanding his present despair of it, was favoured and satisfied with, (~~39116~~Psalm 91:16 ~~38216~~Job 42:16,17). Some versions render it, “as the phoenix” ^{f1033}, a bird of that name, spoken of by many writers as a very long lived one; some say it lived five hundred years ^{f1034}, others five hundred forty ^{f1035}, others six hundred sixty ^{f1036}; yea, some, and so the Jewish writers, as Jarchi and others ^{f1037}, make it to live a thousand years, and some say ^{f1038} more; and it is reported of it, though not with sufficient evidence, that there is never but one of the kind at a time; which, perceiving its end drawing near, it makes a nest of cassia, frankincense, and other spices, and sets fire to it, and burns itself in it, and that out of its ashes comes forth an egg, which produces another; and some of the ancient writers, as Tertullian ^{f1039} particularly, have made use of this as an emblem of the resurrection; and to which some think Job has here respect; that he should live long like this bird, and then die and rise again; but inasmuch as this seems to be a fabulous bird, and that there is not, nor ever was, any such in being, it cannot well be thought that Job should allude unto it; though his making mention of his nest, in the former clause, may seem to favour it, and which has induced some to give into it ^{f1040}: others render it, “as the palm tree” ^{f1041}; between which and the phoenix there is thought to be some likeness on account of duration ^{f1042}, and both in the Greek tongue have the same name; the palm tree is an evergreen, and endures a long time; Pliny ^{f1043} speaks of a palm tree in his time at Delos, said to have been there from the days of Apollo, which is supposed to be 1400 years; and it is observed ^{f1044} that this tree does continue two or three hundred years; and this version may seem to be countenanced and confirmed by what follows: but since the Hebrew word here used is never used but of sand, it is best so to understand it here, seeing it as fully answers Job’s purpose; which was to express his confidence of a very long life. Sand is frequently used in Scripture for what

is innumerable; so **θαμμοκοσια** in Aristophanes^{f1045}, for what cannot be numbered, and are equal to a mountain of sand.

Ver. 19. *My root [was] spread out by the waters*, etc.] According to our version and others, Job here, and in the following verses, gives the reasons of his hope and confidence of his long life, and quiet and comfortable death amidst all his prosperity and happiness; which were founded upon his flourishing circumstances, and the great respect that was shown him among men; and this is the sense, if we read the words in the past tense, as we and many others do; or in the present tense, “my root is spread”, etc. as others; but there are some interpreters, both Jewish and Christian^{f1046}, that render them in the future tense, here and to the end of the chapter; and so they are a continuation of Job’s hope and trust, in the times of his prosperity, that things would always continue as they were with him, and much more abundantly; and indeed all is true of Job, in every sense, and all may be taken into the account; and that these words, and the following, as they describe what had been, and at the then present time, when he concluded the above in his mind, was his case, so they may also declare what he believed would be always his case to the end of his days. Here he compares himself to a tree well rooted and happily situated by plenty of water, and which may be expressive both of his temporal and spiritual prosperity: his outward prosperity seemed to him to have been well settled and established, being like a tree that had taken root, and was like to continue, being watered with the favour and blessing of God, which maketh rich; and as to his spiritual estate, he was like a tree planted by a river of water, to which good men are often compared in Scripture, (^{<3906>}Psalm 1:3 ^{<2340>}Isaiah 44:4 ^{<2471>}Jeremiah 17:7,8); they are in general called trees of righteousness, and are sometimes likened to particular trees, as to olives, cedars, and palm trees; and some think, as Pineda, that it is to the latter Job here has respect; the last clause of (^{<3829>}Job 29:18) being in the Latin Vulgate version so rendered as to countenance this sense; and it may be observed that this tree having thick long leaves, and fruit full of juice, and its wood spongy, requires much water; and, as Pliny^{f1047} says, delights in watery places; nor is it content with rain, but is better satisfied with waters flowing about it; hence it is often found necessary to dig about it, and lay its roots open, that the waters may more easily come at them, and flow about them^{f1048} and so the words here in the original text are, “my root” was, is, or shall be “open to the waters”^{f1049}: good men, as they are rooted in the love of God, and in the person of Christ, so they have, as Job had, the root of the matter in

them, the truth of grace, or a principle of grace; which is watered, and kept alive and flourishing, by the love and favour of God shed abroad in the heart; by fresh supplies of grace out of the fulness of Christ, who is the fountain of gardens, and well of living waters; and by the means of grace, the word and ordinances, the still waters to which saints are led, and by which they are made to lie down, and where they are watered, refreshed, and comforted:

and the dew lay all night upon my branch; so that the water being at his root below, and the dew on his branch above, he must be in a fruitful and flourishing condition: the dew is a great blessing to the earth, to trees, herbs, and plants, and the cause of great fertility; and this may respect Job's temporal happiness, in the health and prosperity of his children, who were to him what branches are to a tree; and in the affluence of worldly good things, with which through the blessing of God, as dew upon him, he abounded; and may also have regard to his spiritual affairs: believers in Christ are branches in him, as Job was one; and the dew of divine grace and favour lies upon them continually, even in the darkest seasons; which revives and refreshes their souls, and makes them fruitful in the exercise of grace, and performance of good works; (see ^{<3092>}Proverbs 19:12 ^{<2846>}Hosea 14:5-7); the dew falls in the night, and the sooner it falls the longer it lies, and is most useful: some render the words "upon my harvest", or "mowing"^{f1050}; the dew is of great use in harvest time; mowers and reapers choose the morning to work in, when the stalks are moistened by the dew; and which is of use to keep the ears of corn from shedding by swelling the fibres, and so retaining the grains in their proper places^{f1051}; (see ^{<2384>}Isaiah 18:4).

Ver. 20. *My glory [was]*, etc.] "Is" or "shall be";

fresh in me; or "new"^{f1052}; renewed day by day, having fresh additions made unto it; which was true of Job's temporal honour from among men; as a prince and civil magistrate, he had the honour given him that was due unto him, and this was continually increasing; and also of his spiritual glory, which lay, as every good man's glory does, in the grace of God wrought in him, and in the righteousness of Christ put upon him, (^{<3980>}Psalm 45:9,13); which grace is renewed and increased in them by the Holy Spirit, and is therefore called the renewing of the Holy Ghost; and which righteousness is revealed "from faith to faith", (^{<8017>}Romans 1:17), from a lesser degree of it to a greater:

and my bow was renewed in my hand; “is” or “shall be”; meaning either his authority as a civil magistrate, increasing daily to the terror of evildoers, and to the praise, profit, and defence of them that did well; or his strength, as Gersom interprets it, his spiritual strength, as in (^{230B}Isaiah 40:31); where the same word is used as here; so that he grew stronger and stronger in faith and other graces, and went from strength to strength; the bow was a warlike instrument, and required strength to draw it, and is put for it; (see ¹⁴⁸²Genesis 48:22 49:24).

Ver. 21. *Unto me [men] gave ear*, etc.] Or give ear, or shall give ear, being all ear; all attention to him, listening to what he said with the utmost diligence and earnestness; even all sorts of men, high and low, rich and poor, princes, nobles, and common people; this they had done, and Job concluded they still would do the same; (see ^{429B}Job 29:9,10);

and waited; patiently, without any weariness, with pleasure and delight, without giving any interruption, or wishing his discourse was ended; and though continuing ever so long, were not impatient until it was finished:

and kept silence at my counsel; which was the thing waited for, and which when given, it was to the highest satisfaction; they acquiesced in it, and showed their approbation of it by their silence, not having anything to object to it, any alteration to be made in it, or any thing to be added to it; but being so complete and full, they were ready to take it at once, and act according to it; Job’s counsel being like that of Ahithophel, which was as the oracle of God, (¹⁰⁶³2 Samuel 16:23).

Ver. 22. *After my words they spake not again*, etc.] Did not or would not make any reply to them; they did not attempt to change and alter them, to add unto them, or take from them, or in any wise to correct them, and much less to contradict them, and treat them with contempt; or “differed not”, as Mr. Broughton renders it; differed not from them, but agreed to them; and differed not among themselves, but united in what Job said, as being full to the purpose, after which nothing more could be said; (see ²⁰²²Ecclesiastes 2:12);

and my speech dropped upon them; his prophecy, as Jarchi, prophesying being expressed by dropping, (³⁰⁷⁶Amos 7:16); his doctrine dropped from his lips like the honeycomb, and was sweet, grateful, and delightful to his hearers, as the church’s lips, (²⁰⁴¹Song of Solomon 4:11); or rather like the rain, as in (^{631D}Deuteronomy 32:2), when it falls and drops gently and

easily, and so penetrates and soaks into the earth, and abides and does good: in like manner, when good and sound doctrine drops upon the hearers, so as to enter into their hearts, and work effectually in them, it does them good, and they rejoice at it, and are far from having anything to say against it.

Ver. 23. *And they waited for me as for the rain*, etc.] The former rain, as appears by the following clause, which fell in autumn, about October, after seedtime, in order to nourish and cherish it, and bring it up; now as the husbandman waited for this, was in daily expectation of it, and greatly desired it, and longed for it; (see ³⁰⁰⁷James 5:7); so the people waited for Job, for his coming into their public assemblies, whether civil or religious, and longed to hear him speak, for their counsel and instruction, for their comfort and direction in all things they stood in need of:

and they opened their mouth wide [as] for the latter rain; which fell in the spring about March, in the time of harvest, which was of use to fatten the kernals of grain, and make them fuller, and the flour finer; now Job's hearers opened their mouths, as the dry and parched earth gapes for rain; or the husbandman, or the gardener, as the Targum, opens his mouth, and asks and prays for rain; or as a hungry and thirsty man opens his mouth to take in refreshment, or expresses thereby his desire of it; or as persons somewhat deaf open their mouths to hear the better, there being a way through the mouth to the internal ear, as anatomists ^{f1053} observe; which lies through the Eustachian tube, out of the palate, to the internal cavity of the ear, called the "concha"; wherefore such persons naturally open their mouths when they would hear attentively; all which expresses the eager desire of Job's hearers after his doctrine, which, like the rain, would be useful, profitable, and edifying to them; their view was not to indulge their curiosity, to please their ears, but to affect their hearts, and instruct their minds.

Ver. 24. *[If] I laughed on them, they believed [it] not*, etc.] Not that he at any time laughed at them, by way of derision; but when in a cheerful frame of mind, or in a merry mood, he used freedom and familiarity, and jested with them; but they could not believe that he did jest, or was in jest, he being a man always of such gravity and seriousness, that they concluded the smile on his countenance, and the pleasant turn of his expression, had a serious meaning in them; or such familiarity with them was so pleasing to them, that they could scarcely for joy believe that he did condescend to

indulge such an air of pleasantry: or as Mr. Broughton renders it, and so some others to the same sense, “they would not be bold” ^{f1054}; familiarity with them did not breed contempt, as it sometimes does; they did not presume upon it, and grow bold and insolent, and make him their equal, and jest with him again; but still there was an awe upon them, and they behaved with reverence to him; and to show how great it was is the design of the expression:

and the light of my countenance they cast not down; they did not ruffle his mind, or disturb the serenity of it; or cause him to change his countenance, through any bold and indecent behaviour towards him, encouraged by the freedom and pleasantry he used with them; they did not put him to shame, or provoke him to anger and displeasure by any unbecoming deportment; they kept their distance, they did not detract from his authority and majesty, or in the least lessen that, but behaved with the same reverence and regard to him they ever did; (see ^{<0046>}Genesis 4:6).

Ver. 25. *I chose out their way*, etc.] When his friends and neighbours came to him for advice in things civil, he marked out their way for them, directed what steps to take, what methods to pursue for their good; they desired him to choose for them, preferring his judgment to theirs, and were determined to abide by his choice of ways and means, and to follow his counsel; and in religious matters, he instructed them in their duty, both towards God and men, and proposed unto them what was most eligible, both with respect to doctrine and practice;

and sat chief; in all their public assemblies; he presided in their councils and courts of judicature; and when met together for religious worship, he sat in the chair of the teacher, and instructed them; he was chief speaker, as the Heathens said of the Apostle Paul, (^{<4442>}Acts 14:12);

and dwelt as a king in the army, or “troop” ^{f1055}. Mr. Broughton renders it with a garrison; Job was surrounded with multitudes of persons, that waited upon him on one account or another, who were ready to receive his words, and be obedient to them, as a king or general in the midst of an army, surrounded by his general officers, and the whole army encamped about him, doing him honour, and ready to obey whatever commands or instructions he should give them; some conclude from hence that Job was really a king, as being not a note of similitude, but of truth and reality, as in (^{<4442>}Matthew 14:2); and so he might be; for in those times and countries every city almost had its king; though this is not necessarily supposed here;

for the phrase seems only to denote the authority and influence Job had over men by his advice and instruction, which were as much regarded as from a king; and the majesty he appeared in, and the reverence in which he was had:

as one [that] comforteth the mourners: which some restrain to the king in his army, and connect them therewith thus, “when he comforteth the mourners”^{f1056}; the soldiers mourning for some loss sustained, and slaughter made among them; whose minds the king or general by a set speech endeavours to cheer, and comfort, and allay their fears, and animate them to intrepidity and fortitude, when all eyes are upon him and attentive to him; and so attentive were Job’s hearers to him. Bar Tzemach observes, that the copulative **W**, or “and”, is wanting, and so is a clause by itself, and expresses something distinct from the forager, and may be supplied, “and I was as one that comforteth the mourners”; as a wise man that comforteth them, as Aben Ezra explains it; like one that made it his business to visit mourners in affliction, on account of the death of a relation, and the like: (see ~~<K119>~~ Job 11:19); and speaks comfortable words to them, to support them under their sorrow; when such an one used to speak alone, and all stood silent before him, and attentive to him; and in a like position was Job, when he gave his instructions to those about him; and he was, no doubt, a comforter of mourners himself, being either in temporal afflictions, or in spiritual troubles; comforted those that were cast down in either sense, and was a type of Christ, who was appointed to comfort all that mourn in Zion.