

# CHAPTER 36

Elihu, having largely reproved Job for some of his unadvised speeches, which Job had nothing to say in the vindication of, here comes more generally to set him to rights in his notions of God's dealings with him. His other friends had stood to it that, because he was a wicked man, therefore his afflictions were so great and so long. But Elihu only maintained that the affliction was sent for his trial, and that therefore it was lengthened out because Job was not, as yet, thoroughly humbled under it, nor had duly accommodated himself to it. He urges many reasons, taken from the wisdom and righteousness of God, his care of his people, and especially his greatness and almighty power, with which, in this and the following chapter, he persuades him to submit to the hand of God. Here we have,

**I.** His preface, (v. 2-4).

**II.** The account he gives of the methods of God's providence towards the children of men, according as they conduct themselves (v. 5-15).

**III.** The fair warning and good counsel he gives to Job thereupon (v. 16-21).

**IV.** His demonstration of God's sovereignty and omnipotence, which he gives instances of in the operations of common providence, and which is a reason why we should all submit to him in his dealings with us (v. 22-33). This he prosecutes and enlarges upon in the following chapter.

## ⌘ JOB 36:1-4

### THE ADDRESS OF ELIHU

Once more Elihu begs the patience of the auditory, and Job's particularly, for he has not said all that he has to say, but he will not detain them long. *Stand about me a little* (so some read it), v. 2. "Let me have your attendance, your attention, awhile longer, and I will speak but this once, as plainly and as much to the purpose as I can." To gain this he pleads,

**1.** That he had a good cause, and a noble and very fruitful subject: *I have yet to speak on God's behalf*. He spoke as an advocate for God, and therefore might justly expect the ear of the court. Some indeed pretend to speak on God's behalf who really speak for themselves; but those who sincerely appear in the cause of God, and speak in behalf of his honour, his truths, his ways, his people, shall be sure neither to want instructions (*it shall be given them in that same hour what they shall speak*) nor to lose their cause or their fee. Nor need they fear lest they should exhaust their subject. Those that have spoken ever so much may yet find more to be spoken on God's behalf.

**2.** That he had something to offer that was uncommon, and out of the road of vulgar observation: *I will fetch my knowledge from afar* (v. 3), that is, “we will have recourse to our first principles and the highest notions we can make use of to serve any purpose.” It is worth while to go far for this knowledge of God, to dig for it, to travel for it; it will recompense our pains, and, though far-fetched, is not dear-bought.

**3.** That his design was undeniably honest; for all he aimed at was to ascribe righteousness to his Maker, to maintain and clear this truth, that God is righteous in all his ways. In speaking of God, and speaking for him, it is good to remember that he is our Maker, to call him so, and therefore to be ready to do him and the interests of his kingdom the best service we can. If he be our Maker, we have our all from him, must use our all for him, and be very jealous for his honour. That his management should be very just and fair (v. 4): “*My words shall not be false*, neither disagreeable to the thing itself nor to my own thoughts and apprehensions. It is truth that I am contending for, and that for truth's sake, with all possible sincerity and plainness.” He will make use of plain and solid arguments and not the subtleties and niceties of the schools. “He who is perfect or upright in knowledge is now reasoning with thee; and therefore let him not only have a fair hearing, but let what he says be taken in good part, as meant well.” The perfection of our knowledge in this world is to be honest and sincere in searching out truth, in applying it to ourselves, and in making use of what we know for the good of others.

## THE ADDRESS OF ELIHU

Elihu, being to speak on God's behalf, and particularly to ascribe righteousness to his Maker, here shows that the disposals of divine Providence are all, not only according to the eternal counsels of his will, but according to the eternal rules of equity. God acts as a righteous governor, for,

**I.** He does not think it below him to take notice of the meanest of his subjects, nor does poverty or obscurity set any at a distance from his favour. If men are mighty, they are apt to look with a haughty disdain upon those that are not of distinction and make no figure; but *God is mighty*, infinitely so, and yet he *despises not any*, v. 5. He humbles himself to take cognizance of the affairs of the meanest, to do them justice and to show them kindness. Job thought himself and his cause slighted because God did not immediately appear for him. “No,” says Elihu, *God despises not any*, which is a good reason why we should honour all men. *He is mighty in strength and wisdom*, and yet does not look with contempt upon those that have but a little strength and wisdom, if they but mean honestly. Nay, for this reason he despises not any, because his wisdom and strength are incontestably infinite and therefore the condescensions of his grace can be no diminution to him. Those that are wise and good will not look upon any with scorn and disdain.

**II.** He gives no countenance to the greatest, if they be bad (v. 6): *He preserves not the life of the wicked*. Though their life may be prolonged, yet not under any special care of the divine Providence, but only its common protection. Job had said that *the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power*, <387> Job 21:7. “No,” says Elihu: “he seldom suffers wicked men to become old. He preserves not their life so long as they expected, nor with that comfort and satisfaction which are indeed our life; and their preservation is but a reservation for the day of wrath,” <388> Romans 2:5.

**III.** He is always ready to right those that are any way injured, and to plead their cause (v. 6): He *gives right to the poor*, avenges their quarrel

upon their persecutors and forces them to make restitution of what they have robbed them of. If men will not right the injured poor, God will.

**IV.** He takes a particular care for the protection of his good subjects, v. 7. He not only looks on them, but he never looks off them: *He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous*. Though they may seem sometimes neglected and forgotten, and that befalls them which looks like an oversight of Providence, yet tender careful eye of their heavenly Father never withdraws from them. If our eye be ever towards God in duty, his eye will be ever upon us in mercy, and, when we are at the lowest, will not overlook us.

**1.** Sometimes he prefers good people to places of trust and honour (v. 7): *With kings are they on the throne*, and every sheaf is made to bow to theirs. When righteous persons are advanced to places of honour and power, it is in mercy to them; for God's grace in them will both arm them against the temptations that attend preferment and enable them to improve the opportunity it gives them of doing good. It is also in mercy to those over whom they are set: *When the righteous bear rule the city rejoices*. If the righteous be advanced, they are established. Those that in honour keep a good conscience stand upon sure ground, and high places are not such slippery ground to them as they are to others. But, because it is not often that we see good men made great men in this world, this may be supposed to refer to the honour to which the righteous shall rise when their Redeemer shall *stand at the latter day upon the earth*; for then only they shall be exalted for ever, and established for ever; then shall they all shine forth as the sun, and be made kings and priests to our God.

**2.** If at any time he bring them into affliction, it is for the good of their souls, v. 8-10. Some good people are preferred to honour and power, but others are in trouble. Now observe,

**(1.)** The distress supposed (v. 8): *If they be bound in fetters*, laid in prison as Joseph was, or *holden in the cords of any other affliction*, confined by pain and sickness, hampered by poverty, bound in their counsels, and, notwithstanding all their struggles, held long in this distress. This was Job's case; he was caught, and kept fast, *in the cords of anguish* (as some read it); but observe,

**(2.)** The design God has, in bringing his people into such distresses as these; it is for the benefit of their souls, the consideration of which should

reconcile us to affliction and make us think well of it. Three things God intends when he afflicts us: —

[1.] To discover past sins to us, and to bring them to our remembrance. Then he shows them that amiss in them which before they did not see. He discovers to them the fact of sin: *He shows them their work*. Sin is our own work. If there be any good in us, it is God's work; and we are concerned to see what work we have made by sin. He discovers the fault of sin, shows them *their transgressions* of the law of God, and withal the sinfulness of sin, *that they have exceeded*, and have been beyond measure sinful. True penitents lay a load upon themselves, do not extenuate, but aggravate, their sins, and own that they have exceeded in them. Affliction sometimes answers to the sin; it serves, however, to awaken the conscience and puts men upon considering.

[2.] To dispose our hearts to receive present instructions: Then *he opens their ear to discipline*, v. 10. Whom God chastens *he teaches* (<sup><19412></sup>Psalm 94:12), and the affliction makes people willing to learn, softens the wax, that it may receive the impression of the seal; yet it does not do this of itself, but the grace of God working with and by it; it is he that opens the ear, that opens the heart, who has the key of David.

[3.] To deter and draw us off from iniquity for the future. This is the errand on which the affliction is sent; it is a command to *return from iniquity*, to have no more to do with sin, to turn from it with an aversion to it and a resolution never to return to it any more, <sup><19418></sup>Hosea 14:8.

3. If the affliction do its work, and accomplish that for which it is sent, he will comfort them again, according to the time that he has afflicted them (v. 11): *If they obey and serve him*, — if they comply with his design and serve his purpose in these dispensations, — if, when the affliction is removed, they continue in the same good mind that they were in when they were under the smart of it and perform the vows they made then, — if they live in obedience to God's commands, particularly those which relate to his service and worship, and in all instances make conscience of their duty to him, — then *they shall spend their days in prosperity again and their years in true pleasures*. Piety is the only sure way to prosperity and pleasure; this is a certain truth, and yet few will believe it. If we faithfully serve God,

(1.) We have the promise of outward prosperity, the promise of the life that now is, and the comforts of it, as far as is for God's glory and our good; and who would desire them any further?

(2.) We have the possession of inward pleasures, the comfort of communion with God and a good conscience, and that great peace which those have that love God's law. If we rejoice not in the Lord always, and in hope of eternal life, it is our own fault; and what better pleasures can we spend our years in?

4. If the affliction do not do its work, let them expect the furnace to be heated seven times hotter till they are consumed (v. 12): *If they obey not*, if they are not bettered by their afflictions, are not reclaimed and reformed, they shall perish by the sword of God's wrath. Those whom his rod does not cure his sword will kill; and the consuming fire will prevail if the refining fire do not; for when God judges he will overcome. If *Ahaz*, in his distress, *trespass yet more against the Lord*, this is that king Ahaz that is marked for ruin, <sup><442></sup>2 Chronicles 28:22; <sup><316></sup>Jeremiah 6:29, 30. God would have instructed them by their afflictions, but they received not instruction, would not take the hints that were given them; and therefore *they shall die without knowledge*, ere they are aware, without any further previous notices given them; or *they shall die because they were without knowledge* notwithstanding the means of knowledge which they were blessed with. Those that *die without knowledge* die without grace and are undone for ever.

V. He brings ruin upon hypocrites, the secret enemies of his kingdom (such as Elihu described, v. 12), who, though they were numbered among the righteous whom Elihu had spoken of before, yet did not obey God, but, being children of disobedience and darkness, become children of wrath and perdition; these are the *hypocrites in heart, who heap up wrath*, v. 13. See the nature of hypocrisy: it lies in the heart, which is for the world and the flesh when the outside seems to be for God and religion. Many that are saints in show and saints in word are hypocrites in heart. That spring is corrupt, and there is an evil treasure there. See the mischievousness of hypocrisy: hypocrites *heap up wrath*. They are doing that every day which is provoking to God, and will be reckoned with for it all together in the great day. *They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*, <sup><411></sup>Romans 2:5. Their sins are *laid up in store with God among his treasures*, <sup><524></sup>Deuteronomy 32:34. Compare <sup><316></sup>James 5:3. As what goes up a vapour

comes down a shower, so what goes up sin, if not repented of, will come down wrath. They think they are heaping up wealth, heaping up merits, but, when the treasures are opened, it will prove they were heaping up wrath. Observe,

**1.** What they do to heap up wrath. What is it that is so provoking? It is this, *They cry not when he binds them*, that is, when they are in affliction, bound with the cords of trouble, their hearts are hardened, they are stubborn and unhumiliated, and will not cry to God nor make their application to him. They are stupid and senseless as stocks and stones, despising the chastening of the Lord.

**2.** What are the effects of that wrath? *They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean*, v. 14. This is the portion of hypocrites, whom Christ denounced many woes against. If they continue impenitent,

**(1.)** They shall die a sudden death, *die in youth*, when death is most a surprise, and death (that is, the consequence of it) is always such to hypocrites; as those that die in youth die when they hoped to live, so hypocrites, at death, go to hell, when they hoped to go to heaven. *When a wicked man dies his expectations shall perish.*

**(2.)** They shall die the second death. *Their life*, after death (for so it comes in here), *is among the unclean*, among the *fornicators* (so some), among the worst and vilest of sinners, notwithstanding their specious and plausible profession. It is among the *Sodomites* (so the margin), those filthy wretches, who *going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, ~~6007~~ Jude 1:7. The souls of the wicked live after death, but they live among the unclean, the unclean spirits, the devil and his angels, forever separated from the new Jerusalem, into which *no unclean thing shall enter.*

## ~~8885~~ JOB 36:15-23

### THE ADDRESS OF ELIHU

Elihu here comes more closely to Job; and,

**I.** He tells him what God would have done for him before this if he had been duly humbled under his affliction. “We all know how ready God is to

*deliver the poor in his affliction* (v. 15); he always was so. The poor in spirit, those that are of a broken and contrite heart, he looks upon with tenderness, and, when they are in affliction, is ready to help them. He *opens their ears*, and makes them to hear joy and gladness, even *in their oppressions*; while he does not yet deliver them he speaks to them good words and comfortable words, for the encouragement of their faith and patience, the silencing of their fears, and the balancing of their griefs; and *even so* (v. 16) would he have done to thee if thou hadst submitted to his providence and conducted thyself well; he would have delivered and comforted thee, and we should have had none of these complaints. If thou hadst accommodated thyself to the will of God, thy liberty and plenty would have been restored to thee with advantage.”

1. “Thou wouldst have been enlarged, and not confined thus by thy sickness and disgrace: *He would have removed thee into a broad place where is no straitness*, and thou wouldst no longer have been cramped thus and have had all thy measures broken.”

2. “Thou wouldst have been enriched, and wouldst not have been left in this poor condition; thou wouldst have had thy table richly spread, not only with food convenient, but with the finest of the wheat” (see <sup><6914></sup>Deuteronomy 32:14) “and the fattest of the flesh.” Note, It ought to silence us under our afflictions to consider that, if we were better, it would be every way better with us: if we had answered the ends of an affliction, the affliction would be removed; and deliverance would come if we were ready for it. God would have done well for us if we had conducted ourselves well; <sup><4813></sup>Psalm 81:13, 14; <sup><2488></sup>Isaiah 48:18.

II. He charges him with standing in his own light, and makes him the cause of the continuance of his own trouble (v. 17): “*But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked*,” that is, “Whatever thou art really, in this thing thou hast conducted thyself like a wicked man, hast spoken and done like the wicked, hast gratified them and served their cause; and *therefore* judgment and justice take hold on thee as a wicked man, because thou goest in company with them, actest as if thou wert in their interest, aiding and abetting. *Thou hast maintained the cause of the wicked*; and such as a man's cause is such will the judgment of God be upon him;” so bishop Patrick. It is dangerous being on the wrong side: accessaries to treason will be dealt with as principals.



**III.** He cautions him not to persist in his frowardness. Several good cautions he gives him to this purport.

**1.** Let him not make light of divine vengeance, nor be secure, as if he were in no danger of it (v. 18): “*Because there is wrath*” (that is, “because God is a righteous governor, who resents all the affronts given to his government, because he has revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and because thou hast reason to fear that thou art under God's displeasure) therefore *beware lest he take thee away suddenly with his stroke*, and be so wise as to make thy peace with him quickly and get his anger turned away from thee.” A warning to this purport Job had given his friends (<sup>1849</sup>Job 19:29): *Be you afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishment of the sword*. Thus contenders are apt, with too much boldness, to bind one another over to the judgment of God and threaten one another with his wrath; but he that keeps a good conscience needs not fear the impotent menaces of proud men. But his was a friendly caution to Job, and necessary. Even good men have need to be kept to their duty by the fear of God's wrath. “Thou art a wise and good man, but beware lest he take thee away, for the wisest and best have enough in them to deserve his stroke.”

**2.** Let him not promise himself that, if God's wrath should kindle against him, he could find out ways to escape the strokes of it.

**(1.)** There is no escaping by money, no purchasing a pardon with silver, or gold, and such corruptible things: “*Even a great ransom cannot deliver thee* when God enters into judgment with thee. His justice cannot be bribed, nor any of the ministers of his justice. *Will he esteem thy riches, and take from them a commutation of the punishment? No, not gold*, v. 19. If thou hadst as much wealth as ever thou hadst, that would not ease thee, would not secure thee from the strokes of God's wrath, in the day of the revelation of which *riches profit not*,” <sup>1811</sup>Proverbs 11:4. See <sup>1806</sup>Psalms 49:7, 8.

**(2.)** There is no escaping by rescue: “*If all the forces of strength* were at thy command, if thou couldst muster ever so many servants and vassals to appear for thee to force thee out of the hands of divine vengeance, it were all in vain; God would not regard it. There is *none that can deliver out of his hand*.”

**(3.)** There is no escaping by absconding (v. 20): “*Desire not the night*, which often favours the retreat of a conquered army and covers it; think not that thou canst so escape the righteous judgment of God, for the *darkness hideth not from him*,” <sup><4D1E></sup>Psalm 139:11, 12. See <sup><48D2></sup>Job 34:22. “Think not, because in the night people retire to their place, go up to their beds, and it is then easy to escape being discovered by them, that God also ascends to his place, and cannot see thee. No; he *neither slumbers nor sleeps*. His eyes are open upon the children of men, not only in all places, but at all times. No rocks nor mountains can shelter us from his eye.” Some understand it of the night of death; that is the night by which men are *cut off from their place*, and Job had earnestly breathed for that night, as the hireling desires the evening, <sup><407D></sup>Job 7:2. “But do not do so,” says Elihu; “for thou knowest not what the night of death is.” Those that passionately wish for death, in hopes to make that their shelter from God's wrath, may perhaps be mistaken. There are those whom wrath pursues into that night.

**3.** Let him not continue his unjust quarrel with God and his providence, which hitherto he had persisted in when he should have submitted to the affliction (v. 21): “*Take heed*, look well to thy own spirit, and *regard not iniquity*, return not to it (so some), for it is at thy peril if thou do.” Let us never dare to think a favourable thought of sin, never indulge it, nor allow ourselves in it. Elihu thinks Job had need of this caution, he having *chosen iniquity rather than affliction*, that is, having chosen rather to gratify his own pride and humour in contending with God than to mortify it by a submission to him and accepting the punishment. We may take it more generally, and observe that those who choose iniquity rather than affliction make a very foolish choice. Those that ease their cares by sinful pleasures, increase their wealth by sinful pursuits, escape their troubles by sinful projects, and evade sufferings for righteousness' sake by sinful compliances against their consciences, make a choice they will repent of; for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction. It is an evil, and only evil.

**4.** Let him not dare to prescribe to God, nor give him his measures (v. 22, 23): “*Behold, God exalteth by his power*,” that is, “He does, may, and can set up and pull down whom he pleases, and therefore it is not for thee nor me to contend with him.” The more we magnify God the more do we humble and abase ourselves. Now consider,

**(1.)** That God is an absolute sovereign: *He exalts by his own power*, and not by strength derived from any other. He exalts whom he pleases, exalts those that were afflicted and cast down, by the strength and power which he gives his people; and therefore *who has enjoined him his way?* Who presides above him in his way? Is there any superior from whom he has his commission and to whom he is accountable? No; he himself is supreme and independent. *Who puts him in mind of his way?* so some. Does the eternal Mind need a remembrancer? No; his own way, as well as ours, is ever before him. He has not received orders or instructions from any (<sup>263</sup>Isaiah 60:13, 14), nor is he accountable to any. He enjoins to all the creatures their way; let not us then enjoin him his, but leave it to him to govern the world, who is fit to do it.

**(2.)** That he is an incomparable teacher: *Who teaches like him?* It is absurd for us to teach him who is himself the fountain of light, truth, knowledge, and instruction. *He that teaches man knowledge*, and so as none else can, *shall not he know?* (<sup>399</sup>Psalm 94:9, 10. Shall we light a candle to the sun? Observe, When Elihu would give glory to God as a ruler he praises him as a teacher, for rulers must teach. God does so. He binds with the cords of a man. In this, as in other things, he is unequalled. None so fit to direct his own actions as he himself is. He knows what he has to do, and how to do it for the best, and needs no information nor advice. Solomon himself had a privy-council to advise him, but the King of kings has none. Nor is any so fit to direct our actions as he is. None teaches with such authority and convincing evidence, with such condescension and compassion, nor with such power and efficacy, as God does. He teaches by the Bible, and that is the best book, teaches by his Son, and he is the best Master.

**(3.)** That he is unexceptionably just in all his proceedings: *Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?* Not, *Who dares say it?* (many do iniquity, and those who tell them of it do so at their peril), but *Who can say it?* Who has any cause to say it? Who can say it and prove it? It is a maxim undoubtedly true, without limitation, that *the King of kings can do no wrong.*

## ⌘ JOB 36:24-33

### THE ADDRESS OF ELIHU

Elihu is here endeavouring to possess Job with great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him into a cheerful submission to his providence.

**I.** He represents the work of God, in general, as illustrious and conspicuous, v. 24. His whole work is so. God does nothing mean. This is a good reason why we should acquiesce in all the operations of his providence concerning us in particular. His visible works, those of nature, and which concern the world in general, are such as we admire and commend, and in which we observe the Creator's wisdom, power, and goodness; shall we then find fault with his dispensations concerning us, and the counsels of his will concerning our affairs? We are here called to *consider the work of God*, <sup>⌘</sup>Ecclesiastes 7:13.

**1.** It is plain before our eyes, nothing more obvious: it is what *men behold*. Every man that has but half an eye may see it, may behold it afar off. Look which way we will, we see the productions of God's wisdom and power; we see that done, and that doing, concerning which we cannot but say, This is *the work of God*, the finger of God; it is the Lord's doing. Every man may see, afar off, the heaven and all its lights, the earth and all its fruits, to be the work of Omnipotence; much more when we behold them nigh at hand. Look at the minutest works of nature through a microscope; do they not appear curious? The eternal power and godhead of the Creator are *clearly seen and understood* by the *things that are made*, <sup>⌘</sup>Romans 1:20. Every man, even those that have not the benefit of divine revelation, may see this; for *there is no speech or language where the voice* of these natural constant preachers *is not heard*, <sup>⌘</sup>Psalm 19:3.

**2.** It ought to be marvellous in our eyes. The beauty and excellency of the work of God, and the agreement of all the parts of it, are what we must remember to magnify and highly to extol, not only justify it as right and good, and what cannot be blamed, but magnify it as wise and glorious, and such as no creature could contrive or produce. Man may see his works, and is capable of discerning his hand in them (which the beasts are not), and therefore ought to praise them and give him the glory of them.

**II.** He represents God, the author of them, as infinite and unsearchable, v. 26. The streams of being, power, and perfection should lead us to the fountain. *God is great*, infinitely so, — great in power, for he is omnipotent and independent, — great in wealth, for he is self-sufficient and all-sufficient, — great in himself, — great in all his works, — great, and therefore greatly to be praised, — great, and therefore *we know him not*. We know that he is, but not what he is. We know what he is not, but not what he is. We know in part, but not in perfection. This comes in here as a reason why we must not arraign his proceedings, nor find fault with what he does, because it is speaking evil of the things that we understand not and answering a matter before we hear it. We know not the duration of his existence, for it is infinite. *The number of his years cannot possibly be searched out*, for he is eternal; there is no number of them. He is a Being without beginning, succession, or period, who ever was, and ever will be, and ever the same, the great *I AM*. This is a good reason why we should not prescribe to him, nor quarrel with him, because, as he is, such are his operations, quite out of our reach.

**III.** He gives some instances of God's wisdom, power, and sovereign dominion, in the works of nature and the dispensations of common providence, beginning in this chapter with the clouds and the rain that descends from them. We need not be critical in examining either the phrase or the philosophy of this noble discourse. The general scope of it is to show that God is infinitely great, and the Lord of all, the first cause and supreme director of all the creatures, and *has all power in heaven and earth* (whom therefore we ought, with all humility and reverence, to adore, to speak well of, and to give honour to), and that it is presumption for us to prescribe to him the rules and methods of his special providence towards the children of men, or to expect from him an account of them, when the operations even of common providences about the meteors are so various and so mysterious and unaccountable. Elihu, to affect Job with God's sublimity and sovereignty, had directed him (<sup><885></sup>Job 35:5) to look unto the clouds. In these verses he shows us what we may observe in the clouds we see which will lead us to consider the glorious perfections of their Creator. Consider the clouds,

**1.** As springs to this lower world, the source and treasure of its moisture, and the great bank through which it circulates — a very necessary provision, for its stagnation would be as hurtful to this lower world as that

of the blood to the body of man. It is worth while to observe in this common occurrence,

(1.) That the clouds above distil upon the earth below. If the heavens become brass, the earth becomes iron; therefore thus the promise of plenty runs, *I will hear the heavens and they shall hear the earth*. This intimates to us that every good gift is from above, from him who is both Father of lights and Father of the rain, and it instructs us to direct our prayers to him and to look up.

(2.) That they are here said to *distil upon man* (v. 28); for, though indeed God *causes it to rain in the wilderness where no man is* (<sup>3826</sup>Job 38:26, <sup>3441</sup>Psalm 104:11), yet special respect is had to man herein, to whom the inferior creatures are all made serviceable and from whom the actual return of the tribute of praise is required. Among men, he *causes his rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust*, <sup>4155</sup>Matthew 5:45.

(3.) They are said to distil the water in *small drops*, not in spouts, as when the *windows of heaven were opened*, <sup>4071</sup>Genesis 7:11. God waters the earth with that with which he once drowned it, only dispensing it in another manner, to let us know how much we lie at his mercy, and how kind he is, in giving rain by drops, that the benefit of it may be the further and the more equally diffused, as by an artificial water-pot.

(4.) Though sometimes the rain comes in very small drops, yet, at other times, it pours down in great rain, and this difference between one shower and another must be resolved into the divine Providence which orders it so.

(5.) Though it comes down in drops, yet it distils upon man *abundantly* (v. 28), and therefore is called *the river of God which is full of water*, <sup>4589</sup>Psalm 65:9.

(6.) The clouds *pour down according to the vapour* that they draw up, v. 27. So just the heavens are to the earth, but the earth is not so in the return it makes.

(7.) The produce of the clouds is sometimes a great terror, and at other times a great favour, to the earth, v. 31. When he pleases *by them he judges the people* he is angry with. Storms, and tempests, and excessive rains, destroying the fruits of the earth and causing inundations, come from the clouds; but, on the other hand, from them, usually, he gives meat

in abundance; they drop fatness upon the pastures that are clothed with flocks, and the valleys that are *covered with corn*, <sup><1611></sup>Psalm 65:11-13.

**(8.)** Notice is sometimes given of the approach of rain, v. 33. *The noise thereof*, among other things, *shows concerning it*. Hence we read (<sup><1184></sup>1 Kings 18:41) of *the sound of abundance of rain*, or (as it is in the margin) *a sound of a noise of rain*, before it came; and a welcome harbinger it was then. As the noise, so the face of the sky, shows concerning it, <sup><1276></sup>Luke 12:56. The cattle also, by a strange instinct, are apprehensive of a change in the weather nigh at hand, and seek for shelter, shaming man, who will not foresee the evil and hide himself.

**2.** As shadows to the upper world (v. 29): *Can any understand the spreading of the clouds?* They are spread over the earth as a curtain or canopy; how they come to be so, how stretched out, and how poised, as they are, we cannot understand, though we daily see they are so. Shall we then pretend to understand the reasons and methods of God's judicial proceedings with the children of men, whose characters and cases are so various, when we cannot account for the spreadings of the clouds, which *cover the light?* v. 32. It is a cloud coming *betwixt*, v. 32; <sup><330></sup>Job 26:9. And this we are sensible of, that, by the interposition of the clouds between us and the sun, we are,

**(1.)** Sometimes favoured; for they serve as an umbrella to shelter us from the violent heat of the sun, which otherwise would beat upon us. A *cloud of dew in the heat of harvest* is spoken of as a very great refreshment. <sup><2304></sup>Isaiah 18:4.

**(2.)** Sometimes we are by them frowned upon; for they darken the earth at noon-day and eclipse the light of the sun. Sin is compared to a cloud (<sup><2402></sup>Isaiah 44:22), because it comes between us and the light of God's countenance and obstructs the shining of it. But though the clouds darken the sun for a time, and pour down rain, yet (*post nubila Phoebus — the sun shines forth after the rain*), after he has wearied the cloud, *he spreads his light upon it*, v. 30. There is a *clear shining after rain*, <sup><1204></sup>2 Samuel 23:4. The sunbeams are darted forth, and reach to *cover even the bottom of the sea*, thence to exhale a fresh supply of vapours, and so raise recruits for the clouds, v. 30. In all this, we must remember to magnify the work of God.