

CHAPTER 34

Elihu, it is likely, paused awhile, to see if Job had any thing to say against his discourse in the foregoing chapter; but he sitting silent, and it is likely intimating his desire that he would go on, he here proceeds. And,

I. He bespeaks not only the audience, but the assistance of the company (v. 2-4).

II. He charges Job with some more indecent expressions that had dropped from him (v. 5-9).

III. He undertakes to convince him that he had spoken amiss, by showing very fully,

1. God's incontestable justice (v. 10-12, 17, 19, 23).
2. His sovereign dominion (v. 13-15).
3. His almighty power (v. 20, 24).
4. His omniscience (v. 21, 22, 25).
5. His severity against sinners (v. 26-28).
6. His overruling providence (v. 29, 30).

IV. He teaches him what he should say (v. 31, 32). And then, lastly, he leaves the matter to Job's own conscience, and concludes with a sharp reproof of him for his peevishness and discontent (v. 33-37). All this Job not only bore patiently, but took kindly, because he saw that Elihu meant well; and, whereas his other friends had accused him of that from which his own conscience acquitted him, Elihu charged him with that only for which, it is probable, his own heart, now upon the reflection, began to smite him.

⌘ JOB 34:1-9

THE ADDRESS OF ELIHU

Here, I. Elihu humbly addresses himself to the auditors, and endeavours, like an orator, to gain their good-will and their favourable attention.

1. He calls them *wise men*, and men that *had knowledge*, v. 2. It is comfortable dealing with such as understand sense. *I speak as to wise men, who can judge what I say*, ^{<416>}1 Corinthians 10:15. Elihu differed in opinion from them, and yet he calls them wise and knowing men. Peevish disputants think all fools that are not of their mind; but it is a piece of justice which we owe to those who are wise to acknowledge it, though our sentiments do not agree with theirs.

2. He appeals to their judgment, and therefore submits to their trial, v. 3. *The ear of the judicious tries words*, whether what is said be true or false, right or wrong, and he that speaks must stand the test of the intelligent. As we must prove all things we hear, so we must be willing that what we speak should be proved.

3. He takes them into partnership with him in the examination and discussion of this matter, v. 4. He does not pretend to be sole dictator, nor undertake to say what is just and good and what is not, but he is willing to join with them in searching it out, and desires a consultation: “Let us agree to lay aside all animosities and feuds, all prejudices and affectation of contradiction, and all stiffness in adhering to the opinion we have once espoused, and *let us choose to ourselves judgment*; let us fix right principles on which to proceed, and then take right methods for finding out truth; and *let us know among ourselves*, by comparing notes and communicating our reasons, *what is good* and what is otherwise.” Note, We are then likely to discern what is right when we agree to assist one another in searching it out.

II. He warmly accuses Job for some passionate words which he had spoken, that reflected on the divine government, appealing to the house whether he ought not to be called to the bar and checked for them.

1. He recites the words which Job had spoken, as nearly as he can remember.

(1.) He had insisted upon his own innocence. Job hath said, *I am righteous* (v. 5), and, when urged to confess his guilt, had stiffly maintained his plea of, *Not guilty: Should I lie against my right?* v. 6. Job had spoken to this purport, *My righteousness I hold fast*, ^{<4276>}Job 27:6.

(2.) He had charged God with injustice in his dealings with him, that he had wronged him in afflicting him and had not righted him: *God has taken away my judgment*; so Job had said, ^{<870>}Job 27:2.

(3.) He had despaired of relief and concluded that God could not, or would not, help him: *My wound is incurable*, and likely to be mortal, and yet *without transgression; not for any injustice in my hand*, ^{<866>}Job 16:16, 17.

(4.) He had, in effect, said that there is nothing to be got in the service of God and that no man will be the better at last for his (v. 9): *He hath said that which gives occasion to suspect that he thinks it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God*. It is granted that there is a present pleasure in religion; for what is it but to delight ourselves with God, in communion with him, in concurrence with him, in walking with him as Enoch did? this is a true notion of religion, and bespeaks its ways to be pleasantness. Yet the advantage of it is denied, as if it were *vain to serve God*, ^{<884>}Malachi 3:14. This Elihu gathers as Job's opinion, by an innuendo from what he said (^{<872>}Job 9:22), *He destroys the perfect and the wicked*, which has a truth in it (for all things come alike to all), but it was ill expressed, and gave too much occasion for this imputation, and therefore Job sat down silently under it and attempted not his own vindication, whence Mr. Caryl well observes that good men sometimes speak worse than they mean, and that a good man will rather bear more blame than he deserves than to stand to excuse himself when he has deserved any blame.

2. He charges Job very high upon it. In general, *What man is like Job?* v. 7. "Did you ever know such a man as Job, or ever hear a man talk at such an extravagant rate?" He represents him,

(1.) As sitting in the seat of the scornful: "He *drinketh up scorning like water*," that is, "he takes a great deal of liberty to reproach both God and his friends, takes a pleasure in so doing, and is very liberal in his reflections." Or, "He is very greedy in receiving and hearkening to the scorns and contempts which others cast upon their brethren, is well pleased with them and extols them." Or, as some explain it, "By these foolish expressions of his he makes himself the object of scorn, lays himself very open to reproach, and gives occasion to others to laugh at him; while his religion suffers by them, and the reputation of that is wounded through his side." We have need to pray that God will never

leave us to ourselves to say or do any thing which may *make us a reproach to the foolish*, ^{<4908>}Psalm 39:8.

(2.) As walking in the course of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners: He *goes in company with the workers of iniquity* (v. 8), not that in his conversation he did associate with them, but in his opinion he did favour and countenance them, and strengthen their hands. If (as it follows, v. 9, for the proof of this) *it profits a man nothing to delight himself in God*, why should he not lay the reins on the neck of his lusts and herd with the workers of iniquity? He that says, I have *cleansed my hands in vain*, does not only *offend against the generation of God's children* (^{<4923>}Psalm 72:13, 14), but gratifies his enemies, and says as they say.

^{<4390>}JOB 34:10-15

THE ADDRESS OF ELIHU

The scope of Elihu's discourse to reconcile Job to his afflictions and to pacify his spirit under them. In order to this he had shown, in the foregoing chapter, that God meant him no hurt in afflicting him, but intended it for his spiritual benefit. In this chapter he shows that he did him no wrong in afflicting him, nor punished him more than he deserved. If the former could not prevail to satisfy him, yet this ought to silence him. In these verses he directs his discourse to all the company: "*Hearken to me, you men of understanding* (v. 10), and show yourselves to be intelligent by assenting to this which I say." And this is that which he says, That the righteous God never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures, but his ways are equal, ours are unequal. The truth here maintained respects the justice of equity of all God's proceedings. Now observe in these verses,

I. How plainly this truth is laid down, both negatively and positively.

1. He does wrong to none: *God cannot do wickedness*, nor *the Almighty commit iniquity*, v. 10. It is inconsistent with the perfection of his nature, and so it is also with the purity of his will (v. 12): *God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment*. He neither can nor will do a wrong thing, nor deal hardly with any man. He will never inflict the evil of punishment but where he finds the evil of sin, nor in any undue

proportion, for that would be to commit iniquity and do wickedly. If appeals be made to him, or he be to give a definitive sentence, he will have an eye to the merits of the cause and not respect the person, for that were to pervert judgment. He will never either do any man wrong or deny any man right, but *the heavens will shortly declare his righteousness*. Because he is God, and therefore is infinitely perfect and holy, he can neither do wrong himself nor countenance it in others, nay more than he can die, or lie, or deny himself. Though he be Almighty, yet he never uses his power, as mighty men often do, for the support of injustice. He is *Shaddai* — God *all-sufficient*, and therefore he cannot be *tempted with evil* (³⁰¹³James 1:13), to do an unrighteous thing.

2. He ministers justice to all (v. 11): *The work of a man shall he render unto him*. Good works shall be rewarded and evil works either punished or satisfied for; so that sooner or later, in this world or in that to come, he will cause every man to find according to his ways. This is the standing rule of distributive justice, to give to every man according to his work. *Say to the righteous, it shall be well with them; woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them*. If services persevered in now go unrewarded, and sins persisted in now go unpunished, yet there is a day coming when God will fully render to every man according to his works, with interest for the delay.

II. How warmly it is asserted,

1. With an assurance of the truth of it: *Yea, surely*, v. 12. It is a truth which none can deny or call in question; it is what we may take for granted and are all agreed in, That God will not do wickedly.

2. With an abhorrence of the very thought of the contrary (v. 10): *Far be it from God that he should do wickedness*, and from us that we should entertain the least suspicion of it or say any thing that looks like charging him with it.

III. How evidently it is proved by two arguments:

1. His independent absolute sovereignty and dominion (v. 13): *Who has given him a charge over the earth* and deputed him to manage the affairs of men upon the earth? Or, Who besides has disposed the whole world of mankind? He has the sole administration of the kingdoms of men, and has it of himself, nor is he entrusted with it by or for any other.

(1.) It is certain that the government is his, and he does according to his will in all the hosts both of heaven and earth; and therefore he is not to be charged with injustice; for *shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* ~~GEN~~Genesis 18:25. How shall God either rule or judge the world if there be, or could be, any *unrighteousness with him?* ~~ROM~~Romans 3:5, 6. He that is entitled to such unlimited power most certainly have in himself unspotted purity. This is also a good reason why we should acquiesce in all God's dealings with us. Shall not he that disposes of the whole world dispose of us and our concerns?

(2.) It is as certain that he does not derive his power from any, nor is it a dispensation that is committed to him, but his power is original, and, like his being, of himself; and therefore, if he were not perfectly just, all the world and the affairs of it would soon be in the utmost confusion. The highest powers on earth have a God above them, to whom they are accountable, because it is not far from them to do iniquity. But *therefore* God has none above him, because it is not possible that he should do any thing (such is the perfection of his nature) that should need to be controlled. And, if he be an absolute sovereign, we are bound to submit to him, for there is no higher power to which we may appeal, so that the virtue is a necessity.

2. His irresistible power (v. 14): *If he set his heart upon man, to contend with him, much more if (as some read it) he set his heart against man, to ruin him, if he should deal with man either by *summa potestas* — mere sovereignty, or by *summum jus* — strict justice, there were no standing before him; man's spirit and breath would soon be gone and *all flesh would perish together*, v. 15. Many men's honesty is owing purely to their impotency; they do not do wrong because they cannot support it when it is done, or it is not in their power to do it. But God is able to crush any man easily and suddenly, and yet does not by arbitrary power crush any man, which therefore must be attributed to the infinite perfection of his nature, and that is immutable. See here,*

(1.) What God can do with us. He can soon bring us to dust; there needs not any positive act of his omnipotence to do it; if he do but withdraw that concurrence of his providence by which we live, *if he gather unto himself that spirit and breath* which was from his hand at first and is still in his hand, we expire immediately, like an animal in an air-pump when the air is exhausted.

(2.) What he may do with us without doing us wrong. He may recall the being he gave, of which we are but tenants at will, and which also we have forfeited; and therefore, as long as that is continued of his mere favour, we have no reason to cry out of wrong, whatever other comforts are removed.

◀ 8886 ▶ JOB 34:16-30

THE ADDRESS OF ELIHU

Elihu here addresses himself more directly to Job. He had spoken to the rest (v. 10) as *men of understanding*; now, speaking to Job; he puts an *if* upon his understanding: *If thou hast understanding*, hear this and observe it, v. 16.

I. Hear this, That God is not to be quarrelled with for any thing that he does. It is daring presumption to arraign and condemn God's proceedings, as Job had done by his discontents. It was, 1. As absurd as it would be to advance one to power that is a professed enemy to justice: *Shall even he that hates right govern?* v. 17. The righteous Lord so loves righteousness that, in comparison with him, even Job himself, though a perfect and upright man, might be said to hate right; and shall he govern? Shall he pretend to direct God or correct what he does? Shall such unrighteous creatures as we are give law to the righteous God? or must he take his measures from us? When we consider the corruption of our nature, and the contrariety there is in us to the eternal rule of equity, we cannot but see it to be an impudent impious thing for us to prescribe to God.

2. It was as absurd as it would be to call a most righteous innocent person to the bar, and to give judgment against him, though it appeared ever so plainly, upon the trial, that he was most just: *Wilt thou condemn him that is righteous in all his ways*, and cannot but be so? 3. It is more absurd and unbecoming than it would be to say to a sovereign prince, *Thou art wicked*, and to judges upon the bench, *You are ungodly*, v. 18. This would be looked upon as an insufferable affront to majesty and to magistracy; no king, no prince, would bear it. In favour of government, we presume it is a right sentence that is passed, unless the contrary be very evident; but, whatever we think, it is not fit to tell a king to his face that he is wicked. Nathan reprov'd David by a parable. But, whatever a high priest or a prophet might do, it is not for an ordinary subject to make so bold with the

powers that are. How absurd is then to say so to God — to impute iniquity to him, who, having no respect of persons, is in no temptation to do an unjust thing! *He regardeth not the rich more than the poor*, and therefore it is fit he should rule, and it is not fit we should find fault with him, v. 19. Note, Rich and poor stand upon the same level before God. A great man shall fare never the better, nor find any favour, for his wealth and greatness; nor shall a poor man fare ever the worse for his poverty, nor an honest cause be starved. Job, now that he was poor, should have as much favour with God, and be as much regarded by him, as when he was rich; *for they are all the work of his hands*. Their persons are so: the poor are made by the same hand, and of the same mould, as the rich. Their conditions are so: the poor were made poor by the divine providence, as well as the rich made rich; and therefore the poor shall fare never the worse for that which is their lot, not their fault.

II. Hear this, That God is to be acknowledged and submitted to in all that he does. Divers considerations Elihu here suggests to Job, to beget in him great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him to submit and proceed no further in his quarrel with him.

1. God is almighty, and able to deal with the strongest of men when he enters into judgment with them (v. 20); even *the people*, the body of a nation, though ever so numerous, *shall be troubled*, unhinged, and put into disorder, when God pleases; even *the mighty* man, the prince, though ever so honourable, ever so formidable among men, *shall*, if God speak the word, *be taken away* out of his throne, nay, out of the land of the living; they shall die; they shall pass away. What cannot he do that has all the powers of death at his command? Observe the suddenness of this destruction: *In a moment shall they die*. It is not a work of time, with God, to bring down his proud enemies, but, when he pleases, it is soon done; nor is he bound to give them warning, no, not an hour's warning. *This night thy soul shall be required*. Observe the season of it: *They shall be troubled at midnight*, when they are secure and careless, and unable to help themselves; as the Egyptians when their first-born were slain. This is the immediate work of God: they are taken away, *without hand*, insensibly, by secret judgments. God can himself humble the greatest tyrant, without the assistance or agency of any man. Whatever hand he sometimes uses in the accomplishing of his purposes, he needs none, but can do it without hand. Nor is it one single mighty man only that he can thus overpower, but even hosts of them (v. 24): *He shall break in pieces*

mighty men without number; for no combined power can stand it out against Omnipotence. Yet, when God destroys tyranny, he does not design anarchy; if those are brought down that ruled ill, it does not therefore follow that people must have no rulers; for, when he breaks mighty men, he *sets others in their stead*, that will rule better, or, if they do not, *he overturns them also in the night*, or in a night, *so that they are destroyed*, v. 25. Witness Belshazzar. Or, if he designs them space to repent, he does not presently destroy them, but *he strikes them as wicked men*, v. 26. Some humbling mortifying judgments are brought upon them; these wicked rulers are stricken as other wicked men, as surely, as sorely, stricken in their bodies, estates, or families, and this for warning to their neighbours; the stroke is given *in terrorem* — *as an alarm to others*, and therefore is given *in the open sight of others*, that they also may see and fear, and tremble before the justice of God. If kings stand not before him, how shall we stand!

2. God is omniscient, and can discover that which is most secret. As the strongest cannot oppose his arm, so the most subtle cannot escape his eye; and therefore, if some are punished either more or less than we think they should be, instead of quarrelling with God, it becomes us to ascribe it to some secret cause known to God only. For,

(1.) Every thing is open before him (v. 21): *His eyes are upon the ways of man*; not only they are within reach of his eye, so that he can see them, but his eye is upon them, so that he actually observes and inspects them. He sees us all, and sees all our goings; go where we will, we are under his eye; all our actions, good and evil, are regarded and recorded and reserved to be brought into judgment when the books shall be opened.

(2.) Nothing is or can be concealed from him (v. 22): *There is no darkness nor shadow of death* so close, so thick, so solitary, so remote from light or sight as that in it *the workers of iniquity may hide themselves* from the discovering eye and avenging hand of the righteous God. Observe here,

[1.] The workers of iniquity would hide themselves if they could from the eye of the world for shame (and that perhaps they may do), and from the eye of God for fear, as Adam among the trees of the garden. The day is coming when mighty men, and chief captains, will call to the rocks and mountains to hide them.

[2.] They would gladly be hid even by the shadow of death, be hid in the grave, and lie for ever there, rather than appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

(3.) It is in vain to think of flying from God's justice, or absconding when his wrath is in pursuit of us. The workers of iniquity may find ways and means to hide themselves from men, but not from God: *He knows their works* (v. 25), both what they do and what they design.

3. God is righteous, and, in all his proceedings, goes according to the rules of equity. Even when he is overturning mighty men, and breaking them in pieces, yet *he will not lay upon man more than right*, v. 23. As he will not punish the innocent, so he will not exact of those that are guilty more than their iniquities deserve; and of the proportion between the sin and the punishment Infinite Wisdom shall be the judge. He will not give any man cause to complain that he deals hardly with him, nor shall any man *enter into judgment with God*, or bring an action against him. If he do, God will be justified when he speaks and clear when he judges. Therefore Job was very much to be blamed for his complaints of God, and is here well-advised to let fall his action, for he would certainly be cast or non-suited. *It is not for man ever to purpose to enter into judgment with the Omnipotent*; so some read the whole verse. Job had often wished to plead his cause before God. Elihu asks, "To what purpose? The judgment already given concerning thee will certainly be affirmed; no errors can be found in it, nor any exceptions taken to it, but, after all, it must rest as it is." All is well that God does, and will be found so. To prove that when God destroys the mighty men, and *strikes them as wicked men*, he does not *lay upon them more than right*, he shows what their wickedness was (v. 27, 28); and let any compare that with their punishment, and then judge whether they did not deserve it. In short, these unjust judges, whom God will justly judge, neither *feared God nor regarded man*, ~~☞~~ Luke 18:2.

(1.) They were rebels to God: They *turned back from him*, cast off the fear of him, and abandoned the very thoughts of him; for *they would not consider any of his ways*, took no heed either to his precepts or to his providences, but lived without God in the world. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, they turn back from God; and it is because they do not consider, not because they cannot, but because they will not. From inconsideration comes impiety, and thence all immorality.

(2.) They were tyrants to all mankind, v. 28. They will not call upon God for themselves; but they *cause the cry of the poor to come to him*, and that cry is against them. They are injurious and oppressive to the poor, wrong them, crush them, impoverish them yet more, and add affliction to the afflicted, who cry unto God, make their complaint to him, and he hears them and pleads their cause. Their case is bad who have the prayers and tears of the poor against them; for the cry of the oppressed will, sooner or later, draw down vengeance on the heads of the oppressors, and no one can say that this is *more than right*, ^{<1022>}Exodus 22:23.

4. God has an uncontrollable dominion in all the affairs of the children of men, and so guides and governs whatever concerns both communities and particular persons, that, as what he designs cannot be defeated, so what he does cannot be changed, v. 29. Observe,

(1.) The frowns of all the world cannot trouble those whom God quiets with his smiles. *When he gives quietness who then can make trouble?* v. 29. This is a challenge to all the powers of hell and earth to disquiet those to whom God speaks peace, and for whom he creates it. If God give outward peace to a nation, he can secure what he gives, and disable the enemies of it to give it any disturbance. If God give inward peace to a man only, the quietness and everlasting assurance which are the effect of righteousness, neither the accusations of Satan nor the afflictions of this present time, no, nor the arrests of death itself, can give trouble. What can make those uneasy whose *souls dwell at ease in God*? See ^{<504>}Philippians 4:7.

(2.) The smiles of all the world cannot quiet those whom God troubles with his frowns; for if he, in displeasure, *hide his face*, and withhold the comfort of his favour, *who then can behold him?* that is, Who can behold a displeased God, so as to bear up under his wrath or turn it away? Who can make him show his face when he resolves to hide it, or see through the clouds and darkness which are round about him? Or, Who can behold a disquieted sinner, so as to give him effectual relief? Who can stand a friend to him to whom God is an enemy? None can relieve the distresses of the outward condition without God. *If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I?* ^{<167>}2 Kings 6:27. Nor can any relieve the distresses of the mind against God and his terrors. If he impress the sense of his wrath upon a guilty conscience, all the comforts the creature can administer are ineffectual. *As vinegar upon nitre, so are songs to a heavy heart.* The

irresistibleness of God's operations must be acknowledged in his dealings both with communities and with particular persons: what he does cannot be controlled, *whether it be done against a nation* in its public capacity *or against a man only* in his private affairs. The same Providence that governs mighty kingdoms presides in the concerns of the meanest individual; and neither the strength of a whole nation can resist his power nor the smallness of a single person evade his cognizance; but what he does shall be done effectually and victoriously.

5. God is wise, and careful of the public welfare, and therefore provides *that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared*, v. 30. See here,

(1.) The pride of hypocrites. They aim to reign; the praise of men, and power in the world, are their reward, what they aim at.

(2.) The policy of tyrants. When they aim to set up themselves they sometimes make use of religion as a cloak and cover for their ambition and by their hypocrisy come to the throne.

(3.) The danger the people are in when hypocrites reign. They are likely to be ensnared in sin, or trouble, or both. Power, in the hands of dissemblers, is often destructive to the rights and liberties of a people, which they are more easily wheedled out of than forced out of. Much mischief has been done likewise to the power of godliness under the pretence of a form of godliness.

(4.) The care which divine Providence takes of the people, to prevent this danger, *that the hypocrite reign not*, either that he do not reign at all or that he do not reign long. If God has mercy in store for a people, he will either prevent the rise or hasten the ruin of hypocritical rulers.

JOB 34:31-37

THE ADDRESS OF ELIHU

In these verses,

I. Elihu instructs Job what he should say under his affliction, v. 31. 32. Having reproved him for his peevish passionate words, he here puts better words into his mouth. When we reprove for what is amiss we must direct

to what is good, that our reproofs may be *the reproofs of instruction*, ~~4163~~ Proverbs 6:23. He does not impose it upon Job to use these words, but recommends it to him, as that which was *meet to be said*. In general, he would have him repent of his misconduct, and indecent expressions, under his affliction. Job's other friends would have had him own himself a wicked man, and by overdoing they undid. Elihu will oblige him only to own that he had, in the management of this controversy, *spoken unadvisedly with his lips*. Let us remember this, in giving reproofs, and not make the matter worse than it is; for the stretching of the crime may defeat the prosecution. Elihu drives the right nail, and speeds accordingly. He directs Job,

- 1.** To humble himself before God for his sins, and to accept the punishment of them: "*I have borne chastisement. What I suffer comes justly upon me, and therefore I will bear it, and not only justify God in it, but acknowledge his goodness.*" Many are chastised that do not bear chastisement, do not bear it well, and so, in effect, do not bear it at all. Penitents, if sincere, will take all well that God does, and will bear chastisement as a medicinal operation intended for good.
- 2.** To pray to God to discover his sins to him (v. 32): "*That which I see not teach thou me. Lord, upon the review, I find much amiss in me and much done amiss by me, but I have reason to fear there is much more that I am not aware of, greater abominations, which through ignorance, mistake, and partiality to myself, I do not yet see; Lord, give me to see it, awoken by conscience to do its office faithfully.*" A good man is willing to know the worst of himself, and particularly, under affliction, desires to be told wherefore God contends with him and what God designs in correcting him.
- 3.** To promise reformation (v. 31): *I will not offend any more. "If I have done iniquity (or seeing that I have), I will do so no more; whatever thou shalt discover to me to have been amiss, by thy grace I will amend it for the future."* This implies a confession that we have offended, true remorse and godly sorrow for the offence, and a humble compliance with God's design in afflicting us, which is to separate between us and our sins. The penitent here completes his repentance; for it is not enough to be sorry for our sins, but we must go and sin no more, and, as here, bind ourselves with the bond of a fixed resolution never more to return to folly. This is

meet to be said in a stedfast purpose, and meet to be said to God in a solemn promise and vow.

II. He reasons with him concerning his discontent and uneasiness under his affliction, v. 23. We are ready to think every thing that concerns us should be just as we would have it; but Elihu here shows,

1. That it is absurd and unreasonable to expect this: “*Should it be according to thy mind?*” No, what reason for that?” Elihu here speaks with a great deference to the divine will and wisdom, and a satisfaction therein: it is highly fit that every thing should be according to God's mind. He speaks also with a just disdain of the pretensions of those that are proud, and would be their own carvers: *Should it be according to thy mind?* Should we always have the good we have a mind to enjoy? We should then wrongfully encroach upon others and foolishly ensnare ourselves. Must we never be afflicted, because we have no mind to it? Is it fit that sinners should feel no smart, that scholars should be under no discipline? Or, if we must be afflicted, is it fit that we should choose what rod we will be beaten with? No; it is fit that every thing should be according to God's mind, and not ours; for he is the Creator, and we are creatures. He is infinitely wise and knowing; we are foolish and short-sighted. He is in one mind; we are in many.

2. That it is in vain, and to no purpose, to expect it: “*He will recompense it whether thou refuse or whether thou choose.*” God will take his own way, fulfil his own counsel, and recompense according to the sentence of his own justice, whether thou art pleased or displeased; he will neither ask thy leave nor ask thy advice, but, what he pleases, that will he do. It is therefore thy wisdom to be easy, and make a virtue of necessity; *make the best of that which is*, because it is out of thy power to make it otherwise. If thou pretend to choose and refuse,” that is, “to prescribe to God and except against what he does, so will not I — I will acquiesce in all he does; and *therefore speak what thou knowest*; say what thou wilt do, whether thou wilt oppose or submit. The matter lies plainly before thee; be at a point; thou art in God's hand, not in mine.”

III. He appeals to all intelligent indifferent persons whether there was not a great deal of sin and folly in that which Job said.

1. He would have the matter thoroughly examined, and brought to an issue (v. 36): “*My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end.*” If any will

undertake to justify what he has said, let them do it; if not, let us all agree to bear our testimony against it.” Many understand it of his trial by afflictions: “Let his troubles be continued till he be thoroughly humbled, and his proud spirit brought down, till he be made to see his error and to retract what he has so presumptuously said against God and his providence. Let the trial be continued till the end be obtained.”

2. He appeals both to God and man, and desires the judgment of both upon it.

(1.) Some read v. 36 as an appeal to God: *O, my Father! let Job be tried.* So the margin of our Bibles, for the same word signifies *my desire* and *my father*; and some suppose that he lifted up his eyes when he said this, meaning, “*O my Father who art in heaven! let Job be tried till he be subdued.*” When we are praying for the benefit of afflictions either to ourselves or others we must eye God as a Father, because they are fatherly corrections and a part of our filial education, ~~xxxv~~ Hebrews 12:7.

(2.) He appeals to the by-standers (v. 34): “*Let men of understanding tell me whether they can put any more favourable construction upon Job's words than I have put, and whether he has not spoken very ill and ought not to cry, Peccavi — I have done wrong.*” In what Job had said he thought it appeared,

[1.] That he did not rightly understand himself, but had talked foolishly, v. 35. He cannot say that Job is without knowledge and wisdom; but, in this matter, *he has spoken without knowledge*, and, whatever his heart is, *his words were without prudence.* What he said to his wife may be retorted upon himself (*He speaks as one of the foolish men speak*) and for the same reason, *Shall we not receive evil as well as good at God's hand?* ~~xxxvi~~ Job 2:10. Sometimes we need and deserve those reproofs ourselves which we have given to others. Those that reproach God's wisdom really reproach their own.

[2.] That he had not a due regard to God, but had talked wickedly. If what he had said *be tried to the end*, that is, if one put it to the utmost stretch and make the worst of it, it will be found, *First*, That he has taken part with God's enemies: *His answers have been for wicked men*; that is, what he had said tended to strengthen the hands and harden the hearts of wicked people in their wickedness, he having carried the matter of their prosperity much further than he needed. Let wicked men, like Baal, plead for

themselves if they will, but far be it from us that we should answer for them, or say any thing in favour of them. *Secondly*, That he has insulted God's friends, and hectored over them: "*He clappeth his hands among us; and, if he be not thoroughly tried and humbled, will grow yet more insolent and imperious, as if he had gotten the day and silenced us all.*" To speak ill is bad enough, but to clap our hands and triumph in it when we have done, as if error and passion had won the victory, is much worse. *Thirdly*, That he has spoken against God himself, and, by standing to what he had said, *added rebellion to his sin*. To speak, though but one word, against God, by whom we speak and for whom we ought to speak, is a great sin; what is it then to multiply words against him, as if we would out-talk him? What is it to repeat them, instead of unsaying them? Those that have sinned, and, when they are called to repent, thus go on frowardly, add rebellion to their sin and make it exceedingly sinful. *Errare possum, Haereticus esse nolo — I may fall into error, but I will not plunge into heresy.*