

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Job defends himself against the accusations of his friends, and accuses them of endeavoring to pervert truth, Job 13:1-8. Threatens them with God's judgments, Job 13:9-12. Begs some respite, and expresses strong confidence in God, Job 13:13-19. He pleads with God, and deplors his severe trials and sufferings, Job 13:20-28.

Verse 1

Lo, mine eye hath seen all this - Ye have brought nothing new to me; I know those maxims as well as you: nor have you any knowledge of which I am not possessed.

Verse 3

Surely I would speak to the Almighty - *אֵלֹהִים* (ulam), O that: - I wish I could speak to the Almighty!

I desire to reason with God - He speaks here to reference to the proceedings in a court of justice. Ye pretend to be advocates for God, but ye are forgers of lies: O that God himself would appear! Before him I could soon prove my innocence of the evils with which ye charge me.

Verse 4

Ye are forgers of lies - Ye frame deceitful arguments: ye reason sophistically, and pervert truth and justice, in order to support your cause.

Physicians of no value - Ye are as feeble in your reasonings as ye are inefficient in your skill. Ye can neither heal the wound of my mind, nor the disease of my body. In ancient times every wise man professed skill in the healing art, and probably Job's friends had tried their skill on his body as well as on his mind. He therefore had, in his argument against their teaching, a double advantage: Your skill in divinity and physic is equal: in the former ye are forgers of lies; in the latter, ye are good-for-nothing physicians. I can see no reason to depart from the general meaning of the original to which the ancient versions adhere. The Chaldee says: *אֵלֹהִים* Ye are idle physicians; and, like the mortified flesh which is cut off with the knife, so are the whole of you. The imagery in the former clause is chirurgical, and refers to the sewing together, or connecting the divided sides of wounds; for *אֵלֹהִים*™ (topheley), which we translate forgers, comes from *אֵלֹהִים* (taphal), to fasten, tie, connect, sew together. And I question whether *אֵלֹהִים*™ (topheley) here may not as well express Surgeons, as *אֵלֹהִים*™ (ropheey), in the latter clause, Physicians. Ye are Chirurgeons of falsity, and worthless Physicians.

Verse 5

Hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom - In Proverbs 17:28 we have the following apophthegm: *אֵלֹהִים* Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips, a man of understanding. There is no reason to say that Solomon quotes from Job: I have already expressed my opinion that the high antiquity attributed to this book is perfectly unfounded, and that there is much more evidence that Solomon was its author, than there is that it was the composition of Moses. But, whenever Job lived, whether before Abraham or after Moses, the book was not written till the time of Solomon, if not later. But as to the saying in question, it is a general apophthegm, and may be found among the wise sayings of all nations. I may observe here, that a silent man is not likely to be a fool; for a fool will be always prating, or, according to another adage, a fool's bolt is soon shot. The Latins have the same proverb: *Vir sapit, qui pauca loquitur*, *אֵלֹהִים* A wise man speaks little.

Verse 6

Hear now my reasoning - The speeches in this book are conceived as it delivered in a court of justice, different counselors pleading against each other. Hence most of the terms are forensic.

Verse 7

Will ye speak wickedly for God? - In order to support your own cause, in contradiction to the evidence which the whole of my life bears to the uprightness of my heart, will ye continue to assert that God could not thus afflict me, unless flagrant iniquity were found in my ways; for it is on this ground alone that ye pretend to vindicate the providence of God. Thus ye tell lies for God's sake, and thus ye wickedly contend for your Maker.

Verse 8

Will ye accept his person? - Do you think to act by him as you would by a mortal; and, by telling lies in his

favor, attempt to conciliate his esteem?

Verse 9

Is it good that he should search you out? - Would it be to your credit if God should try your hearts, and uncover the motives of your conduct? Were you tried as I am, how would you appear?

Do ye so mock him? - Do ye think that you can deceive him; and by flattering speeches bring him to your terms, as you would bring an undiscerning, empty mortal, like yourselves?

Verse 10

He will surely reprove you - You may expect, not only his disapprobation, but his hot displeasure.

Verse 11

His dread fall upon you? - The very apprehension of his wrath is sufficient to crush you to nothing.

Verse 12

Your remembrances are like unto ashes - Your memorable sayings are proverbs of dust. This is properly the meaning of the original: זִכְרוֹנֵי עֵפֶר (zichroneycem mishley epher). This he speaks in reference to the ancient and reputedly wise sayings which they had so copiously quoted against him.

Your bodies to bodies of clay - This clause is variously translated: Your swelling heaps are swelling heaps of mire. That is, Your high-flown speeches are dark, involved, and incoherent; they are all sound, no sense; great swelling words, either of difficult or no meaning, or of no point as applicable to my case.

Verse 13

Hold your peace - You have perverted righteousness and truth, and your pleadings are totally irrelevant to the case; you have traveled out of the road; you have left law and justice behind you; it is high time that you should have done.

Let come on me what will - I will now defend myself against you, and leave the cause to its issue.

Verse 14

Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth - A proverbial expression. I risk every thing on the justice of my cause. I put my life in my hand, 1 Samuel 28:21. I run all hazards; I am fearless of the consequences.

Verse 15

Though he slay me - I have no dependence but God; I trust in him alone. Should he even destroy my life by this affliction, yet will I hope that when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. In the common printed Hebrew text we have לֹא אֶחְיֶה (lo ayachel), I will Not hope; but the Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, and Chaldee have read לֹא אֶחְיֶה (lo), Him, instead of לֹא אֶחְיֶה (lo) Not; with twenty-nine of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., and the Complutensian and Antwerp Polyglots. Our translators have followed the best reading. Coverdale renders the verse thus: Lo, there is nether comforte ner hope for me, yf he wil slaye me.

But I will maintain mine own ways - I am so conscious of my innocence, that I fear not to defend myself from your aspersions, even in the presence of my Maker.

Verse 16

He also shall be my salvation - He will save me, because I trust in him.

A hypocrite - A wicked man shall never be able to stand before him. I am conscious of this, and were I, as you suppose, a secret sinner, I should not dare to make this appeal.

Verse 18

Behold now, I have ordered - I am now ready to come into court, and care not how many I have to contend with, provided they speak truth.

Verse 19

Who is he that will plead with me? - Let my accuser, the plaintiff, come forward; I will defend my cause against him.

I shall give up the ghost - I shall cease to breathe. Defending myself will be as respiration unto me; or, While he

is stating his case, I will be so silent as scarcely to appear to breathe.

Verse 20

Only do not two things unto me - These two things are the following:

1. Withdraw thine hand far from me - remove the heavy affliction which thy hand has inflicted.
2. Let not thy dread make me afraid - terrify me not with dreadful displays of thy majesty. The reasons of this request are sufficiently evident:

1. How can a man stand in a court of justice and plead for his life, when under grievous bodily affliction? Withdraw thy hand far from me.

2. Is it to be expected that a man can be sufficiently recollected, and in self-possession, to plead for his life, when he is overwhelmed with the awful appearance of the judge, the splendor of the court, and the various ensigns of justice? Let not thy dread make me afraid.

Verse 22

Then call thou - Begin thou first to plead, and I will answer for myself; or, I will first state and defend my own case, and then answer thou me.

Verse 23

How many are mine iniquities - Job being permitted to begin first, enters immediately upon the subject; and as it was a fact that he was grievously afflicted, and this his friends asserted was in consequence of grievous iniquities, he first desires to have them specified. What are the specific charges in this indictment? To say I must be a sinner to be thus afflicted, is saying nothing; tell me what are the sins, and show me the proofs.

Verse 24

Wherefore hidest thou thy face - Why is it that I no longer enjoy thy approbation?

Holdest me for thine enemy? - Treatest me as if I were the vilest of sinners?

Verse 25

Wilt thou break a leaf - Is it becoming thy dignity to concern thyself with a creature so contemptible?

Verse 26

Thou writest bitter things against me - The indictment is filled with bitter or grievous charges, which, if proved, would bring me to bitter punishment.

The iniquities of my youth - The Levities and indiscretions of my youth I acknowledge; but is this a ground on which to form charges against a man the integrity of whose life is unimpeachable?

Verse 27

Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks - *שִׁבְרִי* (*bassad*), *â€œ*in a clog,*â€* such as was tied to the feet of slaves, to prevent them from running away. This is still used in the West Indies, among slave-dealers; and is there called the pudding, being a large collar of iron, locked round the ankle of the unfortunate man. Some have had them twenty poundsâ€™ weight; and, having been condemned to carry them for several years, when released could not walk without them! A case of this kind I knew: The slave had learned to walk well with his pudding, but when taken off, if he attempted to walk, he fell down, and was obliged to resume it occasionally, till practice had taught him the proper center of gravity, which had been so materially altered by wearing so large a weight; the badge at once of his oppression, and of the cruelty of his task-masters!

And lookest narrowly - Thou hast seen all my goings out and comings in; and there is no step I have taken in life with which thou art unacquainted.

Thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet - Some understand this as the mark left on the foot by the clog; or the ownerâ€™s mark indented on this clog; or, Thou hast pursued me as a hound does his game, by the scent.

Verse 28

And he, as a rotten thing - I am like a vessel made of skin; rotten, because of old age, or like a garment corroded by the moth. So the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic understood it. The word he may refer to himself.