



The first day of Lent, commonly called
Ash Wednesday.

The Collect.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ This Collect is to be said every day in Lent, after the Collect appointed for the day, until Palm Sunday.

1 Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words. 2 Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth. 3 My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. 4 The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. 5 If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up. 6 Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. 7 Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee. 8 Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, 9 I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. 10 Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy, 11 He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths. 12 Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. 13 Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters. 14 For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. 15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; 16 Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, 17 That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. 18 He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. 19 He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: 20 So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. 21 His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. 22 Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. 23 If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: 24 Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.

25 His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: 26 He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. 27 He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; 28 He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. 29 Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, 30 To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. 31 Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak. 32 If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee. 33 If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom. (Job 33:1-33)

The surprise arrival of Elihu on the scene changes the whole nature and direction of the Book of Job. It also serves to awaken Job to his own vain babblings about his own righteousness and the implied injustice of God. This Book only gets better and more glorious now until the end. Elihu, in his righteous council and sudden appearing serves as a Type of Christ. That which we all must long for is a man to stand between our weakened persons and that Holy Presence of God. We dare not even look upon the Visage of God and His Heaven just as the Publican would not do who came to the Temple with the Pharisee. But another man of like nature to us will not do, for he stands in no better stead to address God the Father than we do. No, we need a DIFFERENT kind of man – a man without sin whose countenance in righteousness can withstand the blinding and perfect Light of God and His holiness. Where do we find such a man? We find Him in our Lord Jesus Christ. Whether in righteousness or not, Elihu seems to stand, as a minister of God, in the stead of Job to mediate his plight with God. None, however, can truly stand in the stead of God – only God can feel such a place, and that Person who stands in the stead of God the Father is God the Son. But we have a clear foreshadowing at least in Elihu of the role to be played by our Lord Jesus Christ in being our sole Mediator between God and man. There is none other – priest, magistrate or potentate!

Due to length of the chapter I will summarize as much as possible without sacrificing intrinsic meaning.

First, in his attempt to justify his own righteousness, Job has claimed he is innocent. *8. Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, 9. I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.* Is there any shadow of possibility to Job's claim? Of course, there is not! *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:* (Romans 3:10) *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23) So we immediately see here that Job is not standing on solid ground by his claims of righteousness. It is very true that every man, woman, and child born into the world needs to do nothing at all in order to deserve hell for we are even conceived in sin. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* (Psalms 51:5) So we are all deserving of hell, and if God relegated us, one and all, to the fires of hell, his justice would be unquestionable. But He has not chosen to do so. Instead, He has sent a Redeemer to release us from the penalty of the law, and open the floodgates of mercy and grace to those who know Him and receive Him in Christ.

Second, Job's implication that God's persecution of Job is unjust. *10. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy, 11. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths.* Does God need to SEEK an occasion against us? Are our sins so few that He must seek out a reason to condemn us? If only the sins we have committed, or omitted, today would be sufficient to cast us into hell. If God

considered Job and enemy, would he have been allowed to go on his verbal rampage against God and His justice? Though God does, indeed, mark our path and light our feet, He does not put our feet in stocks. Au contraire, He sets us at perfect liberty in Christ. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised* (Luke 4:18)

He bore the penalty of our sin so that we might enjoy the liberty whereby He set us free from the bondage of sin. *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all* (Isaiah 53:5-6)

Third, Job's claim of the indifference of God to his suffering is unfounded on the face of it. **12. Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. 13. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.** True, God is greater than man; but in what sense? If you have trouble with that one, I will give you the answer " **in all ways God is so much greater than man that His greatness cannot be measured!** Men sit on church councils and boards trying to determine what direction the church should take in worship as if it were their own prerogative to do so. They do not base their arguments (any more seemingly) on Scriptural imperative, but upon traditions and opinions of mere men. They opt for the flashy and gimmicky, but God will have none of that. He deplores the ostentatious in worship and commands reverence, truth, and spirit. *"the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* (John 4:23-24) *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear For our God is a consuming fire.* (Heb 12:28-29) Believe me, God is omniscient and knows all that not only we do, but every creature and every plant. He has an account of every atom in the Universe and hair upon your head. Can you claim Him to be INDIFFERENT? That is not something even God is able to be.

Elihu addresses the claims of Job in a convicting and spiritual manner, unlike Job's three friends. *"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (John 16:8). We are not always to comfort our erring friends in their errors, but give them convincing arguments from God's Word that will place them in a position to be comforted in truth. Elihu claims to speak with the 'Breath of the Almighty.' Is it possible for us to correct others with that Breath? Yes, the Word of God is life " it is living. If we speak the Mind of God we speak with that breath. But in our convincing endeavor for truth, we must not omit that other ingredient essential to the Spirit: *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.* (Eph 4:15)

In addressing Job's (third) claim of God's indifference and failure to speak, Elihu teaches the manner of God's speech to Job. He speaks in whispers, in small still voices, in the wind and thunder. Yet, man often is dull of hearing the counsel of God because he is too occupied with the noises of the world. **14. For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. 15. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; 16. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, 17. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide**

pride from man Now, suppose the man to whom God speaks does not hear the gentle voice or the thunder? God will speak twice, but in a different nature. 19. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: 20. So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. 21. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. 22. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers God is a gentleman in the sense of a General MacArthur: He will treat with tender words unless the party becomes belligerent; then he strikes with sudden force. Afterwards, he reverts to a tender concern for the heart He has chastened just as the considerate treatment of MacArthur towards the Empire of Japan at the close of hostilities. God is like that, only in a perfect Way. We best attune our ears to hear clearly at first, for the second voice may bring great misery.

Elihu now addresses Job's (second) claim of God's unjust persecution. 23. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness 24. Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom. 25. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: 26. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. God always seeks to keep us from error and His Counsel and Chastening is always bent toward our good. Elihu truly speaks prophetically here, because in the end, Job truly does receive multiple blessings. But first, he must awaken to his own depravity in the face of God's righteousness.

When I grow too old to recognize that I am a condemned sinner apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I pray that God will send a young Elihu to open my eyes to truth. Turning to Job's first claim of innocence in the faith of God's wrath. Elihu states the obvious:

27. He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; 28. He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. 29. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, 30. To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. 31. Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak. 32. If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee. 33. If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom. Elihu points out, in beautiful tones, the mercy of God. If we admit our sins and are grievously sorry, He is anxious to forgive them and restore His erring child. God will endow us with the Light of the Living. Sometimes, it is best just to cease speaking altogether if all we can do, as in the case of Job, is to make pitiful excuses and expressions of self-righteousness. If we listen to the voice of wisdom, we have done well in our reconciliation with our God.