



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 Elihu spake moreover, and said, 2 Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's? 3 For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin? 4 I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee. 5 Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. 6 If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? 7 If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? 8 Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man. 9 By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. 10 But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night; 11 Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven? 12 There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men. 13 Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it. 14 Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him. 15 But now, because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger; yet he knoweth it not in great extremity: 16 Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge. (Job 35:1-16)

The whole kernel of truth being shown in this, and related, chapters is this: If we are righteous in the eyes of God (and Job has been), that righteousness is not our own righteousness but is that which is imputed through the propitious sacrifice of Christ. When we, as Job does, boast of our own righteousness, we have just lost that

righteousness for we have no innate righteousness. So in our boasting, we have rejected that righteousness we had in the eyes of God. Before God can deal with our sin, He must shed us of our pride and self-righteousness. Thus we often suffer needless trials because we refuse to surrender that golden wedge of Achan (Joshua 7:20), but thanks be to God, He is long-suffering and patient for those whom He has claimed from before the foundation of the world. If we surrender at the very beginning of hostilities, the battering rams and siege engines of God will take a far less toll on our walls and ramparts than if we hopelessly wage war with the powers of heaven and it's Omnipotent Sovereign. An early surrender may preclude the destruction of our entire city walls. If we will pause to hear the gentle voice of God in the heart-born winds of our conscience, perhaps we will forego a further skirmish. But if we stubbornly hold to our own merits, and deny in the very face of God our guilt before Him, what choice can His sense of justice provide but a devastating war of attrition until we are brought to the terms of unconditional surrender, though our defense lie in ruins? This has been Job's problem and Elihu has charged Job, not for a permanent indictment, but a temporary adjudication of Job's boastful pride. Until Job realizes his shortcoming, he cannot set his sails for true course. If we encounter a man such as Elihu in our lives, it will be for our own profit and not for our eternal condemnation.

This chapter might be divided into three parts: 1) (verses 1-8) Elihu addresses Job's complaints that his living righteously have resulted in no corresponding blessings from God; 2) (verses 9-14) Elihu reveals to Job that unanswered prayers are the result of asking amiss, or for the wrong things; and 3) (verses 15-16) Elihu condemns – not Job, but – Job's arrogance and presumption in his "multitudes of words without knowledge." It is the epitome of ignorance and brashness to disagree with, or argue with, God. Job learns this, as do all who undertake the same course, the hard way.

1 Elihu spake moreover, and said, 2 Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's? The very thought of such arrogance drives chill bumps up my neck. Yet, it is almost a certainty that both you and I have done the same perhaps to a less overt manner. But the consequences can cause us to sit on the ash pile scrapping our sores with potsherds (like Job). *3 For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?* It is difficult to believe that a learned man such as Job speaks these words; however, we must remember that Job lacks the truth and revelation of the Gospels and Apostles from which to learn that we have benefit of. It is still a very offensive remark for a man to speak against his Creator, for Job KNEW that God was His Maker! The profit of being washed from our sins is all profit and no loss. The loss of NOT being cleansed of our sins is all loss and no profit!

4 I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee. 5 Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. The clouds are so very low compared to the height of God's Heaven, yet they are far above the heads of men - including Job; so God is so very far above our heads that the distance cannot be measured. Elihu now asked questions of Job regarding his importance compared to the Power and Might of God. The foregone conclusion is this: God does not NEED man; neither can man lift a finger against God. But it is God's love for us, not our ability to help or hinder, that makes us of great worth to God. *6 If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? 7 If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? 8 Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.* But our wickedness can do no dent on the Person of God. Though our

righteousness may help our fellow man, it does not increase the storehouse of wealth in heaven except in this wise: God loves His Creation (including every man, woman, and child; every beast of the field and fowl of the air; and every daisy, edelweiss and tree.) When we treat our fellow man and God's Creation with righteous responsibility, God is made to be pleased with us. God observes an ancient Arab principle in relations: "If you are the friend of God's friends, you are a friend of God; but if you are a friend of God's enemies, so are you an enemy of God."

Elihu now condemns the arrogance and false pride of Job. You may say: "Wait, Elihu is judging, and that is wrong." No, it is NOT wrong. God gave us faculties of mind and judgment to compare behaviors with His Holy word. Those sins of arrogance and self-righteousness which we condemn with our mouths have already been condemned by God in His Holy word. That which God has pronounced sin we only echo when we judge with righteous judgment. *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.* (John 7:24) **9 By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty.** It has ever been the common characteristic of the powerful to oppress the poor and weak. It is often done with such a sense of arrogance that the offending party believes they are just in treating the poor with contempt because they feel them to be less worthy. Invariably, the opposite is true. It may be that Job has been guilty of this very thing, but has never had it brought to his realization until now. **10 But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;** Tragically, the oppressed often omit the appeal to God when they are caused to suffer unjustly. Lack of faith, either rich or poor, renders BOTH as poor. **11 Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?** It is truly amazing in my thinking, that God, having created man in His own image and with faculties far above those of every other member of Creation, is the only member of Creation that is able to fathom the existence of God and His moral laws; however, it is mostly man who violates those laws with seeming impunity and seeks the dark corridors more than the highways of Light. **12 There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men.** "They cry proudly against God, rather than humbly to God. So, as the design of affliction is to humble the sufferer, there can be no answer until "pride" gives place to humble, penitent prayer (Psalms 10:4 & Jeremiah 13:17).—Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

The long, sophisticated prayer publicly uttered in pride does not reach the ears of God, but settle only on those low ears of the same nature. **13 Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.** **14 Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.** Truly what man says does not matter an iota with God. But what God says matters supremely to man whether he is willing to admit it or not. In this last verse, Elihu clenches the very missing element in Job's argument – Trust of the Lord. Our National Motto is "In God We Trust." How many untrusting souls have uttered those words in vanity, or repeated the Pledge of Allegiance with vanity where "Under God" is stated? How many times have we recited to the Lord's Prayer without giving a thought to the Sovereign Lord to whom it is addressed, or the petition for His Will to be done without truly proving our words by our living five minutes later? Let it be so in the lives and hearts of our readers that they believe in God and earnestly seek to serve Him in every way.