

CHAPTER 33

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 33

In this chapter Elihu addresses Job himself, and entreats his attention to what he had to say to him, and offers several things to induce him to it; and recommends himself as one that was according to his wish, in the stead of God, a man like himself, and of whom he had no reason to be afraid, (~~Job~~ Job 33:1-7); and then he brings a charge against him of things which he himself had heard, of words that had dropped from him in the course of his controversy with his friends; in which he too much and too strongly insisted on his own innocence and purity, and let fill very undue and unbecoming reflections on the dealings of God with him, (~~Job~~ Job 33:8-11); to which he gives an answer by observing the superior greatness of God to man, and his sovereignty over him, not being accountable to him for anything done by him; and therefore man should be silent and submissive to him, (~~Job~~ Job 33:12,13); and yet, though he is so great and so absolute, and uncontrollable, and is not obliged to give an account of his affairs to man, and the reasons of them; yet he condescends by various ways and means to instruct him in his mind and will, and even by these very things complained of; and therefore should not be treated as if unkind and unfriendly to men; sometimes he does it by dreams and visions, when he opens the ears of men, and seals instruction to them, and with this view, to restrain them from their evil purposes and doings, and to weaken their pride and humble them, and preserve them from ruin, (~~Job~~ Job 33:14-18); and sometimes by chastening and afflictive providences, which are described, (~~Job~~ Job 33:19-22); and which become teaching ones; through the interposition of a divine messenger, and upon the afflicted man's prayer to God, and humiliation before him, God is gracious and favourable to him, and delivers him; which is frequently the design and the use that he makes of chastening dispensations, (~~Job~~ Job 33:23-30); and the chapter is concluded with beseeching Job to mark and consider well what had been said unto him, and to answer it if he could or thought fit; if not, silently to attend to what he had further to say to him for his instruction, (~~Job~~ Job 33:31-33).

Ver. 1. *Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches,* etc.] In the preceding chapter, Elihu directed his discourse to the three friends of Job chiefly, here to Job himself, and that by name; which none of his friends in all their discourses ever used; and in an humble suppliant manner entreats his attention to what he was about to deliver, and that for reasons which his address to his friends could furnish him with; and hence begins his speech with “wherefore”, seeing he took not the part of his three friends, but blamed them; and because he had the Spirit of God in him, and was full of matter, and uneasy until he had vented it; and which he proposed to deliver in a plain and faithful manner, with sincerity and without flattery; on all which accounts he beseeches him to give him a diligent and attentive hearing:

and hearken to all my words; not to some of them only, but to all; he bespeaks his candid and constant attention, that he would hear him out, all that he had to say, with patience, and without interruption; and then judge of the truth, force, and pertinency of them; which he would not so well be able to do, unless he heard them all; for sometimes the proof, the evidence, and demonstration of a thing depends not on a single argument, but upon many put together; each of them alone being insufficient, at least may appear so, when all considered together give full satisfaction.

Ver. 2. *Behold, now I have opened my mouth,* etc.] Begun to speak in order to give vent to the fulness of matter within him, which made him, like bottles of new wine, ready to burst; and since he had opened his lips, that he might speak and be refreshed, he desires Job to listen to him, and offers same things to his consideration to induce him to it:

my tongue hath spoken in my mouth: but does not every man’s tongue speak in his mouth when he speaks? is there anything singular and peculiar in this, that can excite attention? it may be rendered, “in my palate”^{f1174}; which, as it is an instrument of speech, so of tasting and trying food, (see ~~86~~ Job 6:30 12:11); and Elihu’s sense is, that he had thoroughly considered what he should say, he had well weighed what he should speak, and should not deliver anything raw, crude, and undigested; he had palated his words, in order to discern whether there was anything in them perverse or not.

Ver. 3. *My words [shall be of] the uprightness of my heart,* etc.] Not that the uprightness of his heart, or his own personal integrity, should be the subject of his discourse; but what he should say would be in or out of the uprightness of his heart, with all sincerity and faithfulness; what would be

the real sentiments of his mind, and not proceed from a double or insincere heart:

and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly; what knowledge he had of God, and of the perfections of his nature, and of his works in nature and grace, and of his dealings in a providential way with the sons of men; and what knowledge he had of Christ, his person, office, and grace somewhat of which speaks in this chapter; and such sort of knowledge is to be uttered, to be published, and made known to the good of others; and not to be concealed, and hid, or held, as in a prison, in unrighteousness; and to be uttered clearly, plainly, and distinctly, in words intelligible, and easy to be understood; and not in ambiguous terms, or in words of a double meaning; or which are abstruse and intricate, and serve rather to make the mysteries of Providence and grace more dark and obscure than to explain them; integrity of heart, and perspicuity of language, serve much to recommend a speaker, and both are expressed in this verse.

Ver. 4. *The Spirit of God hath made me*, etc.] As a man; so every man is made by God, and not by himself; Father, Son, and Spirit, are his Makers or Creators, as we read of them in the plural number, (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 149:2) (~~Ecclesiastes~~ Ecclesiastes 12:1); and this is a proof of the deity of the Spirit, who was not only concerned in the creation of all things, garnishing the heavens, and moving upon the face of the waters on the earth; but in the formation of man:

and the breath of the mighty hath given me life; the same with the Spirit of God, the allusion is to the creation of man at first, when God breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul: life natural is from God, he is the God of our life, he gives all the mercies of life, and by him is this life preserved; and the whole is the effect of almighty power: now this is observed by Elihu to Job, to encourage him to attend to him without fear, since he was a man, a creature of God, as he was: it may be understood of his spiritual formation, the Spirit of God remakes men, or makes them new men, new creatures; this is done in regeneration, which is the work of the Holy Spirit; hence regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, are put together; and being a work of almighty power, is proof of the deity of the Spirit of God; it is he that quickens men when dead in trespasses and sins, and makes them alive to God; which appears by their spiritual breathings after divine things, and by the exercise of their spiritual senses, and by their performance of spiritual actions; and now Elihu, being a man regenerated

and quickened by the Spirit, might more justly claim the attention of Job, since what he should say was what he had heard, felt, and seen, as good man, one that had an experience of divine and spiritual things.

Ver. 5. *If thou canst answer me*, etc.] That is, when he had done speaking, after he had heard him out; if he thought he could make a reply to him, he gave him full liberty so to do, and tacitly suggests that he should give him an attentive and candid hearing, as he had requested of him:

set [thy words] in order before me; put them into the best form and order thou canst for thy self-defence, and level them at me; set them, as it were, in battle array against me; give them all the poignancy, strength, and three thou art capable of:

stand up; not out of veneration to him, but to denote freedom and boldness in himself; a presentation of himself with boldness, and standing and keeping his ground: the expressions are military; Mr. Broughton renders it, “stand to it”.

Ver. 6. *Behold, I [am] according to thy wish in God’s stead*, etc.] So some persons are, as civil magistrates, the ministers of the word, the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New; (see ^{<A181>}2 Corinthians 5:20); and so in some sense was Elihu; he undertakes to be an advocate for God, to vindicate his justice in his dealings with the children of men, and clear him from the charge of severity towards them, and hard usage of them, and particularly Job; and whom he besought, as in God’s stead, to be reconciled to his providential dealings with him; to bear his afflictions patiently, and wait the issue of them: or “I am as thou art”; so the Targum and Ben Gersom interpret it; one that belongs to God, a creature of God’s, a sinful frail mortal creature, as Job was, and accountable to God; one that belonged to him both as the God of nature and providence, and of grace; and such an one Job seemed to have wished for, to dispute the point in question with; (see ^{<K182>}Job 9:32,33);

I also am formed out of the clay; or “cut out” ^{f1175} of it; alluding to the potter, who, out of a mass or lump of clay before him, cuts a piece out of it to make a vessel of God is the potter, men are as clay in his hands, their bodies are bodies of clay, houses of clay, which have their foundation in the dust; reference may be had to the original formation of man, (^{<O117>}Genesis 2:7), and may denote not so, much the pollution of his nature,

clay being defiling, but the frailty of man, a vessel made of clay being brittle, and easily broken; (see ^{<R019>}Job 4:19 10:9 13:12) (^{<2548>}Isaiah 64:8).

Ver. 7. *Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid*, etc.] To come near, join issue in a debate, and speak freely; this Job had wished for, and desired of God that his fear might not terrify him, and his dread not make him afraid, and then he could talk and reason freely with him, (^{<R034>}Job 9:34,35 13:21,22); now Job had nothing to fear from Elihu, he was a man and not God, with whom there was no terrible majesty, as with God; he was but a clod of clay, and had nothing in him or about him to strike terror into him; he was no great personage, as a king or prince, nor in any civil authority, nor had so much as age to command an awe, much less could inject dread and terror:

neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee; which is not to be literally understood; Job could be in no fear of that, nor Elihu guilty of such rudeness; but figuratively, that he should not seek to afflict and distress him, or add to his affliction, and make it heavier, by hard words, severe reflections, and cruel reproaches; he seems to refer to (^{<R132>}Job 13:21); the Targum is,

“my burden upon thee shall not be heavy;”

he promises not to aggravate things, but make them as easy as they would admit of.

Ver. 8. *Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing*, etc.] After the above preface, Elihu proceeds to the point in hand, and enters a charge against Job; which he took up, not upon suspicion and surmisings, nor upon report, nor upon accusations received from others, but what he had heard with his own ears, unless he was greatly mistaken indeed, which he thought he was not:

and I have heard the voice of [thy] words; the sound of them, clearly and distinctly, and took in the sense of them, as he really believed:

[*saying*]; as follows.

Ver. 9. *I am clean without transgression*, etc.] This with what follows is supposed to be gathered from (^{<R106>}Job 10:6,7 13:23 27:5,6); for this is nowhere said by Job in express words; though I rather think, since Elihu so peremptorily affirms that they were spoken in his hearing, that these words

and the following did drop from Job's lips, in the controversy with his friends, though not recorded; for we are not to suppose that everything that was said on both sides is preserved, only so much as the Holy Ghost thought fit should be: no man is naturally clean, or free from sin; man came clean out of the hands of God, by sin is become unclean. This impurity is propagated by natural generation, and is in all without exception. Job expresses himself clearly on this point, and agreeably to it, (^{<B14>}Job 14:4); nor is any man clean by and of himself, or through anything he is capable of doing, in a moral, ceremonial, or evangelic sense, to make himself clean; as by moral actions, by ceremonial ablutions and sacrifices, or by submission to evangelic ordinances, or even by his own tears, repentance, and humiliation. Job seemed clearly and fully sensible of this, (^{<B30>}Job 9:30,31); (see ^{<B10>}Proverbs 20:9 ^{<B22>}Jeremiah 2:22); yet there are some persons that are clean through the blood of Christ, in which they are washed, and which cleanses from all sin; and through the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, in which they appear without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; and through the sentence of justification pronounced on them, by which word spoken they are all clean; and through the grace of God bestowed on them, the clean water that is sprinkled upon them, by which they are cleansed from all filthiness, and hence said to have clean hearts and clean hands; and if Job meant it in this sense, as he had knowledge of his living Redeemer, he no doubt was such an one, (^{<B25>}Job 19:25): but not "without transgression": without transgression imputed he was, and such are all they whose persons are justified, and their sins pardoned; to those God does not impute sin, (^{<B1>}Psalm 32:1,2); but they are not without the being nor commission of sin; for no man, even the best of men, are clear of it in this sense. Job might be free from the grosser sins of life, but not from indwelling sin, and the actings of it; we find him confessing sin, and disclaiming perfection, (^{<B20>}Job 7:20 9:20);

I [am] innocent; so he was, as to the charges brought against him by his friends, or the things it was insinuated he was guilty of, as hypocrisy, etc. or as to doing any injury to the persons and properties of men, or with respect to gross enormities, from which he had sufficiently cleared himself in (^{<B10>}Job 31:1-40); but not so innocent as to be free from all sin, as Adam was in his state of innocence, which is contrary to his own declarations in the passages before referred to; some, as Aben Ezra observes, interpret the word "covered" ^{f1176}, and as having the same sense with (^{<B1>}Psalm 32:1); and in which sense it was true of Job, that his iniquities were covered; and

others of his being covered with righteousness, with civil righteousness, as in (^{<8294>}Job 29:14); which was true of the exercise of it; and in an evangelic sense he was covered with the justifying righteousness of Christ; the Targum renders the word “washed”, as he was in a spiritual sense. Jarchi interprets it “wiped” or “rubbed”, and others combed and brushed, and so “neat” and “clean”, which is the sense of several versions ^{f1177}:

neither [is there] iniquity in me; in a Gospel sense there is none in believers in Christ; their iniquities being removed from them to him, and are done away and made an end of by him; nor are they to be seen with the eye of vindictive justice; God has cast them behind his back, and into the depths of the sea, never to be seen more; but then there is iniquity in them, as considered in themselves; for men to say they have none shows pride and ignorance, and is inconsistent with the truth of grace. If Job is to be understood in these expressions in an evangelical sense, or with respect to the grossest sins of life, or a vicious course of life (and indeed in no other sense can he well be understood, consistent with himself), he is not to be blamed for what he said, and I apprehend that Elihu does not blame him for saying these things in his own defence; but for insisting so much and so long upon his innocence and purity, and unspotted life; and especially for joining with it undue and unbecoming reflections on the Lord, for afflicting a person so holy and righteous, as follows.

Ver. 10. *Behold, he findeth occasions against me*, etc.] That is, sought in order to find them; so Job in some places suggests, that God inquired after his sins, and sought diligently after them, that he might have something to bring against him; and because he could not find great sins, gross enormities, he sought after lesser sins; so some render the word, “staggingings”, “totterings” ^{f1178}; frailties, failings, and infirmities; and because he could find none of late of a very heinous nature, he went back as far as the sins of his youth; (see ^{<8106>}Job 10:6 13:26); and this in order to pick a quarrel with him; and so Mr. Broughton renders the words, “lo, he picketh quarrels against me”; or that he might have just reason to depart from him, or to break from him, or to break off friendship with him, or to break him to pieces in his estate, family, and health; all which senses some observe the words will bear: but it would be needless for God to seek in order to find occasions against men; there is enough ready at hand, the sins that are about them; and to represent the Lord as dealing thus with good men is to represent him as acting contrary to the declarations and methods of his grace; yea, as doing what wicked men do to good men, as the

enemies of David, Daniel, and Jeremiah, did to them; nay, even as Satan himself does, who goes about and seeks for, and picks up accusations against the saints; this must be owned to be a very irreverent and unbecoming expression of Job's, and for which he deserved to be sharply rebuked, as well as for some following ones, and for which he afterwards was thoroughly humbled:

he counteth me for his enemy; this he had often said, but very wrongly; (see Gill on "^{<18133>}Job 13:24"), and (see Gill on "^{<18169>}Job 16:9"), and (see Gill on "^{<18011>}Job 19:11").

Ver. 11. *He putteth my feet in the stocks*, etc.] This also he had said, (^{<18137>}Job 13:27); by which he would suggest not only that his afflictions were painful and disgraceful, and from which he could not extricate himself, being close fettered by them; but that they were inflicted on him as punishments, and he was treated as a criminal, as a malefactor, who had been guilty of some notorious breach of the law:

he marketh all my paths; looked narrowly at them, numbered and counted them; this also he had said, (^{<18137>}Job 13:27 14:16 31:4); meaning not only his natural and civil paths and steps, but his moral ones, that he could not step the least awry, but presently it was marked and observed, (^{<18104>}Job 10:14); but though God does take notice of the sins of his people, and chastises them for them, yet he does not mark them in strict justice, for, should he, they could not stand before him, (^{<18018>}Psalms 130:3).

Ver. 12. *Behold, [in] this thou art not just*, etc.] Here begins Elihu's answer, who does not deny that Job was a just man, both before God in an evangelic sense, and before men in a moral sense; he did not go about to detract from Job's general character, as a man that lived soberly, righteously, and godly in the world; but in this he was not just, nor is it to be justified, with respect to this thing, he could not acquit him of doing what was wrong; namely, insisting so much on his own innocence, and tacking therewith such unbecoming and undue reflections on the dealings of God with him; he did not give to God his due, he did not do him justice in representing him in this light; he did not say nor do the right thing, so Mr. Broughton translates the words,

“lo, here thou art not in the right;”

(see ^{<18312>}Job 32:2);

I will answer thee; or “I must tell thee”; as the same writer renders the words, being able to make it clear and plain:

that God is greater than man: than any man, than the greatest of men, most famous for power, wisdom, or justice; he is not only greater in his power, faithfulness, goodness, grace, and mercy, but in his holiness and righteousness, wisdom and knowledge; and therefore can never do either an unjust thing, or an unwise one; and for man, who is both sinful and ignorant, even the best in comparison of him, to arraign him at his bar, is very arrogant and presumptuous; since he knows best what to do, and what are his reasons for so doing, and is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Ver. 13. *Why dost thou strive against him?* etc.] A creature against the Creator, a man against his Maker, the clay against the potter; how absurd and stupid is this! and a piece of weakness and folly it was in him to desire to litigate the point with God, and dispute with him, as he often did, when men cannot answer him one of a thousand, as he himself owned, (~~Job~~ Job 9:3,4); and very sinful and criminal it is to chide with God, or complain of him, on account of any of his dealings with the sons of men, as well as it is vain and fruitless:

for he giveth not account of any of his matters; he is a sovereign Being, and does what he pleases in nature, providence, and grace, and is not accountable to any for what he does; in things temporal, he does all after the counsel of his will; he bestows riches and honours, wealth and health, gifts of natural wisdom and knowledge on some, and withholds them from others; and each of these are his own, and he may do with them as he pleases: so likewise in things spiritual, he loves, chooses, redeems, regenerates, calls by his grace, and brings to glory whom he thinks fit; the blessings of grace and glory are his own, and he disposes of them as seems good in his sight; and in all respects he acts according to his will in heaven and in earth; none can stay his hand, or hinder him from doing his pleasure; and none ought to say to him, what dost thou? or why dost thou thus? or, if they do, he is not obliged to give any reasons for his so doing. Some take this to be the thing Job strove and contended with God about, that he did not, and because he did not give an account of all his matters, or answer all his words; and particularly he did not show to him wherefore he contended with him; and others think the meaning is, that God does not reveal all his secrets to men, but only as much as he thinks fit to acquaint them with;

secret things belong to him, and things revealed to men; the secrets of his own nature, and the modes of subsistence of the divine Persons in the Godhead, the secret reasons of divine predestination of men to life or death, and of his dealings with men in a providential way, afflicting the righteous, and suffering the wicked to prosper.

Ver. 14. *For God speaketh once, yea, twice,* etc.] Or, “but God speaketh”^{f1179}; though he is not bound to give an account of his matters, and the reasons of his proceedings in a way of providence or grace; yet such is his condescension and goodness, that he makes use of various ways and means to make known his mind and will in his dispensations, if men were but attentive to them; he speaks once, in dreams and visions, as in (~~1835~~ Job 33:15); and twice, or a second time, by chastisements, as in (~~1838~~ Job 33:18); or he speaks frequently, again and again, (see ~~1821~~ Psalm 62:11); gives line upon line, and precept upon precept; if one way is without effect, he will take another; and if one warning and admonition is not sufficient, he will give another; so that though he is a sovereign Being, and not accountable to any, yet he does not act the unkind and unfriendly part Job had suggested:

[yet man] perceiveth it not: the voice of God speaking in one way or another; hearkens not to the admonition given in a dream or vision, nor hears the chastising rod, and him that has appointed it; he is deaf to all instructions; he understands not the mind and meaning of God in his dispensations; which is not owing to want of means of knowledge, but to the blindness and ignorance of his mind, to dulness of hearing, to negligence and inattention, and to the prevalence of sin and corruption: the words, “yet man”, are a supplement to the text, and not in it, and some versions are without it, and understand the whole of God, rendering the words thus, “God speaketh once, and a second time he does not repeat it”; so the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions: or “does not revise it”, or “will not see it”^{f1180}; to which agrees the Targum,

“and a second time he needs not to look upon it;”

and which rendering, as it suits with the context, so is more agreeable to the accents; but is differently applied, by some to the sufficiency of the word of God, that God has at once made known all truth, and there is no need to do it a second time; but certain it is, that God did at sundry times, and in divers manners, speak unto the fathers by the prophets; though indeed in these last days he hath spoken at once all his mind and will by his

Son, so that no future revelation is to be expected; but though this is true now, it was not in the times of Elihu: by others it is referred to God's dealings with a proud man, that calls him to an account for his actions, to whom he speaks once, and reproveth him for his boldness; but a second time he will not look at him, nor bear his pride and insolence: and by others to the unalterable decrees and purposes of God; what he has said or determined in his eternal mind is done at once, and remains invariably fixed; he has no need to look over a second time, or revise his first thoughts and designs, or reconsider them, whether it is proper to make any alteration in them or not, they are at once so wisely formed; and he has all things before him in one view in his all comprehending mind, so that there cannot possibly anything turn up unforeseen by him, to hinder the execution of his purposes, or cause him to make any change in them; no new thoughts, resolutions, or purposes, can arise in his mind, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. This agrees well with his sovereignty, expressed in (^{<RB3>}Job 33:13), and carries in it a strong reason enforcing what is there said. Though some take the meaning to be this, that God speaks once to a man, and admonishes and reproveth him as he used to do, in the way expressed in the following verse; and if he regards it not, he do not speak to him a second time in that way, or no more by words, but now by blows or chastisements.

Ver. 15. *In a dream, in a vision of the night*, etc.] That is, God speaks to men in this way, and which in those times was his most usual way; (see ^{<RB2>}Job 4:12,13); sometimes he spake to a prophet, a person in public office, and made known his mind and will in this manner to him, that he might deliver it to others, (^{<RB2>}Numbers 12:6); and sometimes directly and immediately to persons themselves, as he did to Abimelech and Laban, (^{<RB2>}Genesis 20:3 31:24);

when deep sleep lieth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; the former denotes a fast, heavy, and sound sleep, when the senses are all locked up, and there is not the least attention to any outward object; the latter a slight sleep, when a man is between sleeping and waking; and now at such a time, when he was laid on his bed in the night season, it was usual for God to come to him in a visionary way, and impress things on his mind; when it was called off from worldly and earthly thoughts and cares, and was calm and serene, and so fit to receive what intimations and instructions might be given this way; (see ^{<RB2>}Psalms 4:4). Job had his dreams and night visions, though he seems not to have had any benefit by them, or to have

understood them, but was scared and terrified with them, (^{<3874>}Job 7:14); to which Elihu may have some respect.

Ver. 16. *Then he openeth the ears of men*, etc.] Not the ears of his body, which remaining shut while things are presented to his mind in a dream or vision, but his internal ears; it is the same with opening the heart or understanding to attend to and receive the things delivered in this visionary way:

and sealeth their instruction; sends home the instruction given in this manner, and imprints it upon the mind, so that it is well remembered when awake, not only the dreams themselves, but the lessons taught and learnt there, as may be observed in the cases of Abimelech and Laban, (^{<0218>}Genesis 20:3 31:24); the word signifies “chastisement”^{f1181} as well as instruction, that being one way in which God teaches and instructs men, (^{<3942>}Psalm 94:12); and so the sense may be, that God in a dream or vision makes it known to men, that if they regard not what he says to them, and repent not of their evils, and turn from them, he will correct and chastise them, and this he assures them of; and they may look for the certain performance of it, that he will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; things that are sealed being sure and firm. Mr. Broughton renders the words, “and imprints why they are chastised.”

Ver. 17. *That he may withdraw a man [from his] purpose*, etc.] Or “work”^{f1182}, his wicked work, as the Targum; either which he has begun upon, or which he designed to do. Thus Abimelech and Laban were restrained from their intentions by a divine admonition in a dream, the one from taking Abraham’s wife, as he intended, and the other from doing harm to Jacob, which he designed:

and hide pride from man; by pardoning his sins, in which there is always pride, so some; pardon of sin being expressed by covering it, (^{<3921>}Psalm 32:1); or rather by repressing, weakening, and preventing it; and that by not suffering vain and proud men to perform their enterprises, but obliging them to submit to the will of God, and humble themselves under his mighty hand. These are the ends proposed, and which are effected through the Lord speaking to men in dreams, opening their ears, and sending instructions to them; and others also for their good follow.

Ver. 18. *He keepeth back his soul from the pit*, etc.] Or, “that he may keep back”^{f1183}; for this is another end and use of God’s speaking unto men; it is

to preserve them for the present from going down to the grave, the pit of corruption and destruction; so called because the bodies of men, being there laid, corrupt, and are entirely destroyed by worms, and turn to rottenness and dust; and to preserve them from the bottomless pit of everlasting ruin and destruction; for the Lord's people are reprov'd by him, that they may not be condemn'd with the world, (^{<4113>}1 Corinthians 11:32);

and his life from perishing by the sword; by the sword of men, which is one of God's sore judgments; or by the sword of the civil magistrate, the man spoken to being warn'd of God of committing these sins, which would bring him into the hands of such; or by the sword of divine justice; Jarchi interprets it of the sword of the angel of death; the word signifies a missive weapon, as a dart; so Mr. Broughton renders the words, "and his life from going on the dart": or, as another version has it, "lest it should go on under the cast of darts"^{f1184}; the darts of an enemy in war, or the fiery darts of Satan, (^{<4016>}Ephesians 6:16).

Ver. 19. *He is chastened also with pain upon his bed*, etc.] This seems to be another way, in which God, according to his eternal purposes, speaks unto men, as the word "also" intimates; namely, by afflictions, and sometimes painful ones; which have a voice in them, and men of wisdom will hearken to it, (^{<389>}Micah 6:9). Pain here signifies not pain of the mind, or a wounded spirit, which is very afflicting, distressing, and intolerable; but pain of the body, as the next clause shows; and this endured on the bed, it being so great as to confine a man to his bed, or is what he felt there, where he might hope for ease and rest; (see ^{<8073>}Job 7:13);

and the multitude of his bones with strong [pain]; not with a slight one, but a very strong one, such as those felt who gnawed their tongues for pain, (^{<6160>}Revelation 16:10). Jarchi interprets it, the multitude of his bones, which are strong; though they are hardy and strong, yet filled with exquisite pain; and not one, or a few of them, but a multitude of them, as there are a multitude of them in a man's body; even all of them, as Hezekiah complains, which must be very excruciating indeed, (^{<2383>}Isaiah 38:13); and which was Job's case; not only his flesh was in pain, through the sores and ulcers upon him, but his bones were pierced in him, and his sinews had no rest, and he was full of tossings to and fro, (^{<8073>}Job 7:3,4 30:17); and in this way he was, as other good men are, reprov'd and chasten'd by the Lord; and in which way he had spoke to him, as he does to others, and which should be attended to; and since such painful

afflictions are but fatherly chastisements, they should be patiently endured, and the voice of God in them listened to, and before long there will be no more pain: the “Cetib”, or textual writing, is, “the contention of his bones is strong”; through pain, or with which God contends with men; we follow the marginal reading.

Ver. 20. *So that his life abhorreth bread*, etc.] Through the force of pain he loses his appetite for food, and even a nausea of it takes place; he loathes it as the most abominable and filthy thing that can be thought of; even bread, so necessary to the support of human life, so strengthening to the heart of man, and what he every day stands in need of, and should pray for, and in health is never weary of; it may be put for all common and useful food:

and his soul dainty meat; the most rich and delicious; such as the tables of the great and rich are furnished with: “food of desire”^{f1185}; or desirable food, as it may be rendered; (see ^{<270B>}Daniel 10:3); such as in the time of health the appetite craves and desires, and is fed on with delight and pleasure, but now had in the utmost aversion. Pains and diseases of body often produce such a nausea in men, (^{<1947I>}Psalm 107:17,18), and was Job’s case, (^{<1804>}Job 3:24 6:7).

Ver. 21. *His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen*, etc.] All being gone, none left to be seen, nothing but skin and bones; and this partly through the vehemence of strong pain, and partly through the nausea of food; not being able to take anything for nourishment and the support of the fluids, and so quite emaciated:

and his bones [that] were not seen stick out: which before were covered with flesh and fat, so that they could not be seen; but now the flesh and fat being wasted, they seem as if they rose up in an eminence, and stood out to be beheld; this was also Job’s case, being reduced to a mere skeleton, (^{<1810>}Job 19:20). Elihu, in this description of an afflicted man, seems to have Job chiefly in view, and by this would intimate to him that God had been, and was speaking to him by those afflictions, which he would do well to advert unto.

Ver. 22. *Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave*, etc.] Not the soul, strictly and properly speaking, for that does not, nor is it laid in the grave at death, but returns to God that gave it; rather the body, for which it is sometimes put, and of which what is here said is true, (see ^{<1910>}Psalm

16:10); or the person of the sick man, whose disease being so threatening, all hope is gone, and he is given up by his physicians and friends, and seemingly is at the grave's mouth, and that is ready for him, and he on the brink of that; which were the apprehensions Job had of himself, (~~1870~~-Job 17:1); (see ~~1888~~-Psalm 88:3 107:17);

and his life to the destroyers; the destroying angels, as Aben Ezra, and so the Septuagint version: or destroying diseases, and so Mr. Broughton renders it, "to killing maladies"; or it may be to worms, which destroy the body in the grave, and which Job was sensible of would quickly be his case, (~~1885~~-Job 19:26); though some interpret it of those that kill, or of those that are dead, with whom they are laid that die; or of deaths corporeal and eternal, and the horrors and terrors of both, with which persons in such circumstances are sometimes distressed.

Ver. 23. *If there be a messenger with him*, etc.] Or angel, either with God, as some think; or rather with the sick man; by which messenger is meant not an angel by nature, a created angel, though sometimes such are God's messengers, sent by him on errands to men, are interpreters of things to them, as Gabriel was to Daniel; of whom there are thousands, and who may be of service to sick men for their comfort and instruction, since it is certain they attend saints in their dying moments; yet this proves not that they are to be invoked as mediators between God and men: but rather a minister of the word is designed, who is by office an angel, a "messenger" of Christ, and of the churches; an "interpreter" of the Scriptures, and of the mind of God in them; and a spiritual, evangelical, faithful minister, is scarce and rare, one among a thousand; and his business is to visit sick persons, and to observe the "uprightness" and faithfulness of God in afflicting them, that they may quietly submit to and patiently bear the affliction; and to direct them for their peace and comfort to the uprightness or righteousness of Christ, for their justification before God; and to show them what is right for them to do in their present circumstances; whether the sick man be stupid and insensible of his case, and his need of righteousness, or whether he be a truly gracious man, yet labouring under doubts and fears about the truth of grace in him, the uprightness of his heart, and his interest in the righteousness of Christ: but it seems best to understand this of Christ himself, the angel of God's presence, the messenger of the covenant, who is with the sick man, and favours him with his spiritual presence; or is "for him"^{f1186} as it may be rendered, is on his side, an advocate and intercessor for him with God;

an interpreter of his Father's mind, and with which he is long acquainted, he lying in his bosom; and of the sacred Scriptures, as he was to his disciples concerning himself; or an "orator"^{fi187}, an eloquent one, never man spake like him, having the tongue of the learned given him as man; and who as a divine Person is the eternal and essential Word of God; who spake for his people in the council of peace and covenant of grace; and also as Mediator is the antitypical Aaron, can speak well for them on all occasions:

one among a thousand: the chiefest among ten thousand, angels or men; (see ²¹⁵⁰Song of Solomon 5:10 ²¹⁰⁷⁸Ecclesiastes 7:28);

to show unto man his uprightness; which to do is his office as Mediator, and especially as a prophet, even to show the uprightness of God, the rectitude of his nature, the righteousness required in his holy law; and this Christ has shown forth and declared in his being the propitiation for the sins of his people, (⁴¹²⁵Romans 3:25,26); by his Spirit he shows to man, and so to a sick man, his want of uprightness in himself, his need of righteousness from another; and brings it near him, and shows it to be perfect, complete, and suitable; as well as teaches to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

Ver. 24. *Then he is gracious to him*, etc.] To the sick man; either the messenger or the minister that is with him, who pities his case and prays for him; and by some the following words are supposed to be a prayer of his, "deliver me", etc. since one find in the Gospel there is a ransom for such persons. Rather Christ, who is gracious to man, as appears by his assumption of their nature and becoming a ransom for them, and who upon the foot of redemption which he has "found" or obtained, (see ³⁸⁹¹²Hebrews 9:12); pleads for the present comfort and future happiness of his people, in such language as after expressed, "deliver him", etc. Or rather God the Father is gracious to the sick man for his Son's sake,

and saith, deliver him from going down to the pit; addressing either the disease, so Mr. Broughton renders the word, "spare him (O killing malady) from descending into the pit", the grave, for the present his disease threatened him with. Or the minister of the word attending the sick man, who is bid to declare to him, as Nathan to David, and Isaiah to Hezekiah, that he should live longer, and not die for the present: or rather the address is to law and justice, to let the redeemed of the Lord go free, and particularly the sick man being one of them; and not thrust him down into

the bottomless pit of everlasting ruin and destruction, for the reason following:

I have found a ransom; which is no other than Christ the Son of God; whom Jehovah, in his infinite wisdom, found out and settled upon to be the ransomer of his people; to which he agreed, and in the fulness of time came to give his life a ransom for many, and for whom he has given himself as a ransom price, which has been testified in due time: and this ransom is for all the elect of God, and is of them from sin, Satan, law, hell, and death; and the finding of it is not of man, nor is the scheme of propitiation, peace and reconciliation by Christ, or of atonement and satisfaction ^{f1188} by the sacrifice of Christ, as the word here used signifies, an invention of men; but is the effect of infinite wisdom, and a scheme drawn in the eternal mind, and formed in Christ from everlasting; (see ~~<4159>~~ 2 Corinthians 5:19). Some take these words to be spoken by the Father to the Son, upon his appointment and agreement to be the ransomer and Redeemer, saying, “go, redeem him”, etc. for so the words ^{f1189} may be rendered; and others think they are the words of the Son the messenger to his Father, the advocate with him for his people, as before observed.

Ver. 25. *His flesh shall be fresher than a child's*, etc.] Being recovered from illness and restored to health, through the gracious dealings of God with him. This is to be understood not simply and absolutely, but comparatively, or with respect to his former condition; that he, who before was reduced to skin and bone, is now become fat and plump; and whose flesh was dry and withered, now moist, succulent, and juicy; and whose skin was wrinkled, now soft and smooth, and sleek; and whose face was pale, now bloomy and ruddy. The Targum is,

“his flesh is weakened more than a child,”

and the Vulgate Latin,

“is consumed,”

referring to his former state:

he shall return to the days of his youth. His youth renewed, and he seem young again; become hale and robust as in his youthful days; (see ~~<4135>~~ Psalm 103:5).

Ver. 26. *He shall pray unto God*, etc.] As the former verse expresses the condition of the body of the man recovered from sickness, this the frame of his soul, and the spiritual blessings enjoyed by him: some understand this of his praying in the time of his affliction, and consider it as one means of his recovery; and indeed a time of affliction is a time for prayer; and which brings a good man to it, who in health and prosperity has been negligent of it; such an one will make his application to God for deliverance, and not to the creature; and it is his mercy and privilege he has a God to pray unto, who can and will help him. But according to the course and connection of the words, it seems rather to respect what the good man would do, and the frame he would be in upon his recovery; who would entreat the Lord to make him thankful the mercy received, and accept of his thanksgiving for the same; that his affliction might appear to be sanctified unto him, and that he is much the better for it, more holy and more humble; and that he would manifest his pardoning grace to him for all the sins and transgressions he had been guilty of, his murmurings and repinings, and everything else during his affliction; and that he may make use of his health and strength given him in the service of God, and for the glory of his name;

and he will be favourable to him; which, if understood of the time of affliction, it may be interpreted of his laying no more on him than he will enable him to bear, and supporting him under it; of granting his gracious presence in it, and of his taking notice of him, visiting him, knowing, owning, and choosing him in the furnace of affliction, and manifesting his care unto him; and of the deliverance of him out of it. But if it respects the man as recovered out of affliction, it denotes further discoveries of the special care and favour of God to him, which are very enlivening and refreshing, strengthening and supporting; and of his gracious acceptance of his person, and of his sacrifices of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, through Christ the Mediator and messenger of the covenant;

and he shall see his face with joy: that is, either God who is favourable to him, he looks with a smiling countenance upon the man now recovered, who before seemed to look upon him with frowns in his countenance, there being a change in the outward dispensations of his providence towards him, though none in his heart: his countenance beholds the upright with pleasure, whether they see it or not; he looks upon his people in Christ with the utmost complacency and delight, and particularly when they come to him in the exercise of grace, with their prayers, praises, and thanksgivings. Or the man recovered from illness, God being favourable to

him, he beholds the face of God with joy, who perhaps had hid it from him in his affliction, which caused trouble; but now showing his face and favour, it causes joy and exultation, even a jubilee in his soul. He beholds him in Christ as the God of grace and peace; and through him can come to him, and look him in the face with comfort and pleasure, as nothing is more delightful to him than the light of his countenance;

for he will render unto man his righteousness: not the sick man recovered render to another man what is his right and due, or what he may have wronged him of; for which being reprov'd by the affliction, and convicted of, is desirous of making restitution: but God, who will render, return, or restore to the man recovered his righteousness, which is the foundation of his joy; not render to him according to his own righteousness, as the Targum, which would be but a poor recompense if strictly given; nor restore to him the righteousness he lost in Adam, which is but a creature righteousness; but the righteousness of Christ, as Mr. Broughton, which is the good man's or the believer's in Christ, because wrought out for him, imputed to him, and bestowed as a free gift on him. Now though this righteousness can never be lost, being an everlasting one, yet a sense of interest in it may, which is returned, restored, and rendered to a man, when that righteousness is afresh revealed to him from faith to faith; the consequence of which is peace and comfort, joy and triumph.

Ver. 27. *He looketh upon men*, etc.] According to our version, and other interpreters, the sense is, God looks upon men as he does on all men in general, their ways and their works; and particularly he takes notice of men under affliction, and observes how they behave; if they are penitent and confess their sins, he restores them to health, and does them good both in body and soul. But most carry the sense another way, and interpret it of the sick man recovered, who looks upon his friends and relations about him, and any others that come within his reach; of he goes about them, as Aben Ezra explains the word; or will accompany with men, as Mr. Broughton; or sets them in rows, as Gersom, in order, as at a levee, that he may the better address them; or he shall direct himself to them, as the Targum; or shall sing over them or before them, so Schultens^{f1190}; in a joyful manner, in an exulting strain, express himself, as follows; for the phrase,

and [if any] say^{f1191}, should be rendered, “and he shall say”; make the following confession of his acknowledgment of the goodness of God unto him;

I have sinned; against God and man, and that has been the cause of all my afflictions; I am now sensible of it, and ingenuously own it:

and perverted [that which was] right: have not done that which is right in the sight of God, nor what is just and right between man and man; have perverted the right ways of God, swerved from his commandments, and gone into crooked paths, with the workers of iniquity; and declined from, or perverted, justice and judgment among men;

and it profiteth me not; as sin does not in the issue; though it promises profit and advantage, it does not yield it; but, on the contrary, much harm and mischief come by it.

Ver. 28. *He will deliver his soul from going into the pit*, etc.] Into the pit of the grave; and then the soul is put for the man or for the body; or into the pit of hell or perdition:

and his life shall see the light; or he shall live and enjoy outward prosperity here, and the light of eternal happiness hereafter; and so the Targum interprets it of superior light, or the light above, even the inheritance of the saints in light. These words have a double reading; the “Keri”, or marginal reading, is what we follow; but the “Cetib”, or textual reading, is, “he hath delivered my soul from going into the pit, and my life sees the light”; and which seems to be the better reading; and so the words are a continuation of the address of the man recovered from illness to his friends; setting forth and acknowledging, with joy and thankfulness, the great goodness of God unto him, that he had delivered him from the grave, and spared his life, and given him to enjoy great prosperity, both temporal and spiritual.

Ver. 29. *Lo, all these [things] worketh God oftentimes with man.*] This is a summary or recapitulation of what goes before, from (^{<8885>}Job 33:15); God is an operating Being, he is always at work in a providential way: “my father worketh hitherto”, (^{<8887>}John 5:17); sometimes on the minds of men in dreams and visions; and sometimes by affliction; and sometimes by his prophets, messengers and ministers of the word; he works with and by these, and all according to the internal workings and actings of his mind, his eternal purposes and decrees, which are hereby brought about: and these he works “oftentimes”, or, as in the original, “twice”^{f1192}; therefore when once is not sufficient, he repeats it in dreams and visions; when men are not admonished by one, he comes to them in another: and afflictions,

when one does not bring men to repentance, or answer a good purpose, he sends another; and continues the ministry of the word, in which he waits to be gracious, till all his people are brought to repentance, and all his ends answered by it: and all this he works “with man”, his darling object, the special care of his providence; and for whom his great concern is in redemption and salvation. He works with men distributively considered, with various men, in the several ways before expressed; and with men personally and individually; to one and the same man he has often appeared in dreams and visions, and on the same person has laid his afflicting hand again and again; and to the same individual has given line upon line, and precept upon precept. And because this is certain and to be depended upon as truth, and is worthy of notice and consideration, as well as is very wonderful and astonishing, that God should thus be mindful of man, and work with him and for him, “lo”, or “behold”, is prefixed unto it: the ends for which all this is done follow.

Ver. 30. *To bring back his soul from the pit*, etc.] From the pit of the grave; at the mouth or on the brink of which he seemed to be in the apprehension of his friends, and having the sentence of death in himself; (see ¹⁹¹⁸Psalm 90:3). Or “to turn away”, ^{f1193}, or “stay his soul from the pit”, as Mr. Broughton; prevent his going into it by removing his disorder, and restoring him to health, as in the case of Hezekiah, (²³⁸⁷Isaiah 38:17). Or figuratively, from the pit of an unregenerate state, which may be compared to a pit or grave, because in it lie such who are dead in trespasses and sins; and which is a pit of corruption, or a corrupt state: men in it are corrupt and corrupters, corrupt both in principles and practices; and is an impure one, like to mire and clay; and a very uncomfortable one, a pit wherein is no water, no refreshment, no solid peace and comfort. In conversion, which sometimes is brought about by the above means, afflictive providences, as well as by the ministry of the word, souls are brought back from hence; are regenerated, quickened, and raised from the graves of sin, and live spiritually, as they are also secured from going down into the pit of hell and everlasting destruction:

to be enlightened with the light of the living; in a natural sense, to enjoy the light of living men, the light of the sun, and to live in health and prosperity, which is called light in opposition to affliction and adversity, expressed by darkness; (see ¹⁷⁸¹⁵Esther 8:15 ⁴³⁰⁴Psalm 112:4) (²¹⁸²Isaiah 8:22). And in a spiritual sense, to live a spiritual life, who before were dead in sin, to live a life of faith on Christ as their righteousness, and to live a life

of holiness from him, and in newness of life to his honour and glory; and to have spiritual light into their state by nature, and their recovery and salvation by Christ; to see their need of him, his suitableness, worth, and excellency, and to have a glimpse of eternal glory; as also hereafter to partake both of eternal life and eternal light, called by our Lord “the light of life”, (~~AND~~ John 8:12).

Ver. 31. *Mark well, O Job*, etc.] Consider and weigh well what has been said; or rather attend to what is further to be said:

hearken unto me; to what he was about to say; for he was full of matter, and had not yet vented all he had to utter:

hold thy peace, and I will speak; be silent and do not interrupt, and I will go on with my discourse.

Ver. 32. *If thou hast anything to say, answer me*, etc.] Any thing to object to what he had delivered, or any answer to return to what he had charged him with:

speak, for I desire to justify thee. Elihu was a fair antagonist, and gave free liberty, time and space, to make whatsoever reply he thought fit, and which he should patiently and attentively hear: his view was not victory, but that truth might come out, and take place and prevail, having nothing more at heart than Job’s good; and could wish it would appear that he was in all respects a just man, and even in that in which he thought he was not just; but could he fairly acquit himself it would be a pleasure to him.

Ver. 33. *If not, hearken to me*, etc.] If he had no objection to make, nor answer to return, then he desires he would attend and listen to what he had further to lay before him:

hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom. For though Job was a wise and good man, he might become wiser and more knowing; and indeed when instruction is given to a wise man, he will be yet wiser, (~~AND~~ Proverbs 9:9); and this may be received sometimes from persons inferior in age and abilities. Elihu proposed to teach him, as he did, natural, moral, and evangelical wisdom, especially the wisdom of God in his providential dealings with men, and what is man’s highest wisdom under them; which is to be reconciled unto them, and patiently to submit, and to fear the Lord, and be careful not to offend him, which to do is wisdom and understanding.