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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse,
or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest.”*
Job 34:33

DEAR friends, it is never wise to dispute with God. Let a man strive with his fellow, but not with his Maker. If we must discuss any point, let it be with imperfect beings like ourselves, but not with the infallible and infinitely wise God, for in most of our discussions, these questions will come back to us, “Should it be according to thy mind?” Are you master? Is everyone to be subordinate to you?”

I am going to speak, this evening, to those who have a quarrel with God concerning the way of salvation. They are very unwise not to take salvation just as God brings it to them, but they do not. They have some difficulty or other, so they raise a dispute, and they have been, perhaps for years, caviling at the Savior whose infinite goodness has provided a way of salvation exactly adapted to their needs. I am going to use Elihu's words, and apply them to their case.

I. To begin at the beginning, here is first, A QUESTION, “Should it be according to thy mind?”

You say that you are willing to find mercy, and that you are very teachable, but you object to the plan of salvation as it is revealed in the Scriptures.

First, then, *what is it to which you object?* Do you object to the very basis of the plan, namely, that God will forgive sin through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son? I know that some do object to this, they cannot bear to hear about atonement by blood, or justification by imputed righteousness.

Others, who will not say that they object to atonement, spirit away the very meaning of it. They cannot endure that glorious doctrine of substitution which is such a joy to us. Christ standing in the sinner's stead, and the sinner then standing in the place of Christ—Christ taking the sinner's sin, and the sinner wearing Christ's righteousness—all this they absolutely reject. “No doubt Christ did something for sinners,” they say, but they cannot define what He did, and as for the sin of any man being actually put away by Christ being punished in the room and place and stead of the ungodly sinner, they will not believe it.

Yet, that is God's plan of salvation, and some of us know, in our inmost hearts, that we never had peace until we accepted that plan of salvation, and that now, if it should be taken away from us, we should lose all the joy of existence, and go back to the despair which at one time, was so heavy upon us that we could sympathize with Job when he said, “My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.” We could better afford that the sun should be quenched, that the moon should be darkened, that all springs should be dried, that the very air itself should disappear—we could better afford to die, and rot in our graves, than that we should lose our Savior, and His atoning blood, and justifying righteousness.

Whatever you, Mr. Objector, may say about it, we say to you, “Should it be according to thy mind?” Would you have Christ to die, and yet not really secure salvation by His death? Could you invent a better plan, or even one half as good—

“So just to God, so safe for man,”—

so consolatory to a wounded conscience, so constraining to gratitude when that conscience has been pacified? Would you, could you, propose anything one thousandth part as good as God's plan of salvation? Even if you could, "should it be according to thy mind?" Who are you, a guilty sinner, to despise the Savior's blood? If you had your just deserts, you would years ago have been in the lowest pit of hell, will you set aside the cross of Christ, and seek to put something else in the place of the crucified Redeemer?

But possibly, you do not object to the doctrine of substitution, but your objection is to the way of salvation by faith. "I don't like that doctrine of justification by faith," says one, "for I am sure that when it is preached, people will begin to think that there is no virtue in good works, and that they may live as they like." I have often heard such a remark as yours, my friend, but experience is dead against you. Whenever justification by faith has been uppermost in the preaching, the morals of the people have been purest, and their spirituality has been brightest.

But whenever the preachers have extolled the works and ceremonies of the law, or the Arminianism which brings in something of trust in works, or human power, it is most certain that there has been a declension in point of morals, while religion itself has seemed almost ready to expire. You may go to those who preach up salvation by works to hear them talk, but you had better not go to see how they live, whereas those who preach justification by faith can boldly point to the multitudes who have accepted this truth, and whose godly lives prove the sanctifying power of the doctrine.

But if you object to this doctrine, how would you like to have it altered? "Oh, well! I would like to have some good feelings put in with faith." And how then, would any man be saved? Can he command his own feelings? Those feelings come naturally enough after faith, but if they are demanded without faith, how will they ever be presented to God? Besides, feelings would claim some credit if they were thus joined with faith. A man would be able to boast that he had felt his way to heaven, and he would have the same self-congratulatory spirit which we see in those who trust in works and ceremonies, and thus Christ would be robbed of His glory as the sinner's Savior. Man would put his dirty hand upon the crown, and place it upon his own head, but that must never be the case.

You shall be saved if you trust the Savior, but if you do not like that way of salvation, you can never be saved. Why should the plan of salvation be changed for you? Is God to be tied down to act only as you please? Is He to alter His Gospel to suit the fancies of rebellious men? That must not be. There is no mistake about this matter, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," and our Lord Himself said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." That is the only message for him if he continues in his unbelief, and it shall not be altered to suit the mind of any man that lives.

"Oh, but!" say some, "We object to the requirements of the Gospel, especially to that verse where Christ says, 'Ye must be born again.' Where is the need of that? We were christened when we were children, we were confirmed as we grew older, we have taken the sacrament, but we do not agree with that hard saying, 'Ye must be born again.'" They will not walk with Christ if He insists upon that condition.

Moreover, He requires the giving up of all known sin, the hating of all sin and the objector says, "But may I not retain my one darling sin? May I not keep my pet evil? I will give up all else, but that one I must have." And when men are told that wherever Christ comes, He makes a radical change, He casts out Satan and all his imps, drives them out by main force, and takes complete possession of the soul—they bar the door of their heart against the Savior, for they do not want such strong measures as His in their case.

Well, sirs, as you say that Christ's requirements are not according to your mind, what would you like them to be? Do you wish to be allowed to continue taking what you call your little drop, which is powerful enough to make you reel across the street? Then there is somebody over yonder who would like to keep his adulteries, and another who would like to keep his petty thefts, and another who would like to keep on with his swearing, and another who would like to retain his covetousness, so that he could still grind the poor to powder, and make money by crushing them.

What sin is there in the whole world that would be put to death if men were left to pick and choose the Agag which each one wished to save? No, Christ came to save His people from their sins—not in them, and it is essential to salvation that sin should be repented of, and being repented of, should be renounced, and that, by the help of God, we should lead a new life, under a new Master, serving from a new motive, because the grace of God has renewed our spirit.

“Should it be according to thy mind?” No, certainly not, for putting all reasons into one, it is not the slightest use for you to make any objection to the Gospel, for you will be lost if you do not accept it just as it is revealed in the Scriptures. Christ will never alter the Gospel one jot or tittle—not the cross of a “t” or the dot of an “i”—to please the biggest man that lives.

“Oh! But really, I am a man of education, am I to be saved in the same way as the man who does not know A from B?” Precisely, there is no other way of salvation for you. There is not one gate for Doctors of Divinity and another for the poor and ignorant. “But I am a person of good character, a matronly woman, am I to be saved just in the same way as a Magdalene?” Precisely the same, there is no other Savior for you than the one in whom Mary Magdalene delighted and trusted. “But sir, you do not surely mean to say that all these street Arabs are to go to heaven in the same way as a man who has kept shop, and been respectable all his life?” Yes, I do, all must go in exactly the same road. Queens and chimney sweeps must enter heaven by the same gate, or not enter at all.

There is but one name given among men whereby we must be saved, there is no other Savior but Christ Jesus the Lord, He suits every class of persons, big sinners and little ones, if there are any little sinners anywhere. All must come to Christ, and at His feet confess their sin, for God’s plan cannot be altered for anyone. My dear sir, we are not going to have any enlargement, or rather, any mystification, of the plan of salvation to suit your profound mind. There will be no golden handles put to the doors of heaven to suit you, my lord, with all your wealth and pride. Nay, nay, nay, come to Christ, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest, but there is no other way of obtaining rest of heart and conscience.

I have thus tried to mention a few of the objections which men make to God’s plan of salvation. Now let me ask two or three questions. First, *should not God have His way?* Is it not intolerable that you and I should raise objections at all, when the mercy of God, if it ever comes to us, is a pure gift of charity? God may well say to us, “Shall I not do as I will with mine own?” There is no man living who has any absolute right to receive anything from God except destruction. That terrible doom we have all merited, but nothing beyond that.

If we were shut up in prison, and kept upon dry bread, so long as we were out of hell, we would still be under obligation to God. If the Lord should choose to show mercy to only one man in the world, He has a perfect right to do so, if He chooses to give it to a few, or if He chooses to give it to all, He has the right to do so. He is absolutely sovereign, and these are the words that He would have every one of us hear and heed, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

The crown rights of the King of kings must never be assailed, for us beggars to turn choosers, and to dictate to God what He shall give to us—for us condemned criminals to begin to make bargains with God as to how He shall preserve our lives, if He chooses to do so—oh, this will never do!

You know, dear friends, that when we give even a trifling charity, we like to do it in our own way. I remember that, one Christmas time, a certain gentleman had given away a quantity of meat to many poor people, he had been so generous that he had given away all he had.

The next morning a woman came to him, bringing back the piece of meat which she had received, which was meant for boiling, she said she wanted to have a piece for roasting. There was none left for changing, so she had to take what had been given to her, or go without any at all. You are quite sure that the next year, that woman’s name was put down among the first to have a Christmas gift, are you not? On the contrary, the gentleman said, “She will not be troubled next year, either with a boiling piece or a

roasting piece from me, I will take good care of that.” I think it was quite natural that he should say so, for our common proverb regards it as ingratitude when we “look a gift horse in the mouth.”

When anything comes to us entirely as a gift, it is not for us to cavil at it, but to accept it, and this is specially true of God’s great gift of salvation. O Lord, if You will but save me, save me anyhow! If I may be delivered from this accursed sin of mine, and made pure and holy, do it, Lord, after Your own gracious fashion! It is not for me to suggest any plan to You, but to leave myself entirely in Your hands, and to let it be according to Your mind.

Further, *is not God’s way the best?* The mind of God is so infinitely great, and good, and wise, that it cannot be supposed that, even if He left the plan of salvation to our option, we could choose anything half as good as what He decrees and appoints. Should He, for a single moment, hold His sovereignty in abeyance, and allow us to be kings and princes on our own account, what follies we should perpetrate! We would choose a way of salvation that would not honor God, nor destroy evil, nor even be good for our own selves.

Some people would like a heaven into which they could enter without being born again, but what kind of heaven would that be? Some would like to have joy and peace without believing in Christ. Some would like to have eternal felicity, and yet indulge their lusts. This would be an evil of the most awful kind. It is better that sin should bring to man infinite sorrow than that it should be linked with eternal enjoyment. The mischief of it is that it does get linked with enjoyment for a while by foolish men, who forget what must come afterwards, but God has never joined these two things together, it is only wicked men who have pretended to celebrate this unholy marriage. God proclaims a perpetual separation between sin and happiness, and it is well that it should be so.

Now, to conclude this first part of our subject, suppose the plan of salvation should be according to any human mind, *whose mind is to decide what it shall be?* Yours? Nay, mine. And another says, “No, mine.” Our proverb rightly says, “Many men, many minds,” and if we were to have salvation arranged according to the mind of each one of us, there would be a pretty quarrel before we left this place. You say, friend, that it is to be according to your mind, but why not according to your neighbor’s mind? If man’s mind were to decide it, what should we have? Why, you would all contradict each other, and there would be no plan of salvation at all if God did not settle it once for all.

Then, besides, should it be according to your mind today? “Yes,” you say, “I have made up my mind.” But you will take your mind to pieces tomorrow—what little there is of it—and then you will put it together again the next day and say, “I have made up my mind, I am a man of mind, you know.” Ah, yes! we know you, sir. There is a certain tribe of people about nowadays, who call themselves “men of culture,” and they sneer at everybody who does not go in for that kind of boasting. If they were really men of mind, they would never talk like that, for the man who has the most culture generally has enough to be a little modest, and not to brag about what he is.

Well, then, if salvation is to be according to man’s mind, whose mind is to decide it, and on what day, and at what hour of the day is the verdict of that man’s mind to be taken? It is vacillating, changing like the moon, never twice in the same mood on the same day, so salvation cannot be according to our mind, for it would be chaos, it would be destruction, if that were the case.

II. Now, secondly, here is A WARNING, “He will recompense it, whether you refuse, or whether you choose.”

By this I understand that, *whatever our will may be, God will carry out His own purpose.* As surely as God is God, He will never be defeated in anything. He who is omniscient, and therefore sees the end from the beginning, is also omnipotent, and therefore can work His own will exactly as He chooses—He will never be baffled by the will of men.

I believe in the free agency of man as much as anyone who lives, but I equally believe in the eternal purpose of God. If you ask, “How do you reconcile those beliefs?” I answer—They have never been at variance yet, so there is no need to attempt to reconcile them. They are like two parallel lines, which will run side by side forever—man responsible because he does what he wills, and God infinitely glorious,

achieving His own purposes, not only in the world of dead, inert matter, but also through those who are free agents, without changing them in the least degree, leaving them just as free as they ever were, He yet, in every jot and tittle, performs the eternal purpose of His will.

I would also remind you that, though you cavil at God's way of salvation, *God will punish sin just the same*. There is many a man who has said, "I will never believe that God will send men to hell," but he has himself gone there, and then he has changed his mind in a very remarkable and terrible fashion when it is too late.

There are many who say, "It should be this, or it should not be that," but they do not ask, "What saith the Scripture?" Yet that is the all-important point, for whatever you may say as to what it should be or should not be, makes no difference to God. He will take less notice of you and your opinion than you do of a gnat or a fly that flies about you on a summer's evening. He is so infinitely great and good that any opposition you and I may think that we can raise against Him shall be less than nothing, and vanity. Shall twigs contend with fire, or wax with the flame? Shall nothing oppose itself to omnipotence? Shall the creature of a day, that is and is not, attempt to wrestle with the Eternal? No, this cannot be, therefore God will have His way, and He will punish sin.

And further, my friends, though you may object to God's way of salvation, *others will be saved by it*. Christ did not die in vain. He will rejoice in every one whom He purchased with His blood. He will not lose one of the jewels that are to deck His crown forever. You may strive against His kingdom, but that kingdom will come when He pleases. The King eternal, immortal, invisible, shall surely reign forever and ever, and if your voice is not heard in the great Hallelujah chorus of heaven, yet not one of its notes will be missing. Christ shall be glorified to the highest possible degree, whosoever may oppose Him.

It is well that those who object to God's plan of salvation should know these facts. That is how Christ treated objectors when He was upon the earth. When they murmured at what He told them, He did not tone down the unpalatable truth, He did not say to them, "You are robbing me of My honor and glory, and I shall never prosper," but He said, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." On another occasion, He said, "Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." He did not humble Himself to them, but again proclaimed His own truth in all its majesty and sublimity, that they might bow before Him and His message.

Just once more, upon this point, let me say that *God will certainly magnify His own name*, whoever may oppose Him, "Whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose," shall make no difference to Him. His grace comes like the dew, which tarries not for man, neither waits for the sons of men. Oftentimes, He is found of them that seek Him not, and to those who were not His people, He says, "Ye are my people," thus magnifying His own amazing grace. Whoever may stand out against Him, He shall lack none of His honor and glory, world without end.

III. This brings us to the third part of our subject, on which I desire to say exactly what Elihu said, "and not I." We cannot be absolutely sure what these three words mean, but if they mean what I think they do, they teach us a lesson, which I have called A PROTEST.

Whenever you find anyone opposing God, say to yourself, "and not I." When there is any wrong thing being done, and it comes under your notice, say, "and not I." Take care that you go not with a multitude to do evil, do not take upon your tongue just what others may be saying, but bear your individual protest against the evil, even if you stand alone, say, "and not I."

What Elihu meant, I think, was this. Whoever opposes God should know that *he is not dealing with a man like himself*. If you hear a preacher make a statement, and you feel, "That is not the Word of the Lord," pray God to forgive him for his sin in making it, but if he speaks with the sound of his Master's feet behind him and what he says is the Word of God, then do not trifle with it. If it be clearly a revealed truth, it may grate against your feelings, and set your teeth on edge, but what of that? You had better get your teeth and your feelings put right, for the truth of God cannot be altered in order to please you.

Someone says, "I cannot believe that statement, because it seems too shocking." That is just why I do believe it, for it does me good by shocking me, and if it is in God's Word, I am bound to accept it.

“Oh!” you say, “but something within me revolts against it.” It is only natural it should do so, for “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” and it naturally cries out against the thing that is most surely true. The supreme majesty of God’s Word is that before which we have to bow, and not the insignificant usurpers of our inward feelings, fancies, and whims. “Let God be true, and every man a liar.”

Elihu also means, I think, “*I will not be responsible for the man who refuses God’s Word. I will not stand in his place, or take the blame which is due him. He shall be recompensed, and not I, for I have spoken the truth. I will not bear the responsibility of it. If men choose to refuse it, they must take the consequences, to the Lord alone they must stand or fall.*”

And once more, Elihu means, “*If you refuse God’s Word, it is not I. I will not share in your rebellion against Him.*” Ah! my dear hearers, there are some of you who think yourselves very intelligent, and wise, and thoughtful, and you imagine that you know a great deal more than I do, and therefore you refuse to receive God’s Word. Well, if you do so, I will not, I am determined about this matter, and I say with Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve JEHOVAH.”

And mark you, by “JEHOVAH” I mean the Old Testament God. I have never seen Him superseded in His own Word, though some men profess that it is so. According to them, the God of the Hebrews was not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, though Jesus never said so, but quite the reverse. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, is He whom we worship this day, and His character, as it is written out in full in the Old and New Testament, is that which we admire and delight in.

Others may have new gods, newly come up, which our fathers knew not, but not I. He who made the heavens and the earth, He who led forth His people out of Egypt, and divided the sea, even the Red Sea, He whose mercy endureth for ever, the God who shines forth all along as the God of a covenanted people to whom He did reveal Himself, “this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Learned men may dispute as much as they like about Him, but we bow humbly at His feet. We question nothing that He does, we believe it to be right even when we do not understand it, and it is our hope that others will do the same, but if they will not, it will not affect our own decision.

IV. Our last head is, A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION.

If there are any who refuse the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, for any reason known only to themselves, we venture to ask them to say what it is, “Therefore speak what thou knowest.” It was not in Elihu’s mind to tell Job to be silent, and never open his mouth again. Speech is the glory of man, and freedom of speech, as far as concerns his fellow creatures, is the right of every man. It is far better that when there is a difficulty or an objection, it should be fairly stated, than that it should lie smothered up within the soul to breed untold mischief. Therefore, if you have an objection to God’s Word, write it out, and look at it. Or if you care not to do that, state it, if not to your friend—if you prefer privacy—state it to yourself, only bring it out, and let it be known. But at the same time, when you are speaking, “speak what thou knowest.”

Now, what do you really know of God? Little enough do the most of us know, but still, I think we know enough to know that He is not the god of modern times whom some preach. One single night of frost will destroy millions upon millions of creatures that were happy and enjoyed life, and this is done by that God of whom we are often assured that He cannot possibly punish sin, or put men to pain. But He does it.

Hear the cry of the poor seamen, when the storm tosses the great barque, and drives it on the rock. See how everywhere the Lord is a great God and terrible. Even though He condescends to be a Father to those of us who trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, and is gentle as a nurse to us, yet is He the God of thunder and of fire, the great and almighty God, the King who will not be questioned by His subjects, and who will not alter His arrangements to please their fancies.

It is well for us to speak of God as we have found Him. He has dealt kindly and graciously with us, “He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities,” else had we been cast away forever. We long that others may be able to speak of God in the same way, not saying what

they would have Him to be, but what He has revealed Himself to be, in nature, and in providence, and especially in grace. Let us all come humbly to His feet. He bids us look to His dear Son, and so find peace and salvation. If we will not do so, there is nothing for us but to be driven from His presence, and from the glory of His power, world without end. Will we dare to defy Him? Have we the impiety so to do? O God, humble us! Beneath the terror of Your majesty, and the glory of Your righteousness, and the supreme splendor of Your love, bow us down, to accept Your grace, and to become Yours forever and ever! God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOB 34

Verses 1-3. *Furthermore Elihu answered and said, Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.*

I wish that verse was always true, especially concerning those who hear what purports to be the Gospel, I only wish they would test and try what they hear, just as, with their mouth, they taste what they eat. But as there are some persons who will eat anything that is set before them, so there are some who will accept anything that they hear, without exercising any spiritual discernment whatever. "It is cleverly put," they say, and therefore they receive it, yet they would scarcely be foolish enough to eat unhealthy food simply because it was skillfully carved.

4-5. *Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good. For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment.*

Yes, Job had said something like that, yet not quite that. He had denied the charges of gross sin which his friends brought against him, and he had, in that sense, declared that he was righteous, and so he was. There may have been in Job a little of the spirit which Elihu here denounces, he may perhaps, have thought that God had not dealt well with him, in letting him fall into so much trouble, seeing that he was a righteous man. This notion, Elihu will not permit to pass unchallenged. Mistaking Job's meaning, he denounces it, just as I have heard preachers sometimes give a description of Calvinism such as it never was, and then they have proceeded to burn the man of straw which they have themselves made. It is one of the easiest things in the world to misquote or misinterpret your opponent's statement, and then denounce it, and think you have confuted him, whereas you have only dissipated the chimera of your own brain. Elihu proceeds to deal with Job in this fashion.

6-9. *Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression. What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.*

He did not mean that Job did really go into the company of the wicked, but that, in his saying that it had been no profit to him that he should delight himself with God—which Elihu declares that Job said, though I do not remember that he ever did say so—he was making himself the associate of ungodly men. Any of us would be doing so if we, in our sorrowful moments, should say that we had derived no profit from delighting ourselves with God. It would not be true, it would be a rebellious and wicked speech, and in some degree, it would be an atheistic speech.

10. *Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.*

That was well spoken. Let us never, even for a moment, imagine that God can do anything that is unrighteous or unjust. God is a sovereign, and therefore He may do as He wills with His own grace, but there is never any injustice in any of the acts of His sovereignty. He is infinitely wise, and just, and merciful, in all that He does. He does as He wills, but He never wills to do anything that could possibly be better done. His own will is the best that can be.

11-17. *For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world? If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust. If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words. Shall even he that hateth right govern?*

Do you suppose that it could be so—that the Governor of all the earth should hate that which is right? This would be rank blasphemy.

17. *And wilt thou condemn him that is most just?*

Will you, poor puny mortal, arraign the Most High, and dare to condemn Him who is most just?

18-19. *Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly? How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands.*

This is the same kind of argument as Paul used in writing to the Romans, “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” Shall the potter’s clay resist the power of the potter, who assuredly has the right to do what he wills with his own clay? And if we do not speak lightly against princes, much less should we speak against the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose infinite majesty fills all things. What after all, are princes, and rich men, and great men, in comparison with the great God who made them all? “They all are the work of his hands.”

20. *In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand.*

An invisible power takes away the strength of which they boasted, and then, what does the prince become, with all his glory, or the warrior, with all his victories? What, but so much corruption that must be buried out of sight?

21-22. *For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*

How gloriously is this great truth put! This Elihu was a man of real eloquence, what a weighty sentence is this! How worthy to be treasured up in the memory! “There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.” Not even in the grave can they be concealed from the eye of God, and if it were possible for them to hide beneath the skirts of death himself, yet would God perceive them, and drag them forth to judgement.

23. *For he will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God.*

For, if man were ill-treated, and more were laid upon him than ought to be, he would have cause to enter into judgment with his Maker. But God will never compromise His own eternal holiness after such a fashion as this. He will not lay upon man more than is right. You who are greatly afflicted, and in sore distress, ought to believe this, and if the Spirit of God shall give you a full conviction of the truth of it, it will afford you great comfort. The waves of your distress will come just as far as God wills, but at His bidding they must stay, as stays the sea in the fullness of its pride when JEHOVAH says to it, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.” Therefore, leave your case in His hands, for He will not lay upon you more than is right.

24-28. *He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead. Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others; because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways: so that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.*

It is a dreadful thing for princes and great men when the poor begin to cry unto God against them. God will soon take up that quarrel, for while the cries of mere politicians and partisans are unheeded by Him, the cry of the afflicted always commands His attention, and He will, in due time, rectify all that is wrong.

29. *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?*

This is a most comforting question, for if God gives quietness to the spirit, nobody can really trouble you. When Christ has once spoken peace to our heart, and given us a holy calm, then are we glad because we be quiet, and who is he that can raise a storm in our soul again? “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” also passes all distraction. It cannot be broken by all the devils in hell. Oh, how blessed is this assurance!

29. *And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?*

If God will not be seen, who can possibly see Him? If He grows wroth with a man, and leaves him, what can that man do? When even His own beloved people no longer see His face, what joy can be theirs? What can make day when the sun is gone? What can make joy when Christ is gone?

29-30. *Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only: that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.*

God has ways of dealing with His children by which He weeds out hypocrites, lays them low, and does not suffer them to have rule over His people.

31. *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more:*

That is the spirit of the true-born child of God, “Father, I know that what I have suffered is a chastisement from Your hand, and I accept it as such. ‘I will not offend any more,’ I quit the sin that grieved You.”

32. *That which I see not teach thou me:*

“Show me wherefore thou contendest with me. Point out to me the evil which thou wouldest have me put away.”

32-35. *If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest. Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me. Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom.*

This man is getting proud and conceited, I think. He spoke well when he was defending God against all charges and complaints, but now that he turns upon Job, the patriarch is a wiser man and a better man than he is. Elihu is not fit to unloose the latches of Job’s shoes, yet he begins to accuse him. It sometimes happens that dogs bark at their masters, yet the masters are not to be blamed, and it is not always the best man who reproves others. Sometimes, a very foolish man will be the loudest in his rebukes of those who are wiser and better than himself, and will find fault with those whom he ought to commend. It was so in the case of Elihu and Job.

36-37. *My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end because of his answers for wicked men. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.*

Well, thank God, we are not going to be judged by Elihu, nor by any other of our fellow creatures, to our own Master we stand or fall, and if we trust in Him, He will make us to stand even in the great day of judgment itself, blessed be His holy name!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—211, 597, 570

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