

CHAPTER 40

Many humbling confounding questions God had put to Job, in the foregoing chapter; now, in this chapter,

- I.** He demands an answer to them (v. 1, 2).
- II.** Job submits in a humble silence (v. 3-5).
- III.** God proceeds to reason with him, for his conviction, concerning the infinite distance and disproportion between him and God, showing that he was by no means an equal match for God. He challenges him (v. 6, 7) to vie with him, if he durst, for justice (v. 8), power (v. 9), majesty (v. 10), and dominion over the proud (v. 11-14), and he gives an instance of his power in one particular animal, here called “Behemoth,” (v. 15-24).

~~380~~ JOB 40:1-5

JOB'S HUMBLE SUBMISSION

Here is,

I. A humbling challenge which God gave to Job. After he had heaped up many hard questions upon him, to show him, by his manifest ignorance in the works of nature, what an incompetent judge he was of the methods and designs of Providence, he clenches the nail with one demand more, which stands by itself here as the application of the whole. It should seem, God paused awhile, as Elihu had done, to give Job time to say what he had to say, or to think of what God had said; but Job was in such confusion that he remained silent, and therefore God here put him upon replying, v. 1, 2. This is not said to be spoken *out of the whirlwind*, as before; and therefore some think God said it in a still small voice, which wrought more upon Job than the whirlwind did, as upon Elijah, ~~1182~~ 1 Kings 19:12, 13. *My doctrine shall drop as the rain*, and then it does wonders. Though Job had not spoken any thing, yet God is said to answer him; for he knows men's thoughts, and can return a suitable answer to their silence. Here,

1. God puts a convincing question to him: “*Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? Shall he pretend to dictate to God's wisdom or prescribe to his will? Shall God receive instruction from every peevish complainer, and change the measures he has taken to please him?*” It is a question with disdain. *Shall any teach God knowledge?* ^{<8922>}Job 21:22. It is intimated that those who quarrel with God do, in effect, go about to teach him how to mend his work. For if we contend with men like ourselves, as not having done well, we ought to instruct them how to do better; but is it a thing to be suffered that any man should teach his Maker? He that contends with God is justly looked upon as his enemy; and shall he pretend so far to have prevailed in the contest as to prescribe to him? We are ignorant and short-sighted, but before him all things are naked and open; we are depending creatures, but he is the sovereign Creator; and shall we pretend to instruct him? Some read it, *Is it any wisdom to contend with the Almighty?* The answer is easy. No; it is the greatest folly in the world. Is it wisdom to contend with him whom it will certainly be our ruin to oppose and unspeakably our interest to submit to?

2. He demands a speedy reply to it: “*He that reproaches God let him answer this question to his own conscience, and answer it thus, Far be it from me to contend with the Almighty or to instruct him.* Let him answer all those questions which I have put, if he can. Let him answer for his presumption and insolence, answer it at God's bar, to his confusion.” Those have high thoughts of themselves, and mean thoughts of God, who reprove any thing he says or does.

II. Job's humble submission thereupon. Now Job came to himself, and began to melt into godly sorrow. When his friends reasoned with him he did not yield; but the voice of the Lord is powerful. *When the Spirit of truth shall come, he shall convince.* They had condemned him for a wicked man; Elihu himself had been very sharp upon him (^{<8347>}Job 34:7, 8, 37); but God had not given him such hard words. We may sometimes have reason to expect better treatment from God, and a more candid construction of what we do, than we meet with from our friends. This the good man is here overcome by, and yields himself a conquered captive to the grace of God.

1. He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say in his own justification (v. 4): “*Behold, I am vile, not only mean and contemptible, but vile and abominable, in my own eyes.*” He is now sensible that he has

sinned, and therefore calls himself *vile*. Sin debases us, and penitents abase themselves, reproach themselves, are ashamed, yea, even confounded. “I have acted undutifully to my Father, ungratefully to my benefactor, unwisely for myself; and therefore I am vile.” Job now vilifies himself as much as ever he had justified and magnified himself. Repentance changes men's opinion of themselves. Job had been too bold in demanding a conference with God, and thought he could make his part good with him: but now he is convinced of his error, and owns himself utterly unable to stand before God or to produce any thing worth his notice, the veriest dunghill-worm that ever crawled upon God's ground. While his friends talked with him, he answered them, for he thought himself as good as they; but, when God talked with him, he had nothing to say, for, in comparison with him, he sees himself nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, vanity and vileness itself; and therefore, *What shall I answer thee?* God demanded an answer, v. 2. Here he gives the reason of his silence; it was not because he was sullen, but because he was convinced he had been in the wrong. Those that are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness dare not justify themselves before God, but are ashamed that ever they entertained such a thought, and, in token of their shame, lay their hand upon their mouth.

2. He promises not to offend any more as he had done; for Elihu had told him that this was meet to be said unto God. When we have spoken amiss we must repent of it and not repeat it nor stand to it. He enjoins himself silence (v. 4): “*I will lay my hand upon my mouth*, will keep that as with a bridle, to suppress all passionate thoughts which may arise in my mind, and keep them from breaking out in intemperate speeches.” It is bad to think amiss, but it is much worse to speak amiss, for that is an allowance of the evil thought and gives it an *imprimatur* — a sanction; it is publishing the seditious libel; and therefore, *if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth* and let it go no further (²⁰⁰Proverbs 30:32) and that will be an evidence for thee that that which thou thoughtest thou allowest not. Job had suffered his evil thoughts to vent themselves: “*Once have I spoken amiss, yea, twice*,” that is, “divers times, in one discourse and in another; but I have done: *I will not answer*; I will not stand to what I have said, nor say it again; *I will proceed no further*.” Observe here what true repentance is.

(1.) It is to rectify our errors, and the false principles we went upon in doing as we did. What we have long, and often, and vigorously

maintained, once, yea, twice, we must retract as soon as we are convinced that it is a mistake, not adhere to it any longer, but take shame to ourselves for holding it so long.

(2.) It is to return from every by-path and to proceed not one step further in it: “*I will not add*” (so the word is); “I will never indulge my passion so much again, nor give myself such a liberty of speech, will never say as I have said nor do as I have done.” Till it comes to this, we come short of repentance. Further observe, Those who dispute with God will be silenced at last. Job had been very bold and forward in demanding a conference with God, and talked very boldly, how plain he would make his case, and how sure he was that he should be justified. *As a prince he would go near unto him* (~~RSSE~~ Job 31:37); he would *come even to his seat* (~~RSTB~~ Job 23:3); but he has soon enough of it; he lets fall his plea and will not answer. “Lord, the wisdom and right are all on thy side, and I have done foolishly and wickedly in questioning them.”

~~RSIB~~ JOB 40:6-14

GOD'S DOMINION OVER THE PROUD

Job was greatly humbled for what God had already said, but not sufficiently; he was brought low, but not low enough; and therefore God here proceeds to reason with him in the same manner and to the same purport as before, v. 6. Observe,

1. Those who duly receive what they have heard from God, and profit by it, shall hear more from him.
2. Those who are truly convinced of sin, and penitent for it, yet have need to be more thoroughly convinced and to be made more deeply penitent. Those who are under convictions, who have their sins set in order before their eyes and their hearts broken for them, must learn from this instance not to catch at comfort too soon; it will be everlasting when it comes, and therefore it is necessary that we be prepared for it by deep humiliation, that the wound be searched to the bottom and not skinned over, and that we do not make more haste out of our convictions than good speed. When our hearts begin to melt and relent within us, let those considerations be dwelt upon and pursued which will help to make a thorough effectual thaw of it.

God begins with a challenge (v. 7), as before (^{38B}Job 38:3): “*Gird up thy loins now like a man; if thou hast the courage and confidence thou hast pretended to, show them now; but thou wilt soon be made to see and own thyself no match for me.*” This is that which every proud heart must be brought to at last, either by its repentance or by its ruin; and thus low must every mountain and hill be, sooner or later, brought. We must acknowledge,

I. That we cannot vie with God for justice, that the Lord is righteous and holy in his dealings with us, but that we are unrighteous and unholy in our conduct towards him; we have a great deal to blame ourselves for, but nothing to blame him for (v. 8): “*Wilt thou disannul my judgment? Wilt thou take exceptions to what I say and do, and bring a writ of error, to reverse the judgment I have given as erroneous and unjust?*” Many of Job's complaints had too much of a tendency this way: *I cry out of wrong, says he, but I am not heard;* but such language as this is by no means to be suffered. God's judgment cannot, must not, be disannulled, for we are sure it is according to truth, and therefore it is a great piece of impudence and iniquity in us to call in question. “*Wilt thou,*” says God, “*condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? Must my honour suffer for the support of thy reputation? Must I be charged as dealing unjustly with thee because thou canst not otherwise clear thyself from the censures thou liest under?*” Our duty is to condemn ourselves, that God may be righteous. David is *therefore* ready to own the evil he has done in God's sight, that *God may be justified when he speaks and clear when he judges,* ^{150A}Psalm 51:4. See ^{40B}Nehemiah 9:33; ^{20E}Daniel 9:7. But those are very proud, and very ignorant both of God and themselves, who, to clear themselves, will condemn God; and the day is coming when, if the mistake be not rectified in time by repentance, the eternal judgment will be both the confutation of the plea and the confusion of the prisoner, for the heavens shall declare God's righteousness and all the world shall become guilty before him.

II. That we cannot vie with God for power; and therefore, as it is great impiety, so it is great impudence to contest with him, and is as much against our interest as it is against reason and justice (v. 9): “*Hast thou an arm like God, equal to his in length and strength? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him,* as he did (^{35D}Job 37:1, 2), or does now out of the whirlwind?” To convince Job that he was not so able as he thought himself to contest with God, he shows him,

1. That he could never fight it out with him, nor carry his cause by force of arms. Sometimes, among men, controversies have been decided by battle, and the victorious champion is adjudged to have justice on his side; but, if the controversy were put upon that issue between God and man, man would certainly go by the worse, for all the forces he could raise against the Almighty would be but like briars and thorns before a consuming fire, ^{<2374>}Isaiah 27:4. “Hast thou, a poor weak worm of the earth, an arm comparable to his who upholds all things?” The power of creatures, even of angels themselves, is derived from God, limited by him, and dependent on him; but the power of God is original, independent, and unlimited. He can do every thing without us; we can do nothing without him; and therefore we have not an arm like God.

2. That he could never talk it out with him, nor carry his cause by noise and big words, which sometimes among men go a great way towards the gaining of a point: “*Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?* No; his voice will soon drown thine and one of his thunders will overpower and overrule all thy whispers.” Man cannot speak so convincingly, so powerfully, nor with such a commanding conquering force as God can, who *speaks, and it is done*. his creating voice is called his *thunder* (^{<2374>}Psalm 104:7), so is that voice of his with which he terrifies and discomfits his enemies, ^{<2374>}1 Samuel 2:10. The wrath of a king may sometimes be like the roaring of a lion, but can never pretend to imitate God's thunder.

III. That we cannot vie with God for beauty and majesty, v. 10. “If thou wilt enter into a comparison with him, and appear more amiable, put on thy best attire: *Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency*. Appear in all the martial pomp, in all the royal pageantry that thou hast; make the best of every thing that will set thee off: *Array thyself with glory and beauty*, such as may awe thy enemies and charm thy friends; but what is it all to the divine majesty and beauty? No more than the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun when he goes forth in his strength.” God decks himself with such majesty and glory as are the terror of devils and all the powers of darkness and make them tremble; he arrays himself with such glory and beauty as are the wonder of angels and all the saints in light and make them rejoice. David could dwell all his days in God's house, to behold the beauty of the Lord. But, in comparison with this, what is all the majesty and excellency by which princes think to make themselves feared, and all the glory and beauty by which lovers think to make themselves beloved? If

Job think, in contending with God, to carry the day by looking great and making a figure, he is quite mistaken. *The sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded, when God shines forth.*

IV. That we cannot vie with God for dominion over the proud, v. 11-14. here the cause is put upon this short issue: if Job can humble and abase proud tyrants and oppressors as easily and effectually as God can, it shall be acknowledged that he has some colour to compete with God. Observe here,

1. The justice Job is here challenged to do, and that is to bring the proud low with a look. If Job will pretend to be a rival with God, especially if he pretend to be a judge of his actions, he must be able to do this.

(1.) It is here supposed that God can do it and will do it himself, else he would not have put it thus upon Job. By this God proves himself to be God, that he resists the proud, sits Judge upon them, and is able to bring them to ruin. Observe here,

[1.] That proud people are wicked people, and pride is at the bottom of a great deal of the wickedness that is in this world both towards God and man.

[2.] Proud people will certainly be abased and brought low; for *pride goes before destruction*. If they bend not, they will break; if they humble not themselves by true repentance, God will humble them, to their everlasting confusion. The wicked will be *trodden down in their place*, that is, Wherever they are found, though they pretend to have a place of their own, and to have taken root in it, yet even there they shall be trodden down, and all the wealth, and power, and interest, to which their place entitles them, will not be their security.

[3.] The wrath of God, scattered among the proud, will humble them, and break them, and bring them down. If he casts abroad the rage of his wrath, as he will do at the great day and sometimes does in this life, the stoutest heart cannot hold out against him. *Who knows the power of his anger?*

[4.] God can and does easily abase proud tyrants; he can *look upon them, and bring them low*, can overwhelm them with shame, and fear, and utter ruin, by one angry look, as he can, by a gracious look, revive the hearts of the contrite ones.

[5.] He can and will at last do it effectually (v. 13), not only bring them to the dust, from which they might hope to arise, but *hide them in the dust*, like the proud Egyptian whom Moses slew and *hid in the sand* (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 2:12), that is, they shall be brought not only to death, but to the grave, that pit out of which there is no return. They were proud of the figure they made, but they shall be buried in oblivion and be no more remembered than those that are hidden in the dust, out of sight and out of mind. They were linked in leagues and confederacies to do mischief, and are now bound in bundles. They are hidden *together*; not their rest, but their shame together *is in the dust*, ~~Job~~ Job 17:16. Nay, they are treated as malefactors (who, when condemned, had their faces covered, as Haman's was: He *binds their faces in secret*) or as dead men: Lazarus, in the grave, had his face bound about. Thus complete will be the victory that God will gain, at last, over proud sinners that set themselves in opposition to him. Now by this he proves himself to be God. Does he thus hate proud men? Then he is holy. Will he thus punish them? Then he is the just Judge of the world. Can he thus humble them? Then he is the Lord Almighty. When he had abased proud Pharaoh, and hidden him in the sand of the Red Sea, Jethro thence inferred that doubtless *the Lord is greater than all gods, for wherein the proud enemies of his Israel dealt proudly he was above them*, he was too hard for them, ~~Exodus~~ Exodus 18:11. See ~~Revelation~~ Revelation 19:1, 2.

(2.) It is here proposed to Job to do it. He had been passionately quarrelling with God and his providence, casting abroad the rage of his wrath towards heaven, as if he thought thereby to bring God himself to his mind. "Come," says God, "try thy hand first upon proud men, and thou wilt soon see how little they value the rage of thy wrath; and shall I then regard it, or be moved by it?" Job had complained of the prosperity and power of tyrants and oppressors, and was ready to charge God with maladministration for suffering it; but he ought not to find fault, except he could mend. If God, and he only, has power enough to humble and bring down proud men, no doubt he has wisdom enough to know when and how to do it, and it is not for us to prescribe to him or to teach him how to prescribe to him or to teach him how to govern the world. Unless we had an arm like God we must not think to take his work out of his hands.

2. The justice which is here promised to be done him if he can perform such mighty works as these (v. 14): "*They will I also confess unto thee that thy right hand is sufficient to save thee, though, after all, it would be too weak to contend with me.*" It is the innate pride and ambition of man

that he would be his own saviour (would have his own hands sufficient for him and be independent), but it is presumption to pretend that he is. Our own hands cannot save us by recommending us to God's grace, much less by rescuing us from his justice. Unless we could by our own power humble our enemies, we cannot pretend by our own power to save ourselves; but, if we could, God himself would confess it. He never did nor ever will defraud any man of his just praise, nor deny him the honour he has merited. But, since we cannot do this, we must confess unto him that our own hands cannot save us, and therefore into his hand we must commit ourselves.

◀815▶ JOB 40:15-24

DESCRIPTION OF BEHEMOTH

God, for the further proving of his own power and disproving of Job's pretensions, concludes his discourse with the description of two vast and mighty animals, far exceeding man in bulk and strength, one he calls *behemoth*, the other *leviathan*. In these verses we have the former described. “Behold now behemoth, and consider whether thou art able to contend with him who made that beast and gave him all the power he has, and whether it is not thy wisdom rather to submit to him and make thy peace with him.” *Behemoth* signifies *beasts* in general, but must here be meant of some one particular species. Some understand it of the *bull*; others of an amphibious animal, well known (they say) in Egypt, called the *river-horse (hippopotamus)*, living among the fish in the river Nile, but coming out to feed upon the earth. But I confess I see no reason to depart from the ancient and most generally received opinion, that it is the elephant that is here described, which is a very strong stately creature, of very large stature above any other, of wonderful sagacity, and of so great a reputation in the animal kingdom that among so many four-footed beasts as we have had the natural history of (Job 38 and 39) we can scarcely suppose this should be omitted. Observe,

I. The description here given of the behemoth.

- 1.** His body is very strong and well built. *His strength is in his loins*, v. 16. *His bones*, compared with those of other creatures, *are like bars of iron*, v. 18. His back-bone is so strong that, though his tail be not large, yet he

moves it like a cedar, with a commanding force, v. 17. Some understand it of the trunk of the elephant, for the word signifies any extreme part, and in that there is indeed a wonderful strength. So strong is the elephant in his back and loins, and the sinews of his thighs, that he will carry a large wooden tower, and a great number of fighting men in it. No animal whatsoever comes near the elephant for strength of body, which is the main thing insisted on in this description.

2. He feeds on the productions of the earth and does not prey upon other animals: He *eats grass as an ox* (v. 15), the *mountains bring him forth food* (v. 20), and the beasts of the field do not tremble before him nor flee from him, as from a lion, but they play about him, knowing they are in no danger from him. This may give us occasion,

(1.) To acknowledge the goodness of God in ordering it so that a creature of such bulk, which requires so much food, should not feed upon flesh (for then multitudes must die to keep him alive), but should be content with the grass of the field, to prevent such destruction of lives as otherwise must have ensued.

(2.) To commend living upon herbs and fruits without flesh, according to the original appointment of man's food, ^{<002>}Genesis 1:29. Even the strength of an elephant, as of a horse and an ox, may be supported without flesh; and why not that of a man? Though therefore we use the liberty God has allowed us, yet *be not among riotous eaters of flesh*, ^{<023>}Proverbs 23:20.

(3.) To commend a quiet and peaceable life. Who would not rather, like the elephant, have his neighbours easy and pleasant about him, than, like the lion, have them all afraid of him?

3. He *lodges under the shady trees* (v. 21), which *cover him with their shadow* (v. 22), where he has a free and open air to breathe in, while lions, which live by prey, when they would repose themselves, are obliged to retire into a close and dark den, to live therein, and to abide in the covert of that, ^{<380>}Job 38:40. Those who are a terror to others cannot but be sometimes a terror to themselves too; but those will be easy who will let others be easy about them; and the reed and fens, and the willows of the brook, though a very weak and slender fortification, yet are sufficient for the defence and security of those who *therefore* dread no harm, because they design none.

4. That he is a very great and greedy drinker, not of wine or strong drink (to be greedy of that is peculiar to man, who by his drunkenness makes a beast of himself), but of fair water.

(1.) His size is prodigious, and therefore he must have supply accordingly, v. 23. He drinks so much that one would think he could drink up a river, if you would give him time, and not hasten him. Or, when he drinks, *he hasteth not*, as those do that drink in fear; he is confident of his own strength and safety, and therefore makes no haste when he drinks, no more haste than good speed.

(2.) His eye anticipates more than he can take; for, when he is very thirsty, having been long kept without water, *he trusts that he can drink up Jordan in his mouth*, and even *takes it with his eyes*, v. 24. As a covetous man causes his eyes to fly upon the wealth of this world, which he is greedy of, so this great beast is said to snatch, or draw up, even a river with his eyes.

(3.) His nose has in it strength enough for both; for, when he goes greedily to drink with it, he *pierces through snares* or nets, which perhaps are laid in the waters to catch fish. He makes nothing of the difficulties that lie in his way, so great is his strength and so eager his appetite.

II. The use that is to be made of this description. We have taken a view of this mountain of a beast, this over-grown animal, which is here set before us, not merely as a show (as sometimes it is in our country) to satisfy our curiosity and to amuse us, but as an argument with us to humble ourselves before the great God; for,

1. He made this vast animal, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made; it is the work of his hands, the contrivance of his wisdom, the production of his power; it is *behemoth which I made*, v. 15. Whatever strength this, or any other creature, has, it is derived from God, who therefore must be acknowledged to have all power originally and infinitely in himself, and such an arm as it is not for us to contest with. This beast is here called *the chief*, in its kind, *of the ways of God* (v. 19), an eminent instance of the Creator's power and wisdom. Those that will peruse the accounts given by historians of the elephant will find that his capacities approach nearer to those of reason than the capacities of any other brute-creature whatsoever, and therefore he is fitly called *the chief of the ways of God*, in the inferior part of the creation, no creature below man being preferable to him.

2. He made him with man, as he made other four-footed beasts, on the same day with man (⁰⁰²⁵Genesis 1:25, 26), whereas the fish and fowl were made the day before; he made him to live and move on the same earth, in the same element, and therefore man and beast are said to be jointly preserved by divine Providence as fellow-commoners, ⁰³⁶⁶Psalms 36:6. "It is *behemoth*, which I made with thee; I made that beast as well as thee, and he does not quarrel with me; why then dost thou? Why shouldst thou demand peculiar favours because I made thee (⁰³⁰⁹Job 10:9), when I made the *behemoth* likewise with thee? I made thee as well as that beast, and therefore can as easily manage thee at pleasure as that beast, and will do it whether thou refuse or whether thou choose. I made him with thee, that thou mayest look upon him and receive instruction." We need not go far for proofs and instances of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion; they are near us, they are with us, they are under our eye wherever we are.

3. *He that made him can make his sword to approach to him* (v. 19), that is, the same hand that made him, notwithstanding his great bulk and strength, can unmake him again at pleasure and kill an elephant as easily as a worm or a fly, without any difficulty, and without the imputation either of waste or wrong. God that gave to all the creatures their being may take away the being he gave; for may he not do what he will with his own? And he *can* do it; he that has power to create with a word no doubt has power to destroy with a word, and can as easily speak the creature into nothing as at first he spoke it out of nothing. The *behemoth* perhaps is here intended (as well as the *leviathan* afterwards) to represent those proud tyrants and oppressors whom God had just now challenged Job to abase and bring down. They think themselves as well fortified against the judgments of God as the elephant with his bones of brass and iron; but he that made the soul of man knows all the avenues to it, and can make the sword of justice, his wrath, to approach to it, and touch it in the most tender and sensible part. He that framed the engine, and put the parts of it together, knows how to take it in pieces. Woe to him therefore that strives with his Maker, for he that made him has therefore power to make him miserable, and will not make him happy unless he will be ruled by him.