

# CHAPTER 34

## INTRODUCTION TO JOB 34

In this chapter Elihu reassumes his discourse, and proceeds in his answer to Job, in which are first a preface exciting attention, (<sup><18340></sup>Job 34:1-4); then a charge is brought against Job, expressed in or extracted from some words that dropped from his lips, not so well guarded, (<sup><18345></sup>Job 34:5-9); a refutation of these expressions of his in a variety of arguments, (<sup><18340></sup>Job 34:10-30); and the chapter is closed with some good advice to Job, (<sup><18345></sup>Job 34:31-33); and with an earnest request of Elihu to men of understanding, to join with him in trying him to the uttermost, (<sup><18345></sup>Job 34:34-37).

**Ver. 1.** *Furthermore Elihu answered and said.*] It is reasonable to suppose that Elihu made a considerable pause, to see whether Job would make any reply to what he had delivered, or object to what he had said; which he gave him free liberty to do, if he had anything upon his mind: but perceiving he was not inclined to return any answer to him, he went on with his discourse; and which is called a further answer to him: for though Job had made no reply to which this could be called an answer, yet as there were several things remaining for Elihu to answer to, and which he proposed to answer and did, it may with great propriety here be said that he answered him.

**Ver. 2.** *Hear my words, O ye wise [men],* etc.] This is not an address to Job's three friends, as some think; for Elihu had expressed his displeasure at them, in condemning Job without convicting him, and returning solid answers to him; and therefore he should not take their method of dealing with him, but take another; and plainly suggests that wisdom was not with them, nor taught by them; and therefore, as he could not give flattering titles to men, it could not well be thought that he should address them as wise and understanding men, unless indeed in an ironic way, as some choose to interpret it; (see <sup><18315></sup>Job 32:3,5,7,9,12,14,21,22). Rather therefore some bystanders are here spoken to, whom Elihu knew to be men of wisdom and knowledge, etc. as it follows,

*and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge*; and as they were endued not only with natural and political wisdom and knowledge, but with that which is divine and spiritual, they were proper judges of the affair in controversy, and could best discern whether what Elihu delivered was right or wrong, and to the purpose or not. And besides, though they had a large share of wisdom and knowledge, yet it was but imperfect; and the most wise and knowing may become more so, and that sometimes by means of their inferiors and juniors: and therefore Elihu craves their attention to what he had said or should say, though he was but a young man, and they aged, and men of great geniuses and abilities; and the rather he might be pressing on them to be his hearers and judges, because, generally speaking, such, as they are the most judicious, so the most candid hearers.

**Ver. 3.** *For the ear trieth words*, etc.] Not only the musical sound of them, the goodness of the language and diction, and the grammatical construction of them, but the sense of them, and whether the matter of them is good or not; that they are sound speech, which cannot be condemned, or unsound; whether they are right or wrong, agreeably to right reason, sound doctrine, and the word of God; for there are words and words, some the words of men, others the words of God. A sanctified ear tries these; but then men must have such ears to hear, and be attentive to what they hear, and retain it; hear internally as well as externally; and which a man does when his ears are opened by the Lord, from whom are the hearing ear and seeing eye; and such try what they hear, distinguish between good and bad, approve truth and receive it, and retain and hold it fast:

*as the mouth tasteth meat*; words and doctrines are like meat, some good and some bad; and such that have a good taste try them, either a rational or rather a spiritual discernment: some have no spiritual taste, their taste is not changed, and therefore cannot distinguish, nor make any good judgment of things; but others have, and these discern the difference, relish truth, savour the things that be of God, taste the good word of God, and esteem it more than their necessary food; and it is sweeter to them than the honey or the honeycomb. Such Elihu judged these men to be he addressed, and therefore desired their attention to what he had to say.

**Ver. 4.** *Let us choose to us judgments*, etc.] Take the part of the question or controversy in which truth and justice lie, and he doubtless has respect to the present controversy with Job;

*let us know among ourselves what [is] good*; agree upon that which is best to be done in the present case, what judgment to be made of the dealings of God with Job, and his behaviour under them, and what the best advice to give to him.

**Ver. 5.** *For Job hath said, I am righteous*, etc.] Not in express words, but what amounted to it: no doubt he was a righteous man in an evangelic sense, being justified by the righteousness of Christ, as all the Old Testament saints were, who looked to him and believed in him as the Lord their righteousness, and said, as the church in those times did, “surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength”; (<sup><3872></sup>Isaiah 45:24,25). And moreover he was an upright man, to which the Lord himself bore testimony, (<sup><3808></sup>Job 1:8); and had the truth of grace in him, that “new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness”; and also lived an holy life and conversation; but then he did not say or think that he was righteous in or of himself, or so as to be free from sin: Job could not judge or speak thus of himself, which would be contrary to what he expressly declares, (<sup><3872></sup>Job 7:20 9:20,30,31); though it must be owned, that he thought himself so righteous, holy, and good, that he ought not to have been afflicted in the manner he was; in which sense it is probable Elihu understood him: and besides, these words are not to be taken separately, but in connection with what follows, which shows Job’s sense, and how Elihu understood him, that though he was a righteous person, he had not justice done him:

*and God hath taken away my judgment*; which words he did say, (see Gill on “<sup><3872></sup>Job 27:2”); or, as Mr. Broughton renders the words, “the Omnipotent keeps back my right”; does not vindicate my cause, nor so much as give it a hearing, nor lets me know why he contends with me; and, though I call for justice to be done, cannot be heard, (<sup><3807></sup>Job 19:7); a like complaint of the church in (<sup><2427></sup>Isaiah 40:27).

**Ver. 6.** *Should I lie against my right?* etc.] No; I ought not: this though Job had not said in so many words, yet this seems to be his sense in (<sup><3874></sup>Job 27:4-6); that should he own and say that he was a wicked man, a hypocrite, and destitute of the grace of God, he should not only speak against himself, but, contrary to his conscience, say an untruth, and not do justice to his character. Some read the words without an interrogation, as Mr. Broughton,

“for my right I must be a liar;”

that is, for vindicating my right, seeking and endeavouring to do myself justice, and clear myself from false imputations, I am reckoned a liar. And to this purpose is the paraphrase of Aben Ezra,

“because I seek judgment, they say that I lie.”

Others render them, “there is a lie in judging me”, so the Vulgate Latin version; that is,

“I am falsely accused, I am judged wrongfully:”

things I know not are laid to my charge, which has often been the case of good men: or, “I have lied in judgment”; that is, “failed”, as the word is sometimes used, (~~2881~~ Isaiah 58:11 ~~3817~~ Habakkuk 3:17); failed in his expectation of judgment or of justice being done him; he looked for it, but was disappointed; but the first sense seems best;

*my wound [is] incurable without transgression*; not that he thought himself without transgression, but that his wound or stroke inflicted on him, or the afflictions he was exercised with, were without cause; were not for any injustice in his hands, or wickedness that he had committed; and that he utterly despaired of being rid of them, or restored to his former health and prosperity; and to this sense he had expressed himself, (~~897~~ Job 9:17 16:17-20). In the Hebrew text it is, “my arrow” <sup>f1194</sup>, that is, the arrow that was in him, the arrows of the Lord that stuck fast in him; these were thrown at him and fastened in him without cause; and there was no hope of their being drawn out, or of the wounds made by them being healed; (see ~~810~~ Job 6:4). Now what Elihu was offended at in these expressions was, that Job should so rigidly insist on his innocence, and not own himself faulty in any respect; nor allow there was any cause for his afflictions, nor entertain any hope of the removal of them: whereas it became him to acknowledge his sins, which no man is free from, and that he was dealt with less than his iniquities deserved; and that, instead of indulging despair, he should rather say, “I will return” to the Lord; he hath “torn” and he will “heal”, he hath “smitten” and he will “bind up”, (~~210~~ Hosea 6:1).

**Ver. 7.** *What man [is] like Job*, etc.] This is said as wondering at the part he acted, that a man so wise and good as Job was esteemed to be should behave in such a manner as he did;

*[who] drinketh up scorning like water?* For a foolish and wicked man to do so is not strange nor uncommon; but for a man of such sense and grace

as Job was to do this was astonishing; to have no more regard to his character than to expose himself to the scorn and ridicule of men: for a man to become a laughing stock to profane and wicked men for his religion and piety, it is no disgrace, but an honour to him; but by unbecoming words and gestures to make himself justly jeered and scoffed at is great indiscretion. Or it may be understood actively of his dealing very freely and frequently in scoffs and jeers, which he poured out very liberally and plentifully, and seemingly with as much delight as a man drinks water when thirsty; (see <sup><8103></sup>Job 11:3).

**Ver. 8.** *Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity*, etc.] The worst of men, who make it their constant business and employment to commit sin:

*and walketh with wicked men*; the most abandoned of mankind. Not that Job kept company with such, and walked with them in all excess of not; nor did Elihu think so; Job was “a man that feared God, and eschewed evil”, and evil men; he was “a companion of them that feared the Lord”; his delight was “with the excellent of the earth”: nor should a good man keep company and walk with the wicked, nor can he with any pleasure. But the sense is, that by his words, the expressions that dropped from his lips, he seemed to agree with them, and to be of the same sentiments with them; and what he delivered tended to encourage and harden them in their sinful ways; and what those words were follow.

**Ver. 9.** *For he hath said*, etc.] Not plainly and expressly, but consequentially; what it was thought might be inferred from what he had said, particularly in (<sup><8102></sup>Job 9:22);

*it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God*; in his house and ordinances, ways and worship; he may as well indulge himself in the pleasures of sin, and in the delights of the world, if God destroys the perfect and the wicked, as Job had said in the place referred to; if this be the case, it is in vain to serve God, and pray unto him, or keep his ordinances; which are the language and sentiments of wicked men, and according to which they act, (see <sup><8214></sup>Job 21:14,15) (<sup><3014></sup>Malachi 3:14). Mr. Broughton renders it,

“when he would walk with God;”

and so the Targum,

“in his walking with God;”

and another Targum,

“in his running with God:”

though he walks and even runs in the way of his commandments, yet it is of no advantage to him; or he does the will of God, as Aben Ezra; or seeks to please him or be acceptable to him, and to find grace in his sight. Whereas though love and hatred are not known by prosperity and adversity, but both come to good and bad men, which seems to be Job’s meaning in the above place, from whence this inference is deduced; yet it is certain that godliness is profitable to all, (~~5048~~ 1 Timothy 4:8).

**Ver. 10.** *Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding,* etc.] The same persons he addresses as wise men and men of knowledge, (~~3891E~~ Job 34:2); and here as men of understanding, or “heart”<sup>f1195</sup>; the heart being the seat of wisdom and knowledge; and such Elihu desired to be his hearers, to attend to what he was about to say; which was to refute the words of Job, or his sense expressed in the preceding verses;

*far be it from God [that he should do] wickedness; and [from] the Almighty, [that he should commit] iniquity;* do any injustice or injury to any person, there being no unrighteousness in him, nor in any of his ways and works; which Job tacitly seemed to charge God with, at least as Elihu understood him. But sin is contrary to his pure and holy nature; he cannot look upon it with pleasure, much less commit it; it is forbidden by his holy righteous law, and therefore would never be done by him the lawgiver; nor can anyone single instance be given of wickedness and unrighteousness committed by him in any of his works of nature, or providence, or grace. He is the author of the evil of afflictions, whether as punishments or fatherly corrections; and in neither case does he commit or do any injustice; not in punishing wicked men less than they deserve, as he does in this life; nor in correcting his own people, which is always for their good: but not of the evil of sin; this may be concluded from the titles here given, of “Almighty and All-sufficient”; for being so he can be under no temptation of doing an unjust thing; and which is expressed with the like abhorrence and indignation by Elihu as the same sentiment is by the Apostle Paul, (~~8914~~ Romans 9:14).

**Ver. 11.** *For the work of a man will he render unto him,* etc.] The reward of his work, as Ben Gersom interprets it, whether the work of a wicked man or of a good man:

*and cause every man to find according to [his] ways.* Which is a truth frequently inculcated in the Scriptures; and will take place especially at the resurrection of the dead, which is for that purpose, and at the final judgment, by the righteous Judge of all; for, though wicked men may not be punished now according to their deserts, they will hereafter, which is sufficient to vindicate the justice of God: and as for the works and ways of good men, though God does not proceed according to them in the methods of his grace, they are not justified by them, nor called and saved according to them; for, though evil works deserve damnation, good works do not merit salvation; yet they are not neglected by the Lord; he is not unrighteous to forget them, and verily there is a reward for righteous men though it is not of debt but grace; and not for, but in keeping the commands of God, is this reward; even communion with him and peace in their souls, which they enjoy in, though not as arising from their keeping them; and at the last day, when their justification will be pronounced before men and angels, it will be according to their works of righteousness, not done by themselves, but done by Christ, in their room and stead and reckoned to them; for the obedience of Christ, by which they are made righteous, though imputed to them without works, is nothing else but a series of good works most perfectly done by Christ for them; and according to which the crown of righteousness in a righteous way will be given them by the righteous Judge. All which therefore is a full proof that no iniquity is, will, or can be committed by the Lord.

**Ver. 12.** *Yea, surely God will not do wickedly,* etc.] This truth is repeated and affirmed in the strongest manner; or “will not condemn”, as the Vulgate Latin version, and so the Targum, that is, he will not condemn the righteous; for, though he may afflict them, which is done that they may not be condemned with the world, he will not condemn them; for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ; his righteousness, by which they are justified, secures them from all condemnation;

*neither will the Almighty pervert judgment:* pronounce a wrong sentence, decline the execution of justice, swerve from the rule of it, or do a wrong thing; for he punishes wherever he finds it, either in the sinner or his surety; and his punishing it in his Son, as the surety of his people, is the strongest

proof of his punitive justice that can be given: nor does he neglect to chastise his people for sin, though satisfied for; so far is he from conniving at sin, and still further from committing it; see (see Gill on “~~xxx~~ Job 8:2”).

**Ver. 13.** *Who hath given him a charge over the earth?* etc.] Or who hath committed the earth unto him, and made it his care and charge? Is there any above him that has put him into this post and office? Under whose direction and command is he, and to whom is he accountable? None at all; he is no deputy or sub-governor: the kings of the earth are under him, and they have others subordinate to them; but he above all, higher than the highest: he is sole Governor of the world in his own right, by right of creation, and which he has from himself and not another; he has no rival, nor partner with him, none to whom he is accountable, or can control him; and since he is the Judge of all the earth, he will do right. Subordinate governors sometimes do unjust things in obedience to their superiors, or to please them, or through fear of them; but nothing of this kind is or can be the case with God; as he cannot do any injustice through inclination of nature, nor through ignorance, as men may; so neither through fear of any, there being none above him from whom he has received a charge, or that rules over him; and, as Jarchi expresses it, can say to him, what dost thou? as, I did not command thee so and so. And though he is sovereign and independent, and his power uncontrollable, it is contrary to his nature to make an ill use of it; and was justice perverted by him, the world would soon be in the utmost confusion: but it is a plain case there is a God that judgeth in the earth, and cannot commit iniquity. Or this may be said with respect to man; who has committed the earth to man, to be his charge, to be governed by him? if so, it would soon come to nothing; all creatures in it would be destroyed, as in the following verses; but this is not the case. Or who has given it to man to possess it, and to enjoy all things in it, and has put all things into his hands, and in subjection to him, to make use thereof, and for his good, delight, and pleasure, and visits him in it in a providential way, in great kindness and goodness? It is the Lord; and can it be thought that he that is so good and beneficent to men will do them any injustice? no, surely! Yea, should he take away all these good things he has given them, and even life itself, it could be no injustice, since he would only take away what he had given and had a right unto;

*or who hath disposed the whole world?* or created it, as Aben Ezra; that stored it with all the good things in it for the use of men? or put it in the beautiful order it is, so suitable and convenient for the good of his



creatures? or made it the habitable earth it is for man and beast? so Mr. Broughton renders the whole,

“who before him looked to the earth, or who settled all the dwelt land?”

Or who made it the fruitful earth it is, abounding with plenty of food for man and beast? or who disposes of all things in it by his wise providence, so that everything is beautiful in its season? None but the Lord has done all this; how then can it be thought that he who has filled the earth with his goodness should do wickedly or pervert judgment?

**Ver. 14.** *If he set his heart upon man*, etc.] Not his love and affections; though there are some he does in this sense set his heart on, and whose souls at death he gathers to himself, but with this sense the next verse will not agree; but to destroy him, as Jarchi adds by way of explanation; if he gives his mind to it, is set upon it and resolved to do it, none can hinder him; or sets himself against him in an hostile way, the issue must be entire ruin and destruction to the race of men; but it is plain this is not the case, or otherwise all must have perished long ago: or if he severely marks the ways and works of men, and deals with them according to the strictness of his justice, which yet he might do without any charge of injustice, none could stand before him; but this he does not, so far is he from any injustice, or any appearance of it;

*[if] he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath*; not his own spirit and breath, drawing in and retaining that within himself, and withholding the influence of it from his creatures, which the Septuagint version seems to favour; but the spirit and breath of man, which are of God, and which, as he gives, he can gather when he pleases. The spirit or rational soul of man is put in him by the Lord; this at death is separated from the body, yet dies not with it, but is gathered to the Lord: and the breath which he breathes into man, and is in his nostrils, and which, as he gives, he can take away, and then man dies. But in doing this he does no injustice; indeed, should he in anger and resentment rise up and deal thus with men in general, the consequence must be as follows.

**Ver. 15.** *All flesh shall perish together*, etc.] Not one by one, or one after another, as they generally do, but all together; as when the flood swept away the world of the ungodly. “All flesh” signifies all men, and their bodies of flesh particularly, which are weak, frail, and mortal; and if God

gathers or takes out the spirit from them, they die immediately, which is meant by perishing, as in (<sup><2075></sup>Ecclesiastes 7:15 <sup><2570></sup>Isaiah 57:1);

*and man shall turn again unto dust*; from whence he came, as the body does at death; when those earthly tabernacles of the bodies of men, which have their foundation in the dust, are dissolved and sink into it. Now though this is the case of particular persons, one after another, yet it is not a general case, as it would be if God was to exert his power, as he might without any charge of injustice: and this shows the merciful kindness of God to man, so far is he from doing any thing injurious or unjust.

**Ver. 16.** *If now [thou hast] understanding, hear this*, etc.] Not as calling his understanding in question, as if he, had none; for Job was a very understanding man; he had not lost his natural understanding by his afflictions, (see <sup><1863></sup>Job 6:13); nor was he without an understanding of divine things, as his speeches and answers show; but rather it is taken for granted that he was a man of understanding: “if” or “seeing” thou hast understanding, art a man of knowledge and intelligence, therefore hearken and attend to what has been said or about to be said; though, as some Jewish interpreters <sup>f1196</sup> observe, the word is not a noun, but a verb, and is imperative, “understand thou now, hear this”; and then the sense is, “if” things are so as before related, (<sup><1843></sup>Job 34:13-15); then now understand this, take it into thy heart and mind, and well weigh and consider it:

*hearken to the voice of my words*; either the preceding or following ones.

**Ver. 17.** *Shall even he that hateth right govern?* etc.] That hates moral and civil justice; is such an one fit to rule among men or over them? No, surely; for to love righteousness and do it is a qualification of a civil governor; it is his business to administer justice; and if an hater of it, he can never be a proper person to rule: and if God was an hater of that which is right, as he would seem to be if he did not do it, he would not be fit to govern the world as he does. To this absurdity is Job reduced, by suggesting that right was not done him, or that God had removed his judgment from him; (see <sup><1023></sup>2 Samuel 23:3 <sup><1085></sup>Genesis 18:25) (<sup><1815></sup>Romans 3:5,6). Mr. Broughton translates the words, “can a foe to judgment rule well?” And yet it cannot be denied, but must be owned, that God does judge in the earth, and judges righteously. Or shall such an one “bind” <sup>f1197</sup>? the allusion may be to a surgeon that binds up wounds. Sin makes wounds, and such as cannot be healed by men; but God can bind them up and cure them, and does: but would he do this if he hated that which is right, if he was not kind and

merciful, just and good? (see <sup><3060></sup>Hosea 6:1). Or, as others render it, which comes pretty near to the same sense, “shall a hater of judgment refrain wrath” <sup>f1198</sup>? Such are tyrants, cruel and unmerciful, full of wrath and vengeance, and which they execute in a barbarous manner: but such is not God; he stirs not up all his wrath, which he in justice might; he retains it not for ever, but delights in mercy;

*and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?* It is not right to condemn any just man, to charge him wrongfully, and then pass an unrighteous sentence on him; and much less to charge the righteous God with injustice, and condemn him that is most just, superlatively just; in whom there is not the least shadow of unrighteousness; who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works; who is naturally, essentially, and infinitely righteous.

**Ver. 18.** [*Is it fit to say to a king, [thou art] wicked?* etc.] Not even to a bad king; for though he may be reprov'd for his sins, yet not by any or everyone, but by a fit and proper person: and generally speaking, if not always, the Scriptural instances of reprov'g such kings are of men that were prophets, and sent in the name of the Lord to do it; and when done by them, was done with decency: and much less should this be said to a good king; as to say to him, Belial, the word here used; or thou art Belial; or a son of Belial, as Shimei said to David, (<sup><3067></sup>2 Samuel 16:7); a name given to the worst of men, and is the devil himself; and signifies either one without a yoke, or lawless, which a king is not; or unprofitable, whereas a king is a minister of God for good; is for the punishment of evildoers, and for a praise to them that do well;

*[and] to princes, [ye are] ungodly?* Who have their name from being generous, munificent, and liberal, and therefore should not be treated in such a manner; who are the sons of kings, or subordinate magistrates to them, and execute their will and pleasure, laws and precepts. And if now such language is not to be used to earthly kings and princes, then surely not to the King of kings and Lord of lords; so Jarchi interprets it of God the King of the world; and some Christian interpreters, as Schmidt, understand by “princes” the three Persons in the Godhead; which can hardly be made to bear: though, could the whole be understood of God in the three Persons of the Deity, the connection with (<sup><3349></sup>Job 34:19) would run more smoothly without the supplement that is made; so Broughton,

“to the King, the King of nobles, that accepteth not,” etc.

**Ver. 19.** [*How much less to him*] *that accepteth not the persons of princes*, etc.] And indeed God is not the respecter of the persons of any, no, not of the greatest men on earth, kings and princes, (<sup><410B></sup>Acts 10:34); these are alike dealt with by him as others in the dispensations of his providence; nor do they escape the marks of his displeasure, wrath and vengeance, when they sin against him:

*nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?* by showing favour to them, or conniving at them,

*for they [are] all the work of his hands*; both the rich and the poor; not only as creatures made by him, but as rich men and poor men; it is God that makes men rich or poor, (<sup><408E></sup>1 Samuel 2:7 <sup><422D></sup>Proverbs 22:9); instances follow proving this, that God is no respecter of persons on account of outward circumstances.

**Ver. 20.** *In a moment shall they die*, etc.] Princes as well as the common people, rich men as well as poor; all must and do die, great and small, high and low, kings and peasants, rich and poor men, and sometimes suddenly; are struck dead at once, and without any previous notice, that night, that hour, that moment their souls are required of them. The Targum interprets this of the men of Sodom. And Mr. Broughton, in his margin, refers to the history of them in (<sup><419D></sup>Genesis 19:1-38);

*and the people shall be troubled at midnight*; either the common people, when their kings and governors die; or the relations and friends of persons deceased; and this circumstance “at midnight” is added, which makes the scene more melancholy, awful, and shocking, when it happens at such a time. The above Targum understands it of the Egyptians, when their firstborn were slain, which was in the middle of the night; and Mr. Broughton refers in his margin to the same instance: but it is a question whether this affair ever came to the knowledge of Job and his friends, at least not so early as this controversy;

*and pass away*; not into another country, being taken and carried away captive; but pass away by death into their graves, and into another world. Saphorno interprets it of the destroying angel’s passing over the tents of the Israelites, and not entering into them to smite them when they smote the firstborn of Egypt. But the former sense is best, (see <sup><437C></sup>Psalms 37:36);

*and the mighty shall be taken away without hand*: without the hand of men, but by the immediate hand of God; not falling in battle, or in a

common natural way by diseases, but by some judgment of God upon them: and the whole verse seems to be understood not of a natural death, or in the common way, but of sudden death in a way of judgment, from the immediate hand of God, and that upon the mighty and great men of the earth; which shows that he is no respecter of princes, (see <sup><2085></sup>Daniel 8:25 11:20).

**Ver. 21.** *For his eyes [are] upon the ways of man*, etc.] Which denotes the omniscience of God, which reaches to every man, to every individual, and to all men in general; and to their ways, to every step taken by them, to the whole of their lives and conversations, and every action of them; to all their internal and external ways and goings; perhaps the former may be meant in this, and the latter in the following clause. This may denote all their inward thoughts, the workings of their mind, the imaginations of their heart; all their secret purposes, designs, and schemes; and all the desires and affections of their soul; and all these, whether good or bad:

*and he seeth all his goings*; the whole of his walk and conversation, conduct and behaviour; all his external ways, works, and actions; and these whether of good or bad men, (see <sup><8000></sup>Psalms 139:1-6).

**Ver. 22.** *[There is] no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*] By whom may be meant chiefly profane sinners that are abandoned to a vicious course of life, and make a trade of sin, or that the common course of their lives; though secret sinners, and even professors of religion, hypocrites, who in a more private manner live in sin, come under this name, (<sup><4073></sup>Matthew 7:23); such may endeavour to hide themselves through shame and fear, but all in vain and to no purpose; there is no screening themselves and their actions from the all-seeing eye of God, and from his wrath and vengeance. “No darkness” of any sort can hide them, not the thick clouds of the heavens, nor the darkness of the night; nor is there any darkness in God that can obstruct his sight of them; nor are they able to cast any mist before his eyes, or use any colourings, pretences, and excuses he cannot see through. “Nor shadow of death”: the grossest and thickest darkness; nor is even the grave itself an hiding place for sinners, from whence they will be raised to receive the just deserts of their sins. (see <sup><1802></sup>Job 10:21,22 14:13). Now from the omniscience of God, and his clear uninterrupted sight of all persons and their actions, inward and outward, Elihu argues to the justice of God, who therefore cannot do anything amiss through ignorance, error, or mistake.

**Ver. 23.** *For he will not lay upon man more [than right],* etc.] Neither in a way of duty, his law being holy, just, and good, not any of his commandments grievous, but all his precepts concerning all things right, his yoke easy and his burden light; nor in a way of punishment, always punishing then less than their iniquities deserve; nor in a way of chastisement, suffering nothing to befall his people but what is common to men; and he is faithful to bear them up under it and through it, and to make a way to escape out of it: or the phrase, “than right”, being a supplement, may be left out, and the words be connected with what follows,

*that he should enter into judgment with God;* and the sense is, either that God does not put it on man to go again into judgment with him; he does not suffer him to have a cause heard over again, to appeal from God or to him to have a second hearing; nor is anything to be got by it, he is in one mind, and none can turn him or reverse or get reversed any sentence of his; and therefore it was a piece of weakness in Job to insist so much as he did to have a hearing of his cause before him, since he could not expect there would be any alteration made in his favour: or, as Mr. Broughton reads it, “it is not for men to purpose to enter into judgment before the Omnipotent”; such a purpose is vain, he can never carry his cause against him; it is a piece of weakness to pretend to litigate a point with him: or the sense is, he puts no more on man than to come to him in judgment, so Schultens; he has appointed a person and time to judge the world in righteousness, and all must appear before his tribunal; and everything, thought, word and action, will then and there be brought into an account, and righteous judgment will pass; and therefore, since he has fixed such a method of proceeding, and requires no other, he can never be charged with injustice.

**Ver. 24.** *He shall break in pieces mighty men without number,* etc.] Such as are mighty in bodily strength, as the giants of the old world, and such as were inhabitants of some parts of the land of Canaan; or mighty in power and authority, being kings, princes, rulers, and governors, over nations and cities; or mighty in wealth and riches, which give men power and strength; these God can and sometimes does break in pieces like potters’ vessels, and even mighty kingdoms and nations themselves he will make like the chaff of the summer threshing floor: and even without number; or there have been and will be numberless instances of this kind; who can tell how many of these mighty men, men of gigantic stature, were drowned in the flood, or cut off by the sword of the Israelites in the land of Canaan? or

“without search”<sup>f1199</sup> as it may be rendered; either on the part of God, who needs not any, with whom are unnecessary any formal inquiries into a cause, or examination of witnesses, in order to a judicial process against delinquents, all being naked and open before him at once; or on the part of man, with whom the ways and judgments of God are unsearchable and who ought not closely and curiously to inquire into any of his proceedings, and the causes and reasons of them, who does all things after the counsel of his own will. Mr. Broughton renders it “without end”, for ever; with an everlasting destruction, an utter and irretrievable one; he so breaks them as that they never can be made whole again, like an earthen vessel that is broke to pieces and cannot be put together again;

*and set others in their stead*; God always provides for a succession in the world, that as when one generation goes off another comes on; when he destroyed the world with a flood, he preserved a family to replenish the earth; when the fathers of the Jewish nation, their carcasses fell in the wilderness, their children were raised up in their room to enter the good land and possess it; and particularly he provides for the civil government of the world and when he pulls down or removes one king he sets up another, and will not suffer kingdoms and states to fall into anarchy and confusion: and sometimes, when he casts down the mighty from their seats, he exalts men of low degree, as when he rejected Saul he took David from the sheepfold, (<sup><0961></sup>1 Samuel 16:11-13); and makes such kings and kingdoms to “stand”<sup>f1200</sup> stable and firm, as the kingdom of David, and as the word here used signifies.

**Ver. 25.** *Therefore he knoweth their works*, etc.] Being God omniscient, or rather takes notice of them, weighs and considers them, and gives to man according to them; or rather makes them known, for of his omniscience Elihu had spoken before; he makes them known to themselves, fastens convictions of their evil ways and works on their consciences, and obliges them to confess them, as the instances of Cain, Pharaoh, and others, show; and he makes them known to others by the judgment he executes, as on the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah; and the works of all will be made manifest at the day of judgment;

*and he overturneth [them] in the night*; literally taken, as the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain in the night, (<sup><0923></sup>Exodus 12:30); and Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red sea in the night, (<sup><0954></sup>Exodus 15:4); and the Assyrian army were destroyed by an angel in one night, (<sup><1295></sup>2 Kings

19:35); and Belshazzar was killed in the night, and the Babylonian empire translated to the Medes and Persians at the same time, (<sup>2183</sup>Daniel 5:30,31): or figuratively, that is, suddenly, at unawares, and by surprise, and as quickly and easily as the night is turned into day; and such a revolution is made, as when he turns the night into day, and discovers and makes known all their secret actions committed in the dark; or he turns the night of calamity upon them, and puts an end to their light of temporal happiness and prosperity; or turns the night of death and everlasting wrath and justice on them, the blackness of darkness upon them:

*so that they are destroyed*; both in a temporal sense, on every side, with an utter destruction; and in a spiritual sense, with an everlasting one.

**Ver. 26.** *He striketh them as wicked men*, etc.] Such is the strict justice of God, that he never strikes men, or inflicts punishment on them, or brings down his judgments upon them, but as wicked men, and because of their wickedness; the casting of man out of Eden was for his sin, as well as the casting down the angels from heaven that sinned; the drowning of the old world, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the ruin of Pharaoh and his host, the driving the Canaanites out of their land, the various captivities of the Israelites, with other instances of God's displeasure with men in this world, and the everlasting punishment of them in another, are only of them as wicked men, and for sin; and therefore he is not chargeable with any unrighteousness. Saphorno interprets it, "instead of wicked men", and illustrates it by the shaking out of Pharaoh and his host into the sea in the room and stead of the wicked Israelites, that came up from thence,

*in the open sight of others*: which the same interpreter refers to the Israelites seeing the Egyptians dead on the seashore; or "in the place of them that see"<sup>f1201</sup>, that is, in a public manner, as generally malefactors are executed, to which the allusion may be; it denotes the publicness of God's righteous judgments on wicked men, for the greater declaration of his power and justice, and for the greater shame and disgrace of such wicked men, and for the joy and comfort of the righteous delivered from them.

**Ver. 27.** *Because they turned back from him*, etc.] Became apostates from the ways and worship of God, as the posterity of Cain before the flood, and the posterity of Ham after it; who had been educated and trained up therein, and turned from the law of God, as the Septuagint version, from the light and law of nature:



*and would not consider any of his ways*; either of providence, whether in a way of mercy which might lead to repentance, or in a way of judgment which might be a caution and instruction to them; or of his precepts, the way of his commandments, not any of these would they consider; so as to express a value for them, show any regard to them, and walk in them; and which was owing to the stubbornness of their wills; they would not advert to them.

**Ver. 28.** *So that they cause the cry of the poor to come to him*, etc.] To God; through their oppressions of the poor they are made to cry by reason of them, and who come to God with their cries, and tears, and supplications, and which enter into the ears of the Lord of hosts;

*and he heareth the cry of the afflicted*; as he did the cry of the Israelites under Egyptian bondage; he is a God hearing and answering prayer, and he particularly attends to the cry of the humble and of the afflicted, and arises for their help and deliverance.

**Ver. 29.** *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?* etc.] Quietness or peace is of God; external peace to bodies of men, to communities, civil and religious, and to particular persons; quietness and contentment in outward enjoyments, peace and safety at home, and from enemies abroad; inward spiritual peace, this is of God, is in Christ, and from him; is the fruit of his righteousness, spoke by his blood, comes through faith in Christ, and is enjoyed in his ordinances, and continues as long as it is the pleasure of God to give it, and cannot be disturbed by men or devils; a national peace, when God gives it, cannot be broke in upon; nor the peace of churches, though there are always some inclined to be troublers of the Israel of God; nor the peace of particular persons, not their outward peace and quietness, when God sets an hedge of providence about them; nor their inward peace, not by all the afflictions and persecutions they meet with in the world; nor by all the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of their own hearts. The Targum is, “who shall condemn?” and so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions; when God acquits, absolves, and justifies men, who can condemn them? (see ~~883~~ Romans 8:33 ~~2818~~ Isaiah 50:8,9). When God pronounces the sentence of justification by the righteousness of Christ in the conscience of a sinner, it produces peace solid and substantial, and this being done, who shall condemn? or of what avail will their condemnation be? whether of the law, or of Satan, or of the world, or of themselves, of their own hearts;

*and when he hideth [his] face, who then can behold him? whether [it be done] against a nation, or against a man only;* whether God hides his face from a nation, as he sometimes did from the nation of Israel, because of their sins; when he would not hear their prayers, nor assist them against their enemies, nor arise for their help and deliverance out of their hands: or from his church and people, his spiritual Jacob and Israel, as when they complain, their way is hid from the Lord, and the Lord has forgotten and forsaken them; or from particular persons, as from David, Heman, and others; and who, of the Lord's people, but at one time or another are under the hidings of his face? and then there is no finding him, no looking to him with comfort and confidence; no looking into and beholding the works and ways of God, and the causes of his dealings with them; these are out of sight, his ways are in the deep, and his footsteps are not known. Some refer this to men; who will show favour to him whom God frowns upon? who will look at him in a pleasant manner, when God hides his face from him?

**Ver. 30.** *That the hypocrite reign not,* etc.] These words seem to be connected with (<sup><38324></sup>Job 34:24-28), "he breaketh in pieces mighty men", etc. the whole of (<sup><38329></sup>Job 34:29) being read in a parenthesis; or with the phrase "he hideth his face"; as God is said to be in the destruction of mighty wicked men, who oppress the poor, and cause their cry to come to God, to prevent the reign of an hypocrite, or however to shorten it. By "an hypocrite" is not meant a common hypocrite in religion, but an hypocrite in politics; who pretends to great humanity and goodness, to a tender care of the people, and a preservation of them in their rights and liberties, and promises to support and establish the constitution, and observe the laws of the nation, with a show of zeal for the religion professed in it. But when he has ascended the throne, and got the power into his hands, he throws off the mask and becomes a tyrant; and men of such a temper, either God does not suffer to ascend the throne, but if they do get on it through artifice and deceit, he suffers them not to continue, but deposes them, and cuts their reign short: and this he does

*lest the people be ensnared;* be brought into bondage, and lose their rights, privileges, and liberties; or lest they be drawn into sin by their precepts or examples. Some take the sense of the words to be, that God suffers not such to reign, but when he does it is because of the offences or sins of the people; he gives them such kings in his wrath, to punish them for their iniquities.

**Ver. 31.** *Surely it is meet to be said unto God*, etc.] By any afflicted person under his chastising hand, and particularly by Job, for whom the advice and instructions in this verse and (~~834E~~ Job 34:32) are designed:

*I have borne [chastisement]*; the word “chastisement” is not in the text, but is very properly supplied, as it is by Jarchi and others; the affliction of God’s people is a fatherly chastisement, and should be considered and borne as such; and it becomes an afflicted good man to say,

“I have borne and still do bear, and I am content yet to bear, the chastisement of the Lord; I am desirous to bear it willingly, cheerfully, and patiently, until he is pleased to remove it from me.”

(see ~~370D~~ Micah 7:9);

*I will not offend [any more]*; that is, sin any more; sin is an offence to God, being contrary to his nature, and a breach of his law; Job had sinned as every good man does, no man is without sin, in many things we all offend; and on account of sin God chastens his people, and the design of it is to bring them to a sense and acknowledgment of it; and it becomes them under chastening providences to confess it, and humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and in the strength of divine grace determine to be careful not to offend more. Some render the words “I will not corrupt” <sup>f1202</sup>; that is, myself or others, my ways and works, by sinning; and others, “I will not break”, or “break through” <sup>f1203</sup>; the commands of God; and so the sense of this and the former version is much the same with ours; or I will not endeavour to break through the afflictive providence in which I am shut up, or break off the fetters and cords of affliction, but bear all patiently, until it is the Lord’s time and will to set me at liberty. Some, as Ben Gersom, interpret this and the preceding clause, “I pardon, I will not destroy”; or “will not retain a pledge”, as others <sup>f1204</sup>; and so take them to be the words of God himself; and thus Mr. Broughton renders the whole verse,

“now unto the Omnipotent, which saith, I pardon, I will not destroy, “this should” be said,”

namely, what follows in (~~834E~~ Job 34:32) <sup>f1205</sup>; it is the prerogative of God, and it is his grace to pardon, and such whom he pardons he never destroys, but accepts, discharges, and remits the surety’s bond or pledge; and nothing more effectually engages to a careful abstinence from sin for the

future, than a sense of pardoning grace; and it highly becomes such persons to say what they are next directed to.

**Ver. 32.** [*That which I see not teach thou me*, etc.] Which may be understood either of the chastisements of God, and his dealings with his people in a providential way, and of the design and use of them, which are sometimes unsearchable, and at most but a part of them only seen and known; it is meet to say to God, it is but a small part and portion of thy ways that is known by me; I can see but little into them: teach me more of thy mind and will in them, or else of sins and transgressions, the cause of chastisement; it is proper for an afflicted man to say unto God, I am conscious to myself of many sinful failings and infirmities, but there may be secret sins committed by me which have escaped my notice and observation; point them out to me, that I may be humbled for them, and make a free confession of them;

*if I have done iniquity, I will do no more*; that is, if I have committed any capital crime, any foul offence or gross enormity, for otherwise no man lives without sin, I sincerely repent of it, and will take care for the future, through divine grace, to do so no more.

**Ver. 33.** [*Should it be according, to thy mind?* etc.] O Job, for the words seem to be directed to him; and may respect either the government of the world in general, and the disposal of all things in it, treated of in this chapter, though more remotely, (<sup><88413></sup>Job 34:13). Is it not proper that God should govern it, who has made it, and do all things in it as he pleases? is it fit he should consult with men what to do, or be instructed and taught by them in the path of judgment? is it meet that every man should have his mind and will, and have everything go in the form and course most eligible to him? Or else they may respect chastisement, with which the words are more nearly connected; and so the sense be, should man be consulted, as Job or any other, and his mind known first, whether he should be chastened or not? should a son or a servant be asked first by a parent or master, whether it is fitting to give correction or not? or is man to be advised with in what way and manner he should be chastened of God, whether in his person, or family, or estate? or how long the chastening should endure upon him, and when it should be removed? no, surely; all should be left with God, the wise and sovereign Disposer of all things;

*he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose, and not I*; that is, God will recompense chastisement; he will chastise whom he

pleases, and in what manner he pleases, and as long as he pleases, whether man consents or submits to it or not; he will not ask his leave; he will do according to the counsel of his own will; and thou Job mayest choose or refuse to submit to him as thou likest best; for my part, was it my case, I would not refuse submission to his will; I would say, “it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight”. Some make this last clause the words of God, put by way of question, “shouldest thou choose or refuse, and not I?” shouldest thou have thine option and refusal, and not I? should man be his own chooser, or choose for himself what he likes best? should he not say, the Lord shall choose mine inheritance for me, though that inheritance is affliction? The words are rendered by others to different senses, all which to observe would be too tedious: some <sup>f1206</sup> to this sense,

“what is of thyself God recompenses;”

sin is of a man’s self, it flows from his corrupt heart and will, he is not tempted to it of God; nor is it to be ascribed to the temptations of Satan, which, though they may have their influence, sin is a man’s own act and deed; and God will recompense it in one way or another, whether man will or not; either in a way of punishment on the sinner himself, or on his surety for him; or in a way of fatherly correction and chastisement; and this is the Lord’s doing and not mine, and he is just in so doing;

*therefore speak what thou knowest*: if thou knowest anything better than this, or canst contradict what is said: or as others <sup>f1207</sup> to this purpose,

“did ever such a speech come from thee, as expressed in the preceding verses? God will recompense it, if thou refusest to speak in such a submissive manner; thou mayest refuse to do it, I would not; I should choose to submit and hear the affliction patiently; if thou thinkest otherwise, speak out thy mind.”

**Ver. 34.** *Let men of understanding tell me*, etc.] Whether I am right or wrong:

*and let a wise man hearken unto me*; to what I have said or shall say. Elihu here addresses the company around him, the wise and intelligent part of them; the words may be rendered in the future tense, men of understanding “will” tell me <sup>f1208</sup>, and a wise man “will” hearken to me and assent, not only to what I have said, but to what I am about to say, namely, what follows.

**Ver. 35.** *Job hath spoken without knowledge*, etc.] Not that Job was an ignorant man, either in things natural or divine; but in this point, about the chastening hand of God upon him, he had said some things which betrayed lack of knowledge, as in (~~4815~~ Job 34:5);

*and his words [were] without wisdom*; Job was not destitute of human wisdom, nor of spiritual wisdom, but no man is wise at all times; some things had dropped from him which savoured of folly and ignorance, and which he afterwards was convinced of, and confessed with shame, (~~4810~~ Job 40:4,5 42:3); being charged by the Lord himself with what he is here by Elihu, (~~4880~~ Job 38:2); and it may be observed, that Elihu does not charge Job with being a wicked man, as his three friends did, but as having spoken unadvisedly with lips, under his chastening circumstances, and which he labours to convince him of.

**Ver. 36.** *My desire [is that] Job may be tried unto the end*, etc.] This is my opinion, or what “I bring in”<sup>f1209</sup> adduce, and lay before you, men of understanding and wisdom, and leave it with you to consider of. Some render it, “O my Father, let Job be tried”, etc. as if it was an apostrophe to God, and a request to him; so Mr. Broughton, who adds,

“which art in heaven,”

and the same is added by some Jewish interpreters<sup>f1210</sup>, as there are others<sup>f1211</sup> of them which go this way, and also several Christian commentators<sup>f1212</sup>; and of late<sup>f1213</sup> it has been urged, from this and other passages, that Elihu was Christ, who here addresses God as his father: but this is his New Testament title; and though God is the father of all men by creation, and of saints by adoption, yet this relation and title are not so frequently claimed under the former dispensation, or however not so early as the times of Job, but are more peculiar to the Gospel dispensation, under which saints receive “not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father”, (~~4815~~ Romans 8:15); wherefore admitting this version, rather some grave venerable person, as Eliphaz<sup>f1214</sup>, senior to Elihu, who was a young man, is addressed under this title; or the whole circle of Job’s friends now about him, all elder than Elihu, may be intended; “father” for “fathers”, the singular for the plural, (see ~~4400~~ Acts 7:2); and what he proposes is, that they should make it their joint request at the throne of grace, that Job’s afflictions be still continued; that he might be thoroughly tried by them, and be purged from all his dross, he not appearing yet to be thoroughly sensible of his sinful speeches, and humbled

for them; and therefore it was proper he should be still corrected and chastened to the end, or unto victory, as Mr. Broughton, or until victory was obtained, and he was obliged to yield, and cry “peccavi”: but since afflictions are things not joyous but grievous, and it does not seem so agreeable to a good man, kind and humane, to desire the continuance of the afflictions of another, though palliated with a plausible for his good; it seems better to understand this as a motion made to the understanding part of the company by Elihu, that the words of Job, which he had spoken without knowledge and wisdom, might be taken under strict examination by them, and thoroughly scanned, that it might be better known what was proper to be said more to him for his conviction;

*because of [his] answers for wicked men*; or concerning or relative to such answers which he had made, which were like to those which wicked men make; who charge the ways of God with inequality and want of equity, ask where is the God of judgment? or which serve the cause of the wicked, and which furnish them with arguments, prepare them for them, and put them into their mouths, to argue against God and his providential dealings with men, and against all religion. (see <sup><1848></sup>Job 34:8).

**Ver. 37.** *For he addeth rebellion unto his sin*, etc.] Or he “may” or “will” add <sup>f1215</sup>, if he is suffered to go on at this rate, and is not stopped; as yet he has only committed, it may be charitably hoped, some sins through ignorance, error, and mistake, but if he is let alone he will proceed from evil to evil, to more ungodliness; to be guilty of presumptuous sins, of open treason and rebellion against God;

*he clappeth [his hands] amongst us*, or “he will clap”; he will either clap his hands together as expressive of extreme grief and sorrow, of the agonies of his mind; showing extravagant impatience, and pouring out his complaints in the most bitter manner, (see <sup><2114></sup>Ezekiel 21:14); or rather by way of joy and triumph, as having got the victory over us, (see <sup><970></sup>Psalms 47:1);

*and multiplieth his words against God*, or “will multiply”; he has said too many things already against God, his justice in his dealings with him, (<sup><1845></sup>Job 34:5); he will say more if he is not restrained. These are the reasons Elihu gives for a thorough trial and strict examination of Job; and they are taken partly from a concern for the good of Job, and partly on their account, that they might not be triumphed over, and chiefly for the glory of God.