



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.

Job 34

King James Version (KJV)

34 Furthermore Elihu answered and said,

2 Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.

3 For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.

4 Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good.

5 For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment.

6 Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression.

7 What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water?

8 Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men.

9 For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.

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.

11 For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to

find according to his ways.

12 Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.

13 Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world?

14 If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath;

15 All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

16 If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words.

17 Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?

18 Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly?

19 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.

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.

21 For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.

22 There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

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

24 He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead.

25 Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed.

26 He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others;

27 Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways:

28 So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.

29 When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only:

30 That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.

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

32 That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

33 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.

34 Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me.

35 Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom.

36 My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end because of his answers for wicked men.

37 For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.

The present discourse of Elihu takes a decided turn from defense of Job to his guilt under the protocols of law and obedience there under. It may seem like a betrayal for Elihu to turn from a defense to a prosecution, but we shall see, I believe, that Elihu's prosecution will result in an acquittal of Job at the bar of mercy and grace. But before mercy and grace may be extended from those Everlasting Arms, we each must confess up to being guilty as charged. It is my opinion that the approach of Elihu centers on this principle. The same old struggle continues today between man's own "presumed" righteousness and His utter depravity before God. If Job was as righteous as he considered himself to be, there would have been no reason for his redemption by Christ. But the blood of Christ was not shed in vain – either for Job, or for you and me! Do you recall the admonition of Elihu in yesterday's devotion in which Elihu stated *For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.* (Job 33:14) The great objective of God in allowing our trials and tribulations is not to punish, but to convict us. He desires to save our souls, but He cannot receive a soul whose heart is convinced of self-righteousness. He will speak in low and whispering tones to convince us at first. If we remain steadfast in our self-righteousness, He will send manifold means of conviction, many of which may be quite painful, until we ARE convinced of our lack of righteousness and of our great need for a Savior in the Person of His only Begotten Son. To claim that we are already righteous and need no Savior is to offend God the Father under the most calamitous terms.

It would be such an easier and less shameful experience if we would simply judge ourselves rather than having our convicting sins brought out in public forum, but God may find it necessary to speak TWICE if we hear not His soft voice the first time. Any who have had a caring mother in childhood will remember that mother's voice was always less harsh on the first reprimand than the second.

Elihu will first, verses 5-9, prefer charges against Job for demeaning the justice of God almighty: *5 For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment. 6 Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression. 7 What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? 8 Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men. 9 For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.* It appears very unseemly to me for any man to defame the justice, or any other virtue of God, in any way. *Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?* (Isaiah 45:9)

Elihu, with immediate dispatch, proceeds to utter vindication for the pure character and justice of the omnipotent God in verses 10-30. God *"rewardeth every man according to his work."* So states Elihu in his case against the claims of Job. *11. For the*

work of a man shall he render unto him. In words of power Elihu charges that our lives are sustained moment by moment by the sustaining Hand of God. If He recalls our breath which He has given, and our spirits, we shall return to the dust of the ground (not ashes). *14. If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; 15. All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.* Has Job offended the dignity of God? Yes, even if in his ignorant ramblings! *18. Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly? 19. 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.*

Elihu continues to say that God is not only all powerful, but all knowing as well. Those who oppose Him or offend His dignity shall perish without a hand being raised against them, and He knows all things about the heart. *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. 21. For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. 22. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*

God's judgment, unlike man's, cannot be perverted for it is always RIGHT judgment. *23 For he will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God. 24 He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead. 25 Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed. 26 He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others; 27 Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways: 28 So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted. 29 When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only: 30 That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.* Man must humble himself unto God

Rather than making puny excuses and feeble arguments, it is best to admit to our deserving of God's chastisement: *31 Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more:* True repentance carries with it the resolve to never repeat the offence.

Where and how shall we learn the right way and the way that is Holy? Have we not prayed with a believing heart? Have we not read the Words and Counsel of the Lord? Have we not sought Him out in quiet fields and in the crevice of the Rock? *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed* (James 1:5-6) *32 That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. 33. 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.* If we ask aright, and in true faith and repentance, God will restore any loss though we deserve loss.

34. Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me. 35. Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom. 36 My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end because of his answers for wicked men. 37 For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God. Elihu is not being ungenerous here – he speaks the truth for the benefit of Job's soul. Have we failed to speak so forthrightly to a close friend whose soul

is in danger because he is oblivious to some great and damning sin? If necessary for Job to be reconciled in righteous truth, Elihu would desire that his trials last until the end that he may at last be redeemed in soul if not body.

Friend, have you given thought to the great difference in the judgment of God and our futile attempts to judge rightly? One characteristic of God's judgment disqualifies us from all personal judgment (except by the Word of God). What is that characteristic? God does not judge us until we close our eyes in death. He is patient and long-suffering. He withholds a final condemnation until there is no hope or spark of life remaining. However, man judges by the spur of the moment and is unable to judge a man in death for that man is beyond the reach of the living. I hope, while the spark of life remains, that we shall do all in our power to comfort and convince others of the redeeming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ this St. Valentine's Day.