

CHAPTER 36

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 36

This chapter, with the following, contains Elihu's fourth and last discourse, the principal view of which is to vindicate the righteousness of God; which is done by observing the dealings of God with men in his providence, according to their different characters, and from the wonderful works wrought by him in a sovereign manner, and for the benefit of his creatures. This chapter is introduced with a preface, the design of which is to gain attention, (^{<K311>}Job 36:1-4); the different dealings of God with men are observed, and the different issue of them, and the different ends answered thereby, (^{<K315>}Job 36:5-15); and it is suggested to Job, that had he attended to the design of the providence he was under, and had submitted to it patiently, things would have been otherwise with him; and therefore Elihu proceeds to give him some advice, which, if taken, would be for his own good, and the glory of God, (^{<K316>}Job 36:16-25); and closes the chapter by observing the unsearchable greatness of God, as appears by the works of nature wrought by him, (^{<K315>}Job 36:26-33).

Ver. 1. *Elihu also proceeded, and said.*] Or "added"^{f1227} what follows to his former discourses; pausing a while to see whether Job would make any reply to what he had already said; but perceiving he had no inclination to do it, and having more upon his mind to deliver, went on with his discourse.

Ver. 2. *Suffer me a little,* etc.] Bear with me a little longer, and allow me to say a few words more. I have but little more to say, and it will take but a little time to say it in; thus, proposing brevity, he hoped to be heard with patience, since he should not long trespass upon it. The word used has the signification of a crown; but not to be understood in the sense of surrounding, as a crown surrounds the head, as some, who interpret it, stand about me, surround me, in order to hear; for this cannot with propriety be said to a single person; but rather in the sense of doing honour, as Aben Ezra; and so the meaning may be, do me the honour of giving; me thy presence a little longer, and hearing me out patiently;

and I will show thee: make things clear, manifest, and plain to thee: clearness of expression, with brevity, recommends a discourse. Something may be here supplied; for a greater stop is here to be made than in our version, as either “my opinion”, as in (^{<18210>}Job 32:10,17); his sentiment concerning God and his righteousness in his dealings with the sons of men; or “truth”, as Ben Gersom; truth in general, plain naked truth, without any colouring, just as it is, cordially, sincerely, in love, and by clear manifestations of it; and particularly the truth of the righteousness of God in all his ways and works. He proposed to make it clear to him that God did all things well and right, and to lay before him in the plainest manner what were the ends God had in view in dealing thus with Job, and what was his duty to do in his present circumstances;

that [I have] yet to speak in God’s behalf: or “for I have yet to speak”^{f1228}, etc. Elihu had said much for God already, in vindication of his sovereignty, purity, holiness, and justice, and he had yet more to say; out of the abundance of his heart his mouth spake for God; he set out with this, that he was full of matter, and wanted to vent himself, that he might be eased, (^{<18218>}Job 32:18-20); and he had vented much, but he had yet more to deliver; and since it was not for himself, in his own behalf, nor of any other but God, he hoped he should be heard: it may be rendered, “for yet God has words”^{f1229}, to put into my mouth, and speak by me; signifying, that he had spoken by him already, and had still more to say by him; and since it was not so much he that spoke, as God that spoke in him and by him, it might be expected he would be heard.

Ver. 3. *I will fetch my knowledge from afar*, etc.] Not from himself; for it is but a small share of knowledge that a man gets of himself, or attains to by the light of nature, and especially concerning God and divine things; but from others, either from persons that lived in former ages, and in foreign countries; it being usual for men desirous of acquiring knowledge to travel into distant parts for it; and such were generally much esteemed of, and the knowledge they professed to have got and published; as the queen of Sheba came from the further parts of the earth to hear and learn the wisdom of Solomon, (^{<1100>}1 Kings 10:1): or rather the sense is, he would fetch the knowledge he should now communicate concerning God from God himself, from the nature and perfections of God, who, and his knowledge, are high as heaven; and from the works of God, which are far above men; or should treat of things deep and sublime, and not common; though perhaps it is best of all to read the words, “I will bring forth

knowledge concerning”, or “with respect to him that is afar off”^{f1230}; that is, God, who is in the highest heavens, and inhabits the high and holy place; a God both at hand and afar off; with which agrees what follows; though some interpret it of lifting it up, and causing it to be heard afar off so some, as Aben Ezra;

and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker: God is the Maker of all men; Elihu considered him as his Maker with gratitude, while many have no regard of him, (^{<8850>}Job 35:10); and therefore thought himself obliged to speak for him, and on his behalf; and particularly in vindication of his righteousness; assert this to be an essential attribute and perfection of his nature; own, acknowledge, publish, and declare it; give him the glory of it, and demonstrate that he is righteous in all his ways and works; and clear him from all imputation of unrighteousness.

Ver. 4. *For truly my words [shall] not [be] false*, etc.] But strictly true; he would take the utmost care to say nothing but the truth, with the greatest impartiality and sincerity, so that what was said might be depended upon; truth spoken briefly, clearly, and on so important a subject as the righteousness of God, deserved attention;

he that is perfect in knowledge [is] with thee; meaning either God, whose knowledge is perfect, who knows all persons and things; knows himself, his nature, persons, and perfections; his thoughts, counsels, and purposes; all his creatures, angels and men; the hearts of all men, their thoughts, words, and works; he, the omniscient and omnipresent God was with Job, from whose presence there is no fleeing; and therefore it became him to be careful of his thoughts, words, and actions; that he did not entertain any unbecoming thoughts of God, and say anything unworthy of him, or do anything that tended to his dishonour; since he was present with him, and nothing could escape his notice: or else Elihu means himself; suggesting, that he who undertook to speak for God and plead his cause, and clear him from the charge of unrighteousness, was no novice, but one that thoroughly understood the point in hand; and though no man is perfect in knowledge in an absolute sense, yet may be in comparison of others; or however may be upright and sincere in his knowledge; which sense the word used often has; and so it may signify, that as he was a sincere searcher after knowledge, and had through divine goodness attained to a competent share of it, even of sound and not superficial knowledge, he should be honest and upright in the communication of it; and this he might

choose to observe the more, to excite the attention of Job to what he had to say; though it may be the truest reading of the words is, “perfect knowledge” or “perfection of knowledge is with thee”^{f1231}, that is, in his own apprehension, so Jarchi; and may be understood either ironically, or rather really, insinuating that Job was a man of such consummate wisdom and knowledge, that he would easily see the force of his reasonings, and the justness of them, and acquiesce in them; and having thus prefaced his discourse, he next enters upon his subject.

Ver. 5. *Behold, God [is] mighty*, etc.] This is a clear plain truth, easy to be discerned, and worthy of notice, and therefore introduced with a “behold”; that God is mighty, the most mighty, the Almighty, as appears from his works of nature and providence; making all things out of nothing, upholding them by the word of his power, and governing and overruling all things in the world, and doing in it whatever he pleases: and from the works of redemption and grace; ransoming his people out of the hands of them that are stronger than they; converting them by the power of his grace; assisting them to do all they do in a spiritual way; supporting them under all their troubles; protecting and defending them from all their enemies; supplying all their wants, and preserving them safe to his kingdom and glory;

and despises not [any]; not the meanest of his creatures, clothing the grass of the field, feeding the fowls of the air, and preserving man and beast; and particularly he despises not any of the sons of men: not the mighty through fear of them, nor envy at them, whose power and grandeur are from him, which he gives and can take away at his pleasure; nor the mean and miserable the poor and the afflicted, to whom he has a merciful regard; much less the innocent and harmless, as the Septuagint; or the just and righteous man, as the Targum: he does not despise his own people, whom he has loved and chosen, redeemed and called; nor any, as Aben Ezra observes, without a cause; for though there are some whose image he will despise, it is because of their own sins and transgressions; and since, therefore, though he is mighty, yet despises not any of his creatures, he cannot do any unrighteous thing; he does not and cannot use or abuse his power to the injury of any of his creatures;

[he is] mighty in strength [and] wisdom, as there is a pleonasm, a redundancy in the expression, “mighty in strength”, it denotes the abundance of his strength, that he is exceeding strong, superlatively and all

expression so; and also strong in wisdom, his strength is tempered with wisdom, so that he cannot employ it to any bad purpose, or be guilty of any unrighteousness. Some men have strength, but not wisdom to make a right use of it; but God abounds as much in wisdom as in strength; he is the only wise and the all wise God, and therefore can do no injustice; and thus Elihu, as he promised, ascribes righteousness to his almighty Maker.

Ver. 6. *He preserveth not the life of the wicked,* etc.] He makes a difference between wicked and righteous men, which shows him to be a holy and righteous God; though he preserves the life of all men so long as they live, yet not in the same way; he preserves the lives of wicked men in the common course of his providence, but not in a special way and manner, as he does the lives of the righteous, which are dear and precious to him; nor does he preserve to any great length such as are notorious sinners, who are guilty of capital crimes, as murder, etc. their lives are shortened, and they do not live out half their days: or he does not quicken them, bestow his spiritual favour upon them, in which only is life; and though they will be quickened and raised at the last day, as well as the righteous, yet not to the resurrection of life, but to the resurrection of damnation;

but giveth right to the poor; pleads their cause and rights their wrongs, administers justice to them, especially to the poor in spirit, who hunger and thirst after righteousness; to these he gives freely the righteousness of his son, which only denominates persons truly righteous: of whom in (~~Job~~ Job 36:7).

Ver. 7. *He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous,* etc.] His eyes of providence are upon them to supply their temporal wants, and to protect and defend them from their enemies, and they are never off of them; his eyes of love, grace, and mercy, are upon them; he always viewed them as righteous in his Son, and through his righteousness imputed; and looked upon them with delight and pleasure, and always so views them; they are engraven on his heart and on his hands, and are ever before him, and in his sight: and his eyes are upon them from the beginning of the year to the end of it, yea, from one eternity to another; these were set upon them from everlasting, and are upon them in time; at the time of their conversion to quicken them, and call them by his grace; and afterwards they continue upon them under all their afflictions, temptations, and desertions, and ever will remain on them; they will never be withdrawn, nothing can separate them from the love of God;

but with kings [are they] on the throne; that is, either the eyes of the Lord are with them, even with righteous kings, as the Targum; to guide and direct them in the affairs of government, and to protect and preserve them from the designs of evil men: or the righteous are with kings on the throne, or are the favourites of kings that are on thrones; are admitted into their presence, and are highly esteemed by them, and have honour conferred on them, even to be the next to them in the throne and kingdom, as Joseph and Daniel, (^{<0444>}Genesis 41:41 ^{<0708>}Daniel 2:48): or rather, the righteous are equal to kings on the throne; they are so accounted of by the Lord as kings; they are made by him kings and priests, and are regarded by him as such; they have the power, and riches, and honour of kings; they have a kingdom of grace bestowed on them now, and a kingdom of glory they are entitled to hereafter; and shall reign with Christ on earth a thousand years, and in the ultimate glory to all eternity, (^{<6016>}Revelation 20:6);

yea, he doth establish them for ever; as righteous persons in their righteousness, which is an everlasting one; so that they shall never come into condemnation: they are established in the love of God, in the covenant of grace, in the hands of Christ, and in a state of grace now, and shall be in a stable permanent state of happiness to all eternity;

and they are exalted: now, being raised as beggars from the dung hill to sit among princes, even among the princes of God's people; and they will be exalted hereafter, and sit at Christ's right hand, and be introduced into his kingdom, where they will be set down with him in his throne, and reign with him for ever and ever, (^{<6215>}Revelation 22:5).

Ver. 8. *And if [they be] bound in fetters*, etc.] Not the wicked, as the Targum, but the righteous spoken of in (^{<8307>}Job 36:7), with which this is closely connected; and this is not to be understood of righteous kings on the throne in particular, or their special favourites, but of the righteous in general; and not in a literal sense, of their bonds and imprisonment for religion and righteousness sake, which is sometimes their lot; but in a figurative sense, of afflictions, as chastenings and corrections for sin, as appears by the next clause; and the design is to obviate an objection, and to show that the eye of God is upon them, and his heart towards them; and they are not the less objects of his love and delight, of his value and esteem, care and protection, though they are afflicted by him, and, as it may seem, used with some severity; seeing he has gracious ends and designs in all this, which are suggested in the following verses;

[and] be holden in cords of affliction; righteous men are not exempt from afflictions; the afflictions of the righteous are many, according to divine appointment, the covenant of grace, the declaration of God, the constant experience of good men, it being the way in which they are all led, and must enter into the kingdom; and the metaphor here used shows that afflictions are sometimes heavy upon them, like fetters and chains, and those made heavy by the hand of God pressing them sore, (~~2XIV~~Lamentations 3:7); no affliction is joyous, but grievous and heavy in itself; it is indeed comparatively light when viewed with the weight of glory; and God can make a heavy affliction light with his presence, and the discoveries of his love; but they are heavy to the flesh, as Job felt his to be, (~~RII~~Job 6:2,3,12 23:2,3); and, like fetters and cords, they cannot free themselves from them, or loose them, until it is the pleasure of God to take them off; and moreover by these they are sometimes held and restrained from going into more or greater sins, which is one use of them: as they are with afflictions hedged about that they cannot come out, any more than a person bound fast in a prison; so they are hedged up with thorns that they cannot go out after their lovers, (~~2XIV~~Lamentations 3:7) (~~2XIV~~Hosea 2:6). Some render the phrase, “cords of poverty”^{f1232}; it is oftentimes the case of righteous persons to be poor, and to be sadly hampered with poverty, and out of which, by all that they can do, cannot extricate themselves; and sometimes they fall into it, and are held in it, after they have enjoyed much worldly prosperity, which was the case of Job. Mr. Broughton renders it, cords of anguish; and indeed the word for “cords” is used of the pains of a woman in travail, who has then great anguish and trouble; and anguish on various accounts lays hold on the righteous, and they are holden thereby, and cannot relieve themselves, (~~RII~~Psalm 119:143); and yet this is all in mercy, and to answer some good ends and purposes, as follow.

Ver. 9. *Then he showeth them their work*, etc.] Either what they ought to do, so the Tigurine version; and which they have not done, their sins of omission; when they have been negligent either of the duty of prayer in private and public, or of attendance on the ordinances of the house of God; then he sends an affliction, and by it, as in a glass, presents to their view the omissions they have been guilty of: or else the work which they have done, and should not have done, their sins of commission: sin is a work at which some toil and labour, and weary themselves to commit; it is a work of the flesh; and so it is in good men; it is a man’s own work, and which he can work of himself; to have a will, and to do good works, is owing to

God working in his people, and it is through him strengthening them they do them; but sin fill works are their own act and deed, though tempted to them by others, and which they are able to do of their own freewill and power. Now God, in the glass of affliction, holds forth to view the sinful actions of good men, and brings them to their remembrance which they had forgotten; as the cases of Joseph's brethren, David, and others, prove: the Lord shows them that they have done such actions, and shows them the evil of them, how exceeding sinful they are; and humbles them under a sense of them, and brings them to repentance for them, and the acknowledgment of them; which sense is confirmed by the next clause, which explains what this their work is,

and their transgressions that they have exceeded. Sin is a transgression of the law, (^{<410>}1 John 3:4); every sin, greater or lesser, is, and even righteous persons are guilty of many; for there is not a just man that sinneth not; and these exceed the bounds set by the righteous law of God, and many of them are sadly aggravated by the light and knowledge, grace and mercy, such have been favoured with; and some of them, they are suffered to fall into, are exceeding great and exceeding sinful; such as those of David, Peter, and others; all which they are made to see, bewail, and weep over, when God by afflictions brings them to a sense of them. Or "when" or "because they have prevailed"^{f1233}; or begin to prevail: as soon as ever indwelling sin begins to be prevalent, the Lord is pleased to take measures to nip it in the bud, by sending a sharp and severe affliction; or when it has prevailed greatly, as sometimes it does, so that good is hindered from being done, and much evil is committed, then the soul is so much under the power of it, as to be carried captive with it; (see ^{<417>}Romans 7:23,24). Or "because they are become proud", or "behaved themselves proudly"^{f1234}; and therefore he afflicts them to humble them, and drive pride from them.

Ver. 10. *He openeth also their ear to discipline,* etc.] Or "to correction"^{f1235}; to the rod of correction; to hear the voice of it and him that has appointed it; its reproving voice for sin, its directing voice to duty, and its commanding voice to return from iniquity, as in the next clause. Or "to instruction"^{f1236}; God's corrections of his people being instructions to them, whereby they learn more of their duty, and of the rich experiences of grace; their faith, hope, love, and patience, are tried and increased hereby; and more of the love of God, of his care and faithfulness, of his covenant, of his gracious presence, and communion with God, what it is; and even of the doctrines of the everlasting Gospel: sometimes more is learned by an

affliction than by a sermon. Now in order to hearken hereunto, to the voice of God in an affliction, the ear must be opened; which is first done in conversion by the mighty power of God: but sometimes good men fall asleep, and are inattentive to divine things; and this is one way God takes to awaken them, to arouse their attention; he speaks to them out of a whirlwind; he sends some terrible startling affliction, which fetches them out of their slumber, and so their ears are opened to hear what he says in it: at the noise of his waterspouts, and his billows one after another rolling over them, they are awakened to a sense of their sin and duty, (^{<4907>}Psalm 42:7);

and commandeth that they return from iniquity; repent of their sin, turn from it and forsake it: such a strong voice has an affliction in it, when sanctified and attended with the spirit and power of God; then it effectually teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, as the word of God, the Gospel of the grace of God does, when accompanied with the same; as there is a commanding voice in the one, so there is in the other; and happy it is when such ends as these are answered by afflictions.

Ver. 11. *If they obey and serve [him]*, etc.] That is, God, to whom so many things are ascribed in the preceding verses; and who only is to be obeyed and served in a religious way, with the obedience of faith and love, in all his commands and ordinances. But here not so much obedience to his word, his law or Gospel, as to his rod is intended: “if they hear”, etc. ^{f1237}; hear the rod and him that has appointed it; hearken to his reproving, instructing, and commanding voice, in affliction; to his calls, cautions, and admonitions thereby given; and act according to them; humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and return from iniquity:

they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures; which intimates, that those to whom afflictions are sanctified, and they obedient under them, when recovered out of them shall enjoy long life; not only live many days, but years, and those in great prosperity and pleasure; be blessed with much temporal prosperity, which lies in riches and wealth, as this word is rendered in (^{<8213>}Job 21:13); and in bodily health, which is a considerable part of outward prosperity; but more especially prosperity of soul may be intended, (see ^{<6012>}3 John 1:2); which is enjoyed when a man is favoured with the discoveries of the love of God to him; with applications of pardoning grace and mercy; when grace is in lively exercise in him, and he has a spiritual appetite for the good word of God, and is fruitful in every

good work: and so pleasures do not so much design corporeal pleasures, though ever so innocent and lawful; for though they may at proper times be indulged unto, yet a man's days and years are not to be spent in them; but rather spiritual pleasures, which are had in views of the wonderful love of God in Christ; in the enjoyment of the gracious presence of God, and communion with him; and which the people of God are favoured with, in his house and ordinances, ways and worship: and when those years are gone, endless pleasures at God's right hand, and in his presence, will follow.

Ver. 12. *But if they obey not*, etc.] Who seem to be righteous and are not; and when afflicted are not submissive to the will of God; attend not to the voice of his providence; receive no instruction thereby; but kick against the pricks, and rebel, against God; complain of him, and murmur at his dealings with them:

they shall perish by the sword; or they shall pass away out of the world by it, or by some missive weapon: they shall die a violent death, by the sword of justice, of the civil magistrate, or by the sword of men; or, as a Jewish commentator^{f1238} paraphrases it, by the dart of death, by the sword of Satan, they shall pass out of this world;

and they shall die without knowledge; without knowledge of their death being near, it coming upon them suddenly and at unawares; or without knowledge of themselves and of their miserable and lost estate; and without knowledge of Christ, and of God in Christ, and of the way of salvation by him. Or they shall perish for lack of knowledge; because they have none; through ignorance and that affected; they know not nor will they understand, but despise the means of knowledge, and hate instruction.

Ver. 13. *But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath*, etc.] Or “and the hypocrites”^{f1239}; for these are the same with the disobedient in (^{<4862>}Job 36:12); who seem to be righteous, but are not; pretend to what they have not; have a double heart, (^{<4912>}Psalms 12:2), or say one thing with their mouth, and mean another thing in their hearts; or with their mouths draw nigh to God, but their hearts are far from him, (^{<4858>}Matthew 15:8); and so hypocrites, at least outwardly righteous before men, but inwardly full of wickedness, as the Pharisees were, whom our Lord often calls hypocrites, (^{<4857>}Matthew 15:7 16:3 22:18): these “put” or add wrath, as Aben Ezra interprets it; they increase the wrath of God; or, as we express it, heap up wrath; or, to use the apostle's phrase, treasure up wrath against the day of

wrath: though some understand it of the wrath of the hypocrites against God for afflicting them; so Jarchi. When afflictions come upon them, they reproach and blaspheme; they are angry with God and are wrathful, and quarrel at his dealings with them: “they put the nose” ^{f1240}; so it may be literally rendered; they erect that against God, and point it at him in a proud, haughty, wrathful, and contumacious manner;

they cry not when he bindeth them; in fetters and cords of affliction, (^{<1818>}Job 36:8); or when he corrects them, as Mr. Broughton rightly as to the sense renders it: they pray not, as Ben Gersom interprets it; whereas sanctified afflictions bring good men to the throne of grace, who have been too long absent from it: but these men cry not unto God for grace and mercy, help, assistance, and deliverance; they cry out against God, but not unto him.

Ver. 14. *They die in youth*, etc.] They, or “their soul” ^{f1241}; which, though that dies not, being immaterial and immortal; yet being the principal part of man, is put for the whole person, and which being taken away, the body dies. All men must die, but all do not die at an age; there is a common term of human life, (^{<1900>}Psalm 90:10); some few exceed it, multitudes arrive not to it; such who die before it may be said to die in youth; it seems to signify premature and untimely death: the word signifies an “excussion”, or violent shaking out; and the Vulgate Latin version is, “in a tempest”; in a tempest of divine wrath, and in a storm in their consciences, (^{<1870>}Job 27:20). Jarchi interprets it by suffocation or strangling;

and their life [is] among the unclean: all men are by nature unclean, and all that is in them; some are more notoriously and openly so than others, who give themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness; such as whoremongers and fornicators, of whom Mr. Broughton understands those unclean persons; or Sodomites, of whom the word is sometimes used, (^{<1827>}Deuteronomy 23:17). And this may be understood either of the present life of hypocrites before they die; who are unclean persons themselves, whatever show of purity they make, and love to live and converse, at least privately, if not openly, with unclean persons, and die while they live with such and in their sins: or of their life after death; for wicked men live after death; their souls live in hell, and their bodies at the resurrection will be raised to life, and be reunited to their souls, and both together will live in endless punishment; and the life of hypocrites will be among such; as is a man in life, so he is at and after

death; if filthy, filthy still; and such will have no admittance into the heavenly state, and with such impure ones, hypocrites will live for ever, (~~6208~~ Revelation 21:8,27 22:15).

Ver. 15. *He delivereth the poor in his affliction*, etc.] The righteous or godly poor; who are not only poor in worldly things, but poor in spirit; who are humbled, brought low, and made contrite, through the afflicting hand of God: these, though the Lord does sooner or later deliver “out” of their afflictions, yet that is not intended here, but a deliverance “in” them; which is done by supporting them under them, by supplying them with his grace to bear them patiently, by granting them his gracious presence for their comfort in them, by stilling the enemy and the avenger, keeping Satan from disturbing them, and freeing them from doubts and fears and unbelief, and by drawing their hearts and affections off of the world, and the things of it, to himself;

and openeth their ears in oppression; while they are oppressed; not only to discipline, correction, and instruction, (~~8360~~ Job 36:10); but to hear comfortable words spoken, to them by the Lord; who, in the midst of their affliction and oppression, whispers in their ears, and tells them how he loves them, though they are rebuked and chastened by him; how he has chosen them to everlasting life and happiness, though now in the furnace of affliction; that he is their covenant God and Father, and knows and owns their souls in adversity that he has pardoned all their sins, though he takes vengeance on their inventions; and in a little time will free them from all their afflictions and oppressions.

Ver. 16. *Even so*, etc.] Here Elihu accommodates what he had said to the case of Job; that had he hearkened and been obedient to the voice of God in his rod, and had submitted to his chastening hand, and patiently bore his afflictions;

he, God,

would have removed thee out of the strait [into] a broad place, where [there is] no straitness: that is, out of the strait circumstances in which he was, into liberty; would have brought him into a large place, where he might walk at liberty, as David experienced, (~~8001~~ Psalm 4:1 18:19 119:45); and may be understood both in a temporal and spiritual sense. In a temporal sense; he was now in great straits, in poverty and affliction; these pressed him hard on every side, so that his way, as he says, was “fenced

up, that he could not pass”, (~~1808~~ Job 19:8). Now had he been rightly humbled under his affliction, God would have taken him out of the straits of adversity, and set his feet in a large room of prosperity; (see ~~1807~~ Psalm 31:7,8). In a spiritual sense; persons are as in a strait place and pent up, when they cannot come forth in the free exercise of grace and duty; their souls are as it were in prison, they are shut up, and have not freedom with God nor man; their faith is ready to fail, their hope is sunk very low, they are straitened in their own bowels or affections, in their love to God and his people: and then they are removed into a large place, when it is the reverse with them; when they are favoured with the free spirit of the Lord, for where he is there is liberty; and when their hearts are enlarged with the love of God, and in the exercise of grace; and then they can run cheerfully the ways of his commandments;

and that which should be set on thy table [should be] full of fatness; which in a temporal sense denotes, that he should have had a plentiful table, spread with the best of provisions, the richest dainties, the finest of the wheat, and the fattest of the creatures; and these should rest and remain upon his table, or be constantly renewed there: and in a spiritual sense, that his soul should have been satisfied with the love of God, shed abroad in his heart; with the blessings of the everlasting covenant of grace applied unto him; and with the goodness of the house of God, his word and ordinances, as with marrow and fatness; (see ~~1805~~ Psalm 63:5 36:8).

Ver. 17. *But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked*, etc.] Some ^{f1242} take this to be a continuation of the happiness Job would have enjoyed, had he behaved in his affliction as he ought to have done; then he would have been filled to satisfaction, by seeing the judgments of God exercised on wicked men, as on the Chaldeans and Sabeans, who had injured him: “and judgment and justice would have upheld thee”; when they should be cast down. But these words rather seem to be expressive of his present state, and the reason of it, he not being sufficiently humbled: and the sense is, not that he had lived a vicious course of life, as the wicked do, and filled up the measure of his wickedness as they; and so deserved to be filled with the like judgments as inflicted on them. Mr. Broughton reads the words,

“as thou hast fulfilled the sentence of the wicked, sentence and judgment have laid hold:”

but rather the meaning is, that he had “fulfilled the contention of the wicked” ^{f1243}; pleaded as they did, argued with God after their manner: and

therefore is said to go in company and walk with them, and make answers for them, (^{<3948>}Job 34:8,36). Wherefore

justice and judgment take hold [on thee]; afflictions in righteousness, or the chastening hand of God, in righteous judgment, had taken hold upon him, and would hold him until he was sufficiently humbled under them.

Ver. 18. *Because [there is] wrath*, etc.] Either wrath in Job, so some; indignation and impatience under the afflicting hand of God, expressed by cursing the day of his birth, and by his angry pleadings with God: and therefore Elihu advises him to beware of it, and check this impetuous spirit; cease from his anger and forsake wrath, and fret not himself to do evil, and provoke the Lord to take him away at once, and then his case would be irretrievable. Or rather wrath in God, which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. His vindictive and punitive justice, to revenge and punish wickedness, the effects of which are sometimes awful judgments on men in this life; and eternal vengeance hereafter, called wrath to come: this is laid up in store with him, and sealed up in his treasures, prepared in his purposes and decrees, is revealed in his law, and breaks forth in various instances; (see ^{<0466>}Numbers 16:46). And there is an appearance of wrath, a little wrath, which is no other than love displeased, in the afflictions and chastisements of God's people, and might be perceived by Job: and this being the case, Elihu advises him to

[beware]; which, though not expressed in the original, is well supplied; and his meaning is, that he would be cautious of what he said, and not go on to multiply words against God; speak unbecomingly of him, arraign his justice, and find fault with his dealings with him; as well as beware of his actions, conduct, and behaviour, that his tongue and his doings be not against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory;

lest he take thee away with [his] stroke; out of the world by death, which is the stroke of his hand; and is sometimes given suddenly, and in an awful manner, in wrath and vengeance. Some render the last word, "with clapping of hands"^{f1244}; either the hands of men, (^{<8723>}Job 27:23); or of God; expressing his exultation and pleasure at the death of such a person, laughing at his calamity, and mocking when fear cometh; which is dreadful and tremendous;

then a great ransom cannot deliver thee: there is no ransom on earth equal to the life or soul of man; "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

(^{<165}Matthew 16:26); (see ^{<906}Psalm 49:6-8). The great ransom of all is the ransom of Christ, which Elihu had made mention of before, (^{<834}Job 33:24); and what else could he have in his mind now? This is the ransom found by infinite wisdom, which Christ came to give, and has given; and by which he has ransomed his people from him that is stronger than they, from the bondage of sin, of Satan, of the world, of hell and death, and everlasting destruction: and this is a great one, plenteous redemption, a great salvation; the ransomer is the great God and our Saviour; the ransom price is not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ, his life, yea, he himself. How great must this ransom be! and it is given for great sinners, the chief of them; and is sufficient for all the elect of God, both Jews and Gentiles: and yet, as great as it is, it is of no avail to one that God has taken away by a stroke out of this world, and sent to everlasting destruction; not through want of sufficiency in this ransom, but by reason of the final and unalterable state of such persons; as, even in the present life, it is of no avail to the deniers and despisers of it, (^{<306}Hebrews 10:26-29).

Ver. 19. *Will he esteem thy riches? [no], not gold, nor all the forces of strength.* Riches can be of no account, nor bear any weight with God; for they are of him and come from him, and what he has a right to take away and dispose of as he pleases. These cannot ward off the stroke of death, or secure from it; nor can a man possessed of them carry them with him into the other world; nor will they profit in the day of wrath. Mr. Broughton renders it, “will he esteem thy nobleness?” so Junius and Tremellius; thy noble birth, rank and station, thou hast had among men? Not at all. God is no respecter of persons; he regards not the noble and the rich more than the poor: and as for gold, the same may be said of that, which, though the most valuable among men, is of no esteem with God; and besides it is his: “the gold is mine”, says he, “and the silver is mine”, (^{<708}Haggai 2:8). Nor is death to be bribed with it, or put off by it; nor is a “munition”, ^{f1245} fortress or castle, as some render the word, any defence against it: “nor all the forces of strength”. Had a man at his command ever such numerous and powerful armies, they could not protect him from the stroke of death, or deliver him from eternal punishment, the demerit of sin. Though as Job had no riches, no gold, nor troops of soldiers about him; nor was there any great likelihood that this would be his case at death; I should think the words might be better rendered, “will he regard thy cry? no, not in distress; not even the most strong and forcible” cries or entreaties: when the stroke

of death is given, the sentence of wrath is passed, and eternal destruction takes place; weeping and wailing will signify nothing: the cries and howlings of the damned in hell are of no avail; their strong cryings, and most intense and earnest entreaties, will have no effect on the Lord; though he is a God of great pity and compassion, and has sympathy with his people in distress, and in all their afflictions is afflicted; yet will have no regard to cries and tears, when the decree is gone forth and carried into execution: the verb from whence the first word is derived is used for “crying” in this chapter, (^{<8813>}Job 36:13); and the Targum renders it here by supplication and petition; so some other Jewish writers ^{f1246} interpret it of crying: and the second word is by several rendered “in straits” ^{f1247} and distress; and Cocceius has observed the notion of intense and fervent prayer in the third, and renders the whole pretty near to what has been observed ^{f1248}.

Ver. 20. *Desire not the night*, etc.] Either in a literal sense, which Job might do; not for secrecy to commit sin, as the thief, murderer, and adulterer do; Elihu had no such suspicion of Job; nor for ease and rest, which he expected not; nor would his sores admit thereof; his nights were wearisome, and when come he wished they were gone, (^{<800>}Job 7:2-4); but either for retirement, that he might muse and consider, and endeavour to search and find out the reason of God’s dealing with men, in cutting off sometimes such great numbers together. Elihu suggests, that such a search was altogether vain and to no purpose; he would never be able to find out the reason of these things: or rather for shelter from the eye and hand of God; as nothing before mentioned could ward off his stroke, so neither could the night or darkness preserve from it; (see ^{<8011>}Psalm 139:11,12). Or else the words may be taken in a figurative sense; either of the night of calamity and distress, he might be tempted to desire and wish for, to come upon his enemies; or rather of the night of death, he wished for himself, as he often had done; in doing which Elihu suggests he was wrong; not considering that if God should take him away with a stroke, and he not be humbled and brought to repentance, what would be the consequence of it;

when people are cut off in their place; as sometimes they are in the night, literally taken; just in the place where they stood or lay down, without moving elsewhere, or stirring hand or foot as it were. So Amraphel, and the kings with him, as Jarchi observes, were cut off in the night, the firstborn of Egypt, the Midianites and Sennacherib’s army, (^{<0145>}Genesis 14:15 ^{<0123>}Exodus 12:30 ^{<0000>}Judges 7:9 ^{<2935>}2 Kings 19:35); and so in the

night of death, figuratively, the common passage of all men, as Mr. Broughton observes, who renders the words, “for people’s passage to their place”.

Ver. 21. *Take heed, regard not iniquity*, etc.] Not any iniquity, as to show any approbation of it, love for it, and desire after it. All appearance of sin, of every sin, is to be abstained from; but particularly by the iniquity here meant may be the sin of impatience under his affliction; murmuring at the dealings of God with him; arraigning his justice, and saying very indecent things of him, as in (^{<384B>}Job 34:5 35:2). Or it may mean the evil he had been guilty of in so earnestly desiring the night of death:

for this thou hast chosen rather than affliction; chose rather to die than to be afflicted as he was; or chose rather to complain of God, as if he dealt hardly with him, and did not do justly by him, than to submit patiently to the will of God, as he, ought to have done: or this he chose “through affliction”^{f1249}; through the force of it, because of it, and by means thereof; and so is a sort of excuse that Elihu makes for him; though at the same time he would have him by no means to regard such iniquity, and indulge to it.

Ver. 22. *Behold, God exalteth by his power*, etc.] He exalts himself, or causes himself to be exalted, and even above all the blessing and praise of his creatures; by his power, in the works of creation and providence, he makes such a display of his glorious perfections, as to set him on high, and out of the reach of the highest praises of men. He exalts his Son as Mediator, and has made him higher than the kings of the earth, (^{<541B>}1 Timothy 2:5 ^{<589B>}Hebrews 9:15); he exalts him as a Prince and a Saviour, (^{<445B>}Acts 5:31), to give repentance and remission of sins to his people, and to be the Judge of quick and dead, (^{<440B>}Acts 10:42 ^{<500B>}2 Timothy 4:1). He has exalted the human nature of Christ to the grace of union to the Son of God: and exalted him in this nature at his right hand, far above all principality and power, (^{<402B>}Ephesians 1:21): he exalts men in a civil sense, who are in a low estate, and raises them to a very high one; promotion is alone of him, he sets up and puts down at pleasure. In a spiritual sense, he exalts men when he brings them out of a state of nature into an open state of grace; brings them out of the horrible pit, and sets their feet upon the rock Christ Jesus; takes them as beggars from the dunghill, and places them among princes, even the princes of his people; admits them to communion with himself, puts and keeps them in his favour, as in a

garrison; and at last causes them to inherit the throne of glory, (^{<0118>}1 Samuel 2:8). He exalts men, when he sets the poor on high from affliction, and brings them out of adversity into prosperity; and which is what may be chiefly intended here; let a man be brought as low as may, God can by his power, if he will, raise him up again. And this may be said for the comfort and encouragement of Job, in his present circumstances: and so Aben Ezra interprets it,

“God will exalt thee;”

as he afterwards did. The Targum is,

“behold, God alone is strong in his might;”

(see ^{<0213>}Psalm 21:13);

who teacheth like him? He teaches by his providences, adverse as well as prosperous; he teaches by his word and ordinances; he teaches by his Spirit and grace, and none teaches like him. Ministers of the word teach men both doctrine and duty, but not like him; they have their gifts for teaching, their wisdom and knowledge, their doctrine, and all the use they are of, from him; none teach so pleasantly, so profitably, so powerfully and effectually, as he does: the Targum adds,

“right things?”

Ver. 23. *Who hath enjoined him his way?* etc.] He teaches men his own ways, the methods of his grace and mercy towards them; and he prescribes to them the ways in which they should walk; but none can lead or prescribe to him; as the way of governing the world, in what manner he should act in it; who has “taught him in the path of judgment?” or “showed to him the way of understanding?” (^{<2304>}Isaiah 40:14); and particularly whom he should afflict, in what manner he should do it, when and how long he should continue it; all which he does according to his sovereign will, and is not to be controlled: and, in a spiritual sense, no man can or ought to enjoin and prescribe to him whom he should save, and in what way; he saves whom he pleases, and in his own way, even by his Son Jesus Christ, and no other; or “who hath visited”, or “should visit on him”, or “with him his way” ^{f1250}? who can take upon him to examine into his ways, and scrutinize them, and call him to an account for what he does? no man can overlook his ways and works, or censure him for any of his actions:

or, who can say, thou hast wrought iniquity? this may be said of every man, but it cannot be said of God by any without sin; for, as there is no iniquity in his nature, there can be none in his works; not any in his works of providence, no, not in the afflictions of his people; just and true are all his ways.

Ver. 24. *Remember that thou magnify his work,* etc.] Or his works; his works of creation and providence, which are great in themselves, and declare the greatness of God; and which, though they cannot be made greater than they are, men may be said to magnify them when they ascribe them to God, and magnify him on account of them; when they think and speak well of them, and give glory to God: and particularly by his work may be meant the chastisement of his people, which is a rod in his hand, which he appoints, and with which he smites; it is his own doing, and he may do what he pleases this way; and it becomes his people to be still and patient because he does it; and then do they magnify this work of his, when they bear it patiently, quietly submit to it, and humble themselves under the mighty hand of God;

which men behold: for the works of God are visible, particularly the works of creation, and the glory of God in them; which men of wisdom and understanding behold with admiration and praise; and so the Targum is,

“which righteous men praise;”

and some derive the word here used from a root which signifies to “sing”, and so may be understood of men’s celebrating the works of God in songs of praise; though his work here may chiefly design the afflictions he lays on his people, and particularly which he had laid upon Job, which were so visible, and the hand of God in them was so clearly to be seen, that men easily beheld it and took notice of it.

Ver. 25. *Every man may see it,* etc.] Not only was to be seen by the wise and learned, the just and good, but by the common people; whether it is to be understood of the works of creation, or of the afflictive providences of God in general, or of Job’s afflictions in particular;

man may behold [it] afar off; as to time, from the creation of the world to the present time, as Jarchi; or as to place, from the heaven, so distant, where are the sun, moon, and stars; and which, though so far off, are easily beheld; or as to the manner of seeing them, not darkly, imperfectly, and in a confused manner, as things at a distance are seen, so some understand it;

but rather clearly and plainly, as things easy to be seen are clearly discerned at a distance; and it signifies that the work of God here meant is so visible, that he must be quite blind and stupid that cannot see it; it may be seen, as it were, with half an eye, and a great way off; he that runs may see and read.

Ver. 26. *Behold, God [is] great,* etc.] In his power and might, in his wisdom and knowledge, in his truth and faithfulness, in his love, grace, and mercy, and that to admiration; and it is worthy of notice and attention, which the word “behold”, prefixed hereunto, is expressive of: or is “much” or “many”, ^{f1251}; as he is in his persons: for though his essence is one, his persons are more, they are three, Father, Son, and Spirit; in his perfections, of which there is a fulness; in his thoughts, counsels, purposes? and decrees, which respect other persons and things; in his works of creation, providence, and grace, and in the blessings of his goodness, which are so many as not to be reckoned up;

and we know [him] not; God is to be known by the works of creation, and even by the very Heathen; though such is their inattention to them, that they are said not to know God; yea, even the wisest among them, by all their wisdom, knew not God, (^{<4012>}1 Corinthians 1:21); for though they might know there was a God, they knew not who and what he was. God is known by his word among those who are favoured with a divine revelation of him, and especially by true believers in Christ, who know God in Christ, whom to know is life eternal; and yet these know but in part, there is no finding out the Almighty to perfection; God is not known clearly, fully, and perfectly, by any: or “we know [it] not”; the greatness of God; he is great, but we know not how great he is; his greatness is beyond all conception and expression;

neither can the number of his years be searched out; years are ascribed to God, after the manner of men, otherwise, properly speaking, they are not applicable to him; by which time is measured, and which belongs not to the eternal God; however, the number of his years in an eternity past, and of those to come, cannot be searched out and reckoned up: it requires no great skill in arithmetic to reckon up the years of the oldest man that ever lived; yea, the months, the days, the hours, and minutes, of his life may be counted; but the years of the Most High cannot; this is a phrase expressive of the eternity of him which is, and was, and is to come, and who from everlasting to everlasting is God. He was before the world was, as the

creation of it out of nothing shows. Jehovah the Father had a Son, and he loved him before the foundation of the world, and all his people in him; he made an everlasting choice of them in him, before the world began; he made an everlasting covenant with them in him, and gave them grace in him as early as that; he set him up as Mediator from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; and will be the everlasting and unchangeable portion of his people to all eternity. Cocceius thinks that these words are expressive of the constant love of God to the church, and the continuance of his kingdom in it; and of his most fixed purpose of love to men, and indefatigable care of them.

Ver. 27. *For he maketh small the drops of rain*, etc.] Elihu proceeds to give instances and proofs of the greatness of God, and begins with rain, as Eliphaz does, (~~1819~~ Job 5:9,10); a common phenomenon, what is very frequent, and well known in all ages and countries, and by all men, more or less; and yet there are some things relative to it which are beyond the comprehension of men, and show the greatness and incomprehensibility of God: and the design of this, and all other instances of this kind, is to convince Job of his folly in searching out the causes and reasons of God's works of providence, when the common works of nature lie out of the reach of men; and to reconcile him to them, and bring him patiently to submit to the will of God, whose ways are past finding out; and some render the words, "he restrains the drops of rain"^{f1252}; he withholds it from the earth, which causes a drought, and so brings on a famine; others, "he subtracts", or draws out, or draws up, the drops of water^{f1253}, which he exhales by the heat of the sun out of the earth and out of the sea; (see ~~1819~~ Psalm 135:7) (~~1818~~ Amos 5:8); and which are drawn up in small particles, but form large bodies of waters in the clouds; and which are let down again upon the earth in small drops, in an easy and gentle manner, and so soak into the earth and make it fruitful; which is what is meant by our version here: this is a wonderful instance of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, and is beyond our comprehension; for no mortal man can tell how the Almighty parts and divides those large quantities of water in the clouds, that sometimes hang over our heads, into millions and ten thousand times ten thousand millions of drops, even innumerable; and causes these waters in such a manner to descend on the earth; lets them not fall at once, or in waterspouts, which would wash away the inhabitants of cities and towns, the cattle of the field, and the produce of the earth, as at the general deluge;

they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: the water, drawn up and formed into large bodies in the heavens, pours down rain in a gentle and plentiful manner, according to the quantity of vapours exhaled out of the earth and sea; if a small quantity is drawn up, a small quantity is let down; and if a large quantity is attracted, a large quantity, or a plentiful shower, is given: some think that a small rain is meant in the preceding clause, and a great rain in this; for there is the small rain and the great rain of his strength, (~~48376~~ Job 37:6). The word translated “pour” has the signification of liquefying, melting, and dissolving, and of purging and purifying; and which is applicable to clouds which melt and dissolve gradually as they descend in drops upon the earth; and the water which they let down is of all the most clear and pure, as Galen and Hippocrates ^{f1254}, those eminent physicians, have observed; and a late celebrated one tells us ^{f1255}, that rain water is so truly distilled by nature, that the chemist, with all his distilling art, cannot produce purer water; for, though it is exhaled out of the dirty earth, out of miry places, bogs, and ditches, yet, being bound up in the clouds as in a garment, and passing through the atmosphere, it comes down to us pure as if it had been percolated or strained through a linen cloth; and though the water as drawn up out of the sea is salt, yet carried up into the air, and there, as in an alembic, distilled, it descends to us sweet and fresh, and has not the least brackishness in it.

Ver. 28. *Which the clouds do drop [and] distil upon man abundantly.*] Not upon the persons of men, which they take care as much as possible to shun and avoid, but upon the fields of men, and so for the profit and advantage of men; and this denotes both the gentle manner in which the clouds let down rain, and the liberal profusion of them; they let it down both in an easy and plentiful manner, and upon an abundance of men, or upon an abundance of fields and lands belonging to men; though sometimes rain falls upon the wilderness, where no man is, (~~48385~~ Job 38:26). The Targum is,

“at the prayer of a son of a great man,”

or at the prayer of a man that has great interest with God; that is famous for his faith and piety, as Elijah was, to whom perhaps the Targumist may have respect. The rain is an emblem of the word of God, the Gospel of Christ, which drops and distils on the souls of men like rain, and refreshes them, and makes them fruitful; and is dispensed by the ministers of it, who

are compared to clouds, according to the measure of the gift of grace received by them, and that freely and fully as they have received it.

Ver. 29. *Also can [any] understand the spreadings of the clouds*, etc.] Or “of a cloud” ^{f1256}, a thick cloud, a single one; which sometimes at the beginning is very small, about the size of a man’s hand, (<1184>1 Kings 18:44); and which in a little time spreads all over the heavens, and covers them with black clouds and darkness; none can understand, describe, and tell by what means so small a cloud at first appearance is spread to such a prodigious extent; and which is done partly for the use of God himself, to be a pavilion or tent around him, (<981>Psalm 18:11 97:2); and partly for the use of men, either to let down rain on the several parts of the world, or to be a sort of an umbrella to men, to shelter them from scorching heat; nor can any understand how the clouds, stretched out to such a compass, are poised and balanced in the air, so as to retain their position as long as it is the pleasure of God; (see <8576>Job 37:16). Ben Gersom, who is followed by others ^{f1257}, interprets this of the differences of the clouds, which are unaccountable, as to the form and colour of them being curious, and the matter which they contain or what issues from them; out of some rain, others hail, others snow and sleet, others wind, others thunder and lightning; and yet all arise from the same, even from vapours exhaled from the earth and sea; some become moist and cold, others hot and dry. As clouds are emblems of Gospel ministers, (<2386>Isaiah 5:6); this may lead us to observe the different gifts of grace bestowed on them, and the different uses they are of; some are Boanergeses, sons of thunder, (<4087>Mark 3:17); others Barnabases, sons of consolation, (<4085>Acts 4:36); and the extent of the Gospel ministry all over the world, which first began as a small cloud over the land of Judea, and then was spread throughout the Gentile world;

[or] the noise of his tabernacle; the tabernacle of God, which are the clouds, which are laid as the flooring of his palace, and are drawn about him as a tent or pavilion, (<9443>Psalm 104:3 18:11), where he sits invisible, and from whence, as a general of an army, he issues out his orders, and sends forth his artillery, rain, hail, snow, thunder, and lightning, and stormy wind fulfilling his word; the noise hereof is either the noise of the waters in the clouds, the sound of an abundance of rain, (<1184>1 Kings 18:41); or of the blustering winds, by which the clouds are moved and portend rain; or of the thunder that bursts out of them with a vehement noise, and which is usually followed with rain; and the thunder of his power who can understand? (<8394>Job 26:14). This may be an emblem of the voice of God in

his Gospel out of his tabernacle, the church, which the natural man understands not; or the voice of God in his providences, in which he speaks to men once and twice, and they perceive it not.

Ver. 30. *Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it*, etc.] Upon his tabernacle; that is, upon the clouds, which are his tabernacle; either the light of the sun, whereby the clouds are dispersed and blotted out; an emblem of the blotting out of sin, or the forgiveness of it, (^{<2342>}Isaiah 44:22), which is like a clear shining after rain, (^{<1234>}2 Samuel 23:4), or on a thin cloud, whereby the rainbow is formed, an emblem of peace and reconciliation by Christ; or lightning, which bursting out of the dark cloud is spread over it, when it seems to be all in flames. Cocceius renders it, “he spreads the light about himself”; God spreads it about himself, clothing himself with light as with a garment, and dwelling in light inaccessible to men: or he “spreads [it] upon him”, upon man; causing his sun to shine on the just and unjust; or on it, the earth; so it was spread when first commanded to shine out of darkness, with which the earth in its primeval state was covered; and so it is spread every morning upon the earth; as soon as day breaks, the morning is spread upon the mountains, and in a short time it overspreads the whole hemisphere; an emblem this of the spread of the light of grace over the dark hearts of men, in conversion, which are like the earth in its chaotic state, or as in the night season covered with darkness; out of which they are called and brought by the grace of God, having the true light sprung and placed in their souls; which at first is but glimmering, and at best imperfect in the present state, yet is spreading and increasing, (^{<1048>}Proverbs 4:18); and of the spread of the great and glorious light of the Gospel in the world, in the times of the apostles, and as it will be in the latter day glory;

and covereth the bottom of the sea, or “the roots of the sea”^{f1258}; though one would think they should be rather covered with water and with darkness, as they are; (see ^{<8308>}Job 38:8-10 ^{<2310>}Isaiah 11:9). This is to be understood either of the light of the sun, and the rays of it, which are so piercing and penetrating as to reach to the bottom of the sea, and cover it and exhale waters out of it; or of lightning, which is equally as piercing and penetrating, or more, and strikes to the very roots of the sea, and covers them, or rather discovers them, so that the channels of waters are seen, and the foundations of the world are discovered, (^{<9314>}Psalm 18:14,15); the Targum of this verse is,

“he spreads upon it rain, and covers the rocks or foundations of the sea;”

and the rain is called light according to Ramban, because by the descent of it the day is enlightened, and the darkness of the clouds removed; and by this means the bottom of the sea is covered, so that it passes its bounds and covers the rocks, that is, the borders of it, as others explain it ^{f1259}.

Ver. 31. *For by them judgeth he the people*, etc.] That is, by the clouds; which the Lord uses both in a way of judgment, as expressed in this clause; and in a way of mercy, as in the following; by these, and what issue out of them, as rain, hail, winds, thunder, and lightning, he sometimes punishes the inhabitants of the earth, as he did the old world by a deluge of water, which came partly from the fountains of the great deep, and partly from the windows of heaven, which destroyed man and beast, and the increase of the earth, (^{<0071>}Genesis 7:11,23); he punished the Egyptians by a violent storm of hail, (^{<0023>}Exodus 9:23); and slew many of the Canaanites with hailstones, (^{<0011>}Joshua 10:11); Pharaoh and his host sunk like lead when he blew with his wind, (^{<0250>}Exodus 15:10); and Sodom and Gomorrah, with the cities of the plain, were destroyed with thunder and lightning, fire and brimstone, from heaven, (^{<0124>}Genesis 19:24); as the army of the Philistines were discomfited by thunder in the times of Samuel, (^{<0070>}1 Samuel 7:10); and the captains of fifties, with their men, were consumed by lightning in the times of Elijah, (^{<0014>}2 Kings 1:14); and as the heavens and the earth will be burnt with fire at the end of all things, (^{<0134>}Matthew 13:40) (^{<0012>}2 Peter 3:12);

he giveth meat in abundance; very plentifully, or to a multitude of creatures, both men and cattle; who have a liberal supply of food by means of the clouds and rain, which falling upon the earth make it fruitful, so that it gives bread to the eater, and seed to the sower; causes grass to grow up for the beasts of the field, and produces bread corn, oil, and wine, for the benefit of men; an emblem of the variety and plenty of spiritual food dispensed to the churches of Christ, through the ministry of the word, and by the ministers of it.

Ver. 32. *With clouds he covereth the light*, etc.] Either the lightning, which is hid and covered in the black dark cloud until it bursts out of it; or the light of the sun, which is wonderful, that waters naturally clear and transparent, when formed into clouds, should obstruct the rays of the sun and darken it; (see ^{<0307>}Ezekiel 32:7); and thus it was in the storm and

tempest the Apostle Paul was in many days, which was so thick and dark, that the sun and stars did not appear of a long time, (⁴²⁷¹Acts 27:20);

and commandeth it [not to shine], by [the cloud] that cometh betwixt; that is, commands the sun that it shines not, or hinders it from shining, by reason of the intervening clouds; this is an emblem of sin interposing between God and his people, which causes him to hide his face from them and not shine upon them: sins are comparable to clouds for numbers, being more than can be told; and for their nature and quality, like clouds they rise out of the earthly and carnal heart of man; and which is also like a troubled sea which cannot rest; and which reach up unto heaven and bring down wrath and vengeance from thence on wicked men; and in God's own people, like the clouds they intercept the light of his countenance, the bright shining of the sun of righteousness, the comfort, peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit: the words may be rendered, "with hands he covers the light, and commands [that it shine not] by [reason of] what comes between": and they are understood by some, as by Schmidt particularly, of the eclipses of the sun and moon, when God as it were covers them with hands, and suffers them not to shine by intervening bodies; so the eclipse of the sun is occasioned by the moon's coming between that and the earth, and the eclipse of the moon by the interposition of the earth between that and the sun; the Targum is,

"because of rapine of hands he restrains rain, and commands it to descend because of him that prays,"

who comes between and intercedes for a sinful people, as Elijah did; or, as others, he commands the lightning that it harms not because of him that comes between and intercedes with his prayers.

Ver. 33. *The noise thereof showeth concerning it,* etc.] The rain, that it is coming; it is a presage and prognostic of it, namely, the noise of the clouds in the air, the sound of abundance of rain there; or the noise of the winds, which is often a forerunner of it: or the noise of thunder when rain frequently follows, (²⁴⁰³Jeremiah 10:13);

the cattle also concerning the vapour; that is, the cattle likewise show signs of rain, being sensible of the vapours which rise up out of the earth, and are drawn up into the air and form clouds there; these, through their sharp sight, discern the vapours rising out of the earth insensible by men; or by their quick smell ^{f1260} or taste discern them, these leaving some tincture

upon the grass they are feeding on; and which occasion some motions and gestures in them by which husbandmen, and those that are accustomed to them, know that the rain is at hand: and there are various things observable in brutes, fowls, and cattle, and other creatures, which are signs of approaching rain; as the cawing of crows, the croaking of frogs, the flying about of cranes and swallows, the motion of ants, the retire of cattle to places of shelter, and the like; Aben Ezra observes that sheep lying on their right side portends rain; the above things with others are most beautifully expressed by Virgil ^{f1261} and which with many others are collected together by Pliny ^{f1262}; and though there are various interpretations given of this passage, this seems to be the most agreeable, and which suits with our version; unless the following, which I only propose, should be more eligible, “he”, that is, God, “by [it]”, the rain, “declares his good will” to men, likewise to “the cattle, [and] also towards what rises up” out of the earth, the herbs and plants; all which receive much benefit by the clouds and rain.