

Devotion on The Book of Job (Chapter Thirty-Seven) for Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent - 17 February 2013, Anno Domini



The First Sunday in Lent.

The Collect.

O LORD who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

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 At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place. 2 Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. 3 He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. 4 After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. 5 God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.

6 For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength. 7 He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work. 8 Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places. 9 Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. 10 By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened. 11 Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: 12 And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. 13 He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy. 14 Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. 15 Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine? 16 Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? 17 How thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south wind? 18 Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking glass? 19 Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. 20 Shall it be told him that I speak? if a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up. 21 And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them. 22 Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty. 23 Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict. 24 Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any that are wise of heart. (Job 37:1-24)

There is always cause for trembling and fear at the Voice of God – not because the Christian is fearful of personal peril – but because of the presence of the awesome power and majesty exhibited thereby. We are in awe at the mighty waters of Niagara, the depth and beauty of the Grand Canyon, but far more so at the Voice of God who made these – and us. So we may easily understand the opening remark in this chapter of the young man, Elihu: **At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place.** I do not know if Elihu's is aware that the next voice that we shall hear following this discourse of Elihu will be the Voice of the Almighty? But Elihu seems to have aptly prepared the ground of Job's heart, and that of his friends, to hear that very Voice. Though a righteous man in the eyes of the Lord, it is doubtful that Job has ever heard the Voice of the Lord speak with the power and grandeur for which he is being prepared. I believe it is also true that many Christians at first birth will know the voice of the Lord as clearly as they may later hear it after trials and tribulations have made their ears keen to the sound. Elihu prepares Job to listen intently to the same Voice that emanates from the gathering whirlwind as was spoken from the Burning Bush to Moses. **Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth.**

Beginning in the next chapter (38), Friends, we are about to hear and read the most beautiful and meaningful prose in all of the Bible. We will see the very words of God spoken in prose that surpasses our finest poets (including Shakespeare), yet simple and pregnant with meaning. So we must also, with Job, prepare our hearts to hear, digest, and assimilate those Pristine Words of the Lord in the next four chapters. This 37th chapter is a run-on to the previous chapter : ***The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.*** (Job 36:33) In the last verse of the last chapter (36) Elihu demonstrates the effect of the gathering storm on even cattle. ***Now he turns to its effect on man! Have we not known that God makes His Voice heard even through the natural things made by His artful hands? Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*** (Romans 1:19-20) All the beauty, all the solitudes, all the storms and tumults of nature – all speak

of His Majesty and Power. He is in the peaceful pastures, the still waters, the myriad-colored sunsets; but He is also in the rocky and snow clad heights of Kilimanjaro, the chaos of Niagara Falls, and the blinding sandstorms of the Sahara.

Today's watered-down gospel often omits the great power and force of God's Holy Word. What God has spoken is almost reduced to the decisions of a denominational committee. How sad and tragic. Millions suffer for famine of the Word while it is being withheld by the very ministers whose responsibility it is to serve them the whole and nutritious Word of God untainted by the filthy hands of men! *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.* (Amos 8:11-12) It is becoming more and more difficult to purchase the untainted Word of God in Christian bookstores. The classical devotions and theologies are re-written to provide the new-speak of the NIV, NASB, ESV, and Jehovah Witness Bibles. The Received Text (King James Version, Geneva Bible, etc) is becoming more and more rare with the passing days. Is this not a famine of the Word? *3 He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. 4 After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. 5 God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.* The problem facing those who take such a light view of God's Word will be CONFRONTED by it, if need be, via the Thunders of Lightning's of God's own sent-storm. His voice excels the Thunder, and more piercing than the lightning. The Voice of God is not literally the thunder, but of far greater force.

Elihu now turns to other great evidences of God's power and creativity. *6. For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength* The approach of God is peaceful and gentle, but grows in its intensity until we acknowledge that voice. As the silent flakes of snow fall imperceptibly in the winter night, so God whispers to those asleep. But if we ignore the Voice of God, he will come next in stronger measure as the "small rain." If we continue in our deafness, He will bring on the great floods of rain until we either HEAR, or are washed away thereby. *7. He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work. 8. Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places.* Whether men acknowledge Him or not, He binds their hands in seasons. When the blizzards assail across the central plains, man must close himself into shelters or perish. The great snows of the northern plains imprison men indoors. Even the domestic and wild beast is prevented by His force to remain immovable in shelters. When we have known Him and turn away, He may bring our hands into a forced idleness until we respond to His Voice.

9. Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. How well do I know that the whirlwinds (tornadoes) come from the south where I live in southern Alabama? The warm (from south) and cold (from north) air masses collide and form whirlwinds that destroy lives and property. "...As whirlwinds in the south pass through..." (Isaiah 21:1) Who needs the meteorology manual when the Bible has already described weather patterns and the origin of air masses? *10. By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened.* Does any see the forming of the frost out of thin air? No, it comes softly, silently as the dew dispelling in the quiet of the dawn. Great waters are indeed straightened by His continual breath. The forces God has placed in nature itself causes the meandering streams to be straightened in their plunge to the valleys below. Nature itself is God's handmaiden. .

The words of Elihu, like a good minister, come as a foreshadow to that beauty in the fuller Words of God to follow. A minister can never achieve the beauty of expression in God's Word without a total reliance and resort to that Word itself! That is why the Reformers insisted on Expository Preaching – not some silly use of acronyms or other cheap tools of modern sermonizing. **11. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: 12. And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. 13. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.** God, through the process of evaporation on sea and land, draws millions of tons of water into the air by invisible means. He literally FILLS the clouds with water so that they cannot hold a teacup more. They send their waters cascading down on the parched and dry earth. He also disperses the sun-lined clouds and they vanish. He sends the cloud, and turns it about at His leisure, to accomplish His purpose of blessing or curse.

14. *Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.* Do you desire to hear the beauty of the meadowlark? Be perfectly still in the morning mist – then you may hear clearly. Before we can hear the works of God, we must first stop the rustling of our own feet and works. We cannot consider the wondrous works of God while our hands are busy performing the works of the flesh. ***Be still, and know that I am God*** (Psalms 46:10) His Voice is as the Underground River at Shechem that fed into the waters of Jacob's Well. During the busy day of commerce, the course and trickle of the river could not be heard beneath the streets of Shechem, but when the busy noise of commerce, and men's feet, were stopped, then one can hear the faint flowing of the waters. We are too occupied with the racket of the world to hear the beautiful, small, still voice of God. **15. *Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine?*** Of course, Job and his friends do not know when and how God disposed His works. God was the only eye witness to Creation. Can Job, or you, determine when the lightning will strike from the cloud and where? Could you set a rainbow in the eastern sky?

Now Elihu asks more searching questions without a whispering retort from his listeners. That is the power of God's Word when spoken by His minister. **16. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? 17. How thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south wind? 18. Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking glass? 19. Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.** Who can set a balance between rain and sunshine? What of the warming season of the southern tropical winds that bring such warm and pleasant climate? What words can we utter that are ours? He has given us speech, intelligence, and knowledge. But without the light of God in our hearts, there can be nothing but darkness.

20 Shall it be told him that I speak? if a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up. Here, Elihu tactfully restates the earlier comment of Job in asking that God would "hear him and answer him." Can we demand an answer from God? Can a mouse consume a tiger? **21. And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them.** The clouds are as raiment or curtain that blocks out the sun or moon. Though we cannot see those lights, they are there nonetheless. God sends a wind from some quarter and cleanses, or disperses, the clouds as a woman cleanses a kitchen window. **22. Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty.** Not until very recent decades did man know of the science they called 'meteorology.' They had no clue about polar air masses and the atmospheric cycle of

movement of those air masses. But man could have known millennia before if they had resorted to scripture, and understood it. The high pressure air masses descend from the polar air coming from the north and create fair and beautiful weather. **23. Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict.** No man knows the mysteries of God though there are many would-be theologians that will not admit of any ignorance of God and His Word. We cannot find God in His glorious form, and we look in the wrong places. Perhaps the devout can always find Him if they search out the deep chambers of His Temple – the Heart! **24. Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any that are wise of heart.** If a man is wise of heart, he is claiming wisdom for himself. Only God is truly wise, and the wise heart will be filled with the wisdom that belongs to God and not man... Have you claimed that wisdom by having a heart devoted to God as a Temple?