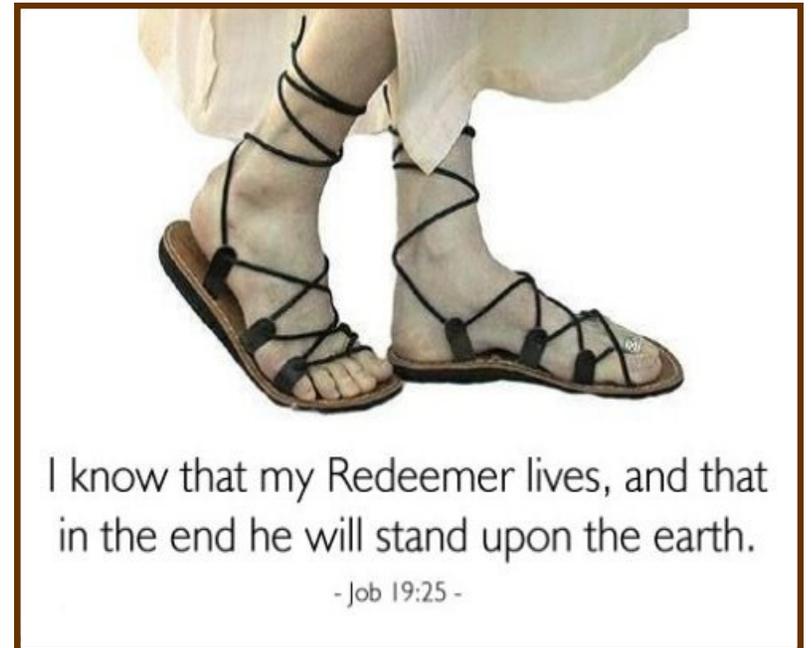


# *Job*

## *Chapter Thirty Six:*



I know that my Redeemer lives, and that  
in the end he will stand upon the earth.

- Job 19:25 -

*God Alone is Just*

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*The commentary on the Book of Job, is by Saint Thomas Aquinas and was translated by Brian Mulladay and edited by Rev. Joseph Kenny, O.P. The book shows how human affairs are ruled by divine providence using probable arguments.*

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX: GOD ALONE IS JUST**

### **The First Lesson: The True Meaning of the Sufferings of Job**

1 And Eliud continued and said: 2 Bear with me a little while and I will show you for I still have something to say on behalf of God. 3 I will take up my argument from the beginning and my Maker I will prove just. 4 For truly my discourses are without deceit, and I will show you perfect science. 5 God does not cast out the powerful, because he is powerful, 6 but he does not save the wicked and he grants right judgment to the poor. 7 He does not take his eyes away from the just. And he places kings on the throne for all time and they are raised up. 8 And if they were in chains and were bound with the bonds of poverty, 9 he will show them their works and their crimes because they were violent. 10 He will also open their ears to correct them, and he speaks to turn them from evil. 11 If they listen, and they observe it, they will complete their days in good and their years in glory; 12 but if they do not listen, they will pass away by the sword, and they will be consumed in their foolishness. 13 Pretenders and knaves provoke the anger of God, and they will not cry out when they have been bound. 14 Their soul will die in torment and their life among effeminate men. 15 He will snatch the poor man from his anguish and he will open his ears in tribulation. 16 Thus he will save most amply from the narrow mouth which is without foundation beneath him. The rest of your table will be full of fat. 17 Your cause has been judged as evil; and you will receive the cause and judgment. 18 Do not let anger master you so that you oppress someone nor let a great number of gifts make you waver. 19 Lay down your greatness without tribulation and all the strong with your courage. 20 Do not lengthen the night so that the peoples rise on your behalf. 21 Beware that you do not fall into evil: you began to pursue this after your misery.

***“For truly my discourses are without deceit.”***

***END OF JOB CHAPTER 36***

Eliud presented two things in the words of Job again which he wanted to argue: first, the fact that he said he was just and the fact that he accused God of injustice in his judgment, according to the interpretation Eliud had given the words of Job. Eliud had disputed against these two ideas above. (cc. 34 and 35) Now for a second time he intended to argue against the same ideas using another argument and so the text says, "And Eliud continued," with arguments supporting the ones already used, "and said," what follows. First, he gets his attention saying, "Bear with me a little while," because he intends to dispute briefly against the two ideas in one answer, and so he says, "and I will show you," the truth of the thing about which we are treating. He does not want to seem redundant because he seems to have shown already what he wanted [cc. 34 and 35], so he then says, "for I have something to say on behalf of God," as if to say: I still have other arguments at hand with which I can defend the justice of divine judgment. Since he intends to introduce reasons a second time against both of these ideas, he says, "I will take up my argument from the beginning," for against everything which has been said from the beginning, I will again adduce arguments which support my opinion. He shows this is his duty saying, "and my Maker," God who made me, "I will prove just." I will show there is no evil in his judgment which you, Job want to charge him with so that you may assert that you are just. He precludes someone saying that what he was about to say did not proceed from true science, but false opinion saying, "For truly my discourses are without deceit," for I will not say anything but what is true and accords with true knowledge. So he says, "and I will show you perfect science," the following proofs will convince you because they seem to come from perfect science.

After these introductory remarks he begins to discuss the arguments already adduced by Job. First he argues against the fact that Job had said that he was just. To disprove this he proceeds in this manner: Job had enjoyed great power in the time of his prosperity. Powerful men sometimes menace others who either from envy or from fear are afraid that they will be crushed by their power. This is properly the lot of the weak, who both envy the powerful and fear their oppressions. But this cannot be said about God, who excels all in power, and so he says, "God does not cast out the powerful because he is powerful." Therefore one can understand that God hates nothing in man in which man is similar to him, because since God is the very essence of good, there cannot be anything like him unless it is good. From this it is clear that God does not persecute certain men because they are powerful, but because he sometimes finds evil in them, and for this God punishes them. So he says, "but he does not save the wicked," that is, he damns them. He shows the cause of this damnation saying, "and he grants right judgment to the poor," because he passes judgment on evil powerful men in favor of the poor who have been oppressed by them. He does not desist because of power from the assistance of the just, and so he says, "He does not take away from the just," even the powerful man, "his eyes," the gaze of his goodness and mercy, according to Psalm 33, "The eyes of the Lord are on the just." (v. 16)

He shows next the magnitude of the works of God which exceed human reason, listing different changes in the air which is sometimes disposed to dryness. Concerning this he says, "He bears the drops of rain," by preventing it from raining. Sometimes, however, the air is filled with rain, and he describes this abundance saying, "he pours showers like torrents" which flow on the land. Such an abundance of rain seems wonderful if the origin of rain is considered, because so much water bursts forth from the clouds which have no solidity, and as to this he says, "which," the torrents "flow from the clouds" not because such rain exists to act in the clouds, but because the vapors themselves of the clouds gradually condense into rain. The rain is more wonderful because it is poured over the great expanse of the region and so he says, "and covers everything from above," so that in places here it rains no part of the land remains unwatered. Then he speaks about the clouds themselves saying, "If he wills to unfold the clouds like a tent," because the clouds hide heaven which is the seat of God like the seat of some man is hidden in a tent. The lightening proceeds from the clouds because of the collision of the winds, and so he says, "and to make lightening with his light from above." Sometimes the clouds cover heaven as far as the horizon of some region and seem to enclose the farthest bounds of the sea beneath this, and so he says, "even the roots of the sea he will cover" with the tent of the clouds. He says, "If he wills," to show that the divine will is the principle of natural works. To will means properly to act for an end, and so he shows the end of these works, "Through these he judges the peoples," because men are punished by them, "and he gives food to many mortal men," in the sense that the rains are useful to the fertility of the land which produces food for men.

After Eliud rejected the words of Job in which he had said he was just, he here rejects his words because he believed he had spoken against the justice of divine judgment. So he first proposes the sublimity of divine power when he says, "Behold God preeminent in his power," for he has a higher power than everything else. It is against reason that someone who wields less power should convict a greater authority of injustice. Second, he proposes God's authority when he says, "and no one is like him among the lawmakers," because "those who make laws discern what is just" through his wisdom, as we read in Proverbs 8:15. So there is no law which can condemn him for injustice, but rather his wisdom is the rule and measure of all laws. Third, he proposes the incomprehensibility of his works when he says, "Who will be able to examine his ways," that is, sufficiently search the nature of his works? From this he concludes that he cannot be convicted of injustice, and so he says, "Or who dares to say to him: You have done evil?" To be able to condemn someone for evil, he must be subject to a higher power. He must both be bound by the laws of others and his deeds must be known. These have no place in God, as has already been established. (cf. vv. 22-23)

He begins as a result to show clearly that man cannot examine the ways of God, which are his works, saying, "Remember that you are ignorant of his work about which men sang." These are the wise, whom he calls men because of the strength of their souls. He says, "they sang", because of the ancient custom of the wise who represented divine and philosophical things in verse. No matter how some wise men may be, they cannot arrive at knowing and explaining God's essence. But all the thought of man and his discourse about God is through his works. For no one lacks wisdom to such an extent that he does not perceive some of the divine works. Again, no one is so wise that his knowledge is not completely surpassed by the excellence of divine clarity, and so he says, "each one beholds from afar," that is, human knowledge is very far from the perfect comprehension of the divine essence, both because man can only know him through his works, which are an infinite distance from the excellence of his essence, and because man does not even know his works perfectly. From this he concludes that God exceeds the knowledge of man in his excellence, and so he says, "Behold the great God who surpasses our science," for God cannot be known by us perfectly not because of some defect in him, as happens in motion and time, but because of his excellence. Someone could object that although we are not able to know what God is, still we can know that God is, which pertains to his duration. He shows that this also exceeds human knowledge saying, "The number of his years cannot be counted," since the eternity of his duration cannot be comprehended by the human intellect.

Since he does not take his mercy away from the powerful if they are just, he shows the benefits which he confers on the powerful. First, he confirms their power, and so he says, "And he places kings on the throne for all time," if they have been just. Second, he shows it since he promotes them to greater dominion, and so he says, "and they," placed on the throne, "are raised up," for they are exalted to greater things when God increases their power and wealth. Third, he manifests it because even if they are punished for their sins, he has mercy on them if they wish to do penance, and so he says, "and if the (the kings) were in chains," placed in prison, "and were bound with the bonds of poverty," if they suffered poverty when they were tied up in prison. This is like a chain which binds men so that they cannot fulfill their work and they are more confined by many miseries besides. Yet to those who have been so constituted in unhappiness, God first confers this benefit of recognizing the past sins for which they have been punished, and so he says, "he will show them their works," for he will make them know what they have done which is unjust. So he continues, "and their crimes," because he will force them to recognize that the works which they did were criminal acts. He shows then what their sin was, saying, "because they were violent." For the special sin of the powerful is to inflict violence on their subjects, using their power like the law of justice. Not only does he force them to recognize their past sins, but he also shows them that they are punished for these sins, and so he says, "He will also open their ears," that is, he will make them understand that God speaks to them in punishing them. Therefore they are punished because of their sins, and so he says, "to correct them", as if to say: He will make them recognize that God punished them to correct them. Further he will persuade them to do penance, and so he says "and he speaks," interiorly or by exterior admonition, "to turn them back from evil," by doing penance for their past sins. He shows the fruit of this penance when he says, "If they listen," taking it to heart, "and they observe it," completing it with works, they will be brought back to their former state and so "they will complete their days in the good," of virtue and earthly prosperity, "and their years in the glory" of the earth. "But if they do not listen, "if they do not obey this interior inspiration to do penance, "they will pass away by the sword," because they will be led to prison to be killed by the sword, "and they will be consumed," destroyed "in their foolishness", because of their foolishness. Here consider that in this Eliud seems to agree with the friends of Job that present adversities are punishments for sins and that through repentance one returns to his former state. Although this sometimes happens, this does not always happen according to the opinion of Job.

Since men sometimes suffer adversities even though their sins are not apparent, he wants to preclude his previously cited opinion being dashed to pieces by this fact. So he interprets them to be pretenders because they make a pretense of justice which they do not have, and are clever inasmuch as they use certain things to do injustice under the guise of justice. In this they sin more gravely. So he says, "Pretenders and knaves provoke the anger of God," since God detests this even more. Such men do not do penance easily even in time of persecution because they think themselves just since they are praised by others, and so he says, "they will not cry out" begging mercy from God, "when they have been bound," with the chains and bonds of poverty. In this he gives us to understand that he thought Job was a pretender and knave and thus he should recognize his sin in the punishments he was experiencing. Because such men do not do penance in their punishments, they are not freed from adversity, and so he says, "Their soul will die in torment," since they suffer diverse agonies even to death, "and their life" will fail, "among effeminate men," who do not have the power to free themselves from the hand of their oppressors. He rightly compares pretenders to effeminate men because men make pretensions from meanness of soul. People who are magnanimous do everything in the open as Aristotle says. Since he had said that God helped the powerful in tribulation, he does not want to seem to say that God is a respecter of persons and so he shows that he confers the same benefit also on the poor. He expresses this saying, "He will snatch the poor man from his anguish, by freeing him from adversity. He shows the order of liberation saying, "and he will open his ears in tribulation," for he will make him understand that he is punished for his sins and he leads him to do penance as he has already also said about the powerful.

He applies what he has said already in general to the person of Job (vv.5-12). First, since he has said that God brings salvation to both the poor and the powerful in tribulation (vv. 8 and 15), he concludes that even Job can hope for such salvation from God when he says, "Thus he will save you most amply from the narrow and gaping mouth," from the tribulation which is a narrow hole by which man enters into a wide range of different miseries. For one evil becomes for man the cause of many different evils, and the multiplication of evils of this kind can proceed to infinity so that he never arrives at a state of rest. He expresses this saying, "which is without a foundation," on which a man can rest, "beneath him," when he has descended to the depths of evil. This seems especially to express the punishments which occur after death, which last perpetually without any respite. He not only promises him freedom from evils if he will be willing to recognize his sin and repent, but also a great quantity of goods, and so he says, "The rest at your table will be full of fat," as if to say: You will be able to eat abundantly in safety and in peace of the good things which will be restored to you by God.

Since he has shown that "God does not cast out the powerful," (v. 5) but the wicked, whereas Job seemed to be cast out by God through many adversities, so he says, "Your cause has been judged as evil," as if to say: You were not punished because you were powerful but as a wicked man. Against this he promises him a reward if he will repent and so he says, "you will receive the cause and judgment, "for the cause and judgment will be restored to you so that you can investigate the cases of others and judge on them. As though this had already happened, he warns him now to bear himself in this situation. Judges sometimes deviate from justice because of anger, and as to this he says, "Do not let anger master you so that you oppress someone," unjustly, when then "you will receive the cause and judgment." Pg 5

Judges also sometimes deviate from justice because they are greedy for graft, and he expresses this saying, "not let a great number of gifts make you waver," in that new situation of authority. Sometimes someone denies justice to others just from pride alone, and expressing this he says, "Lay down your greatness," the pride of your soul, "without tribulation," before God sends you a trial for your humiliation. Judges also deviate from justice at times when they defer to powerful men through fear, and expressing this he says, "and all the strong with your courage," whom you pull down with your own strength. Or this can mean do not hesitate to pull down men however strong they may be in their power through your justice. Sometimes, judges lack justice for the sake of their own comfort and so he says, "Do not lengthen the night," that is, do not permit the justice of a cause to be hidden for a long time but immediately bring the truth to light, and he shows the reason for this when he says, "so that the peoples rise up because of them," strong men, as if to say: Do not defer your judgment in such a way that the whole populace is stirred up by the violent action of the powerful and come to disturb you because of their wrongs. Or this can mean something else, "Do not lengthen the night so that the peoples rise up for them," as if to say: Do not defer to exercise judgment against the strong lest perhaps they find by their power many partisans who rise to their defense and impede your judgment. All these things tend to this conclusion; To avoid injustice in the state of future prosperity. So he says, "Beware that you do not fall into evil," in one of these ways or others. Job could say that this warning was superfluous because he was accustomed to diligently strive after justice, for he had said this in Chapter Twenty Nine (v. 14), and so Eliud adds, "you began to pursue this (evil) after your misery," because you reckoned yourself more just than God. Therefore, you must take care not to turn to injustice if you happen to return to the state of prosperity.

### **The Second Lesson: Hymn to the Almighty**

22 Behold, God is preeminent in his power and no one is like him among lawmakers. 23 Who will be able to examine his ways? Or who dares say to him: You have done evil? 24 Remember that you are ignorant of his work about which men sang. 25 All men see him, each one beholds his from afar. 26 Behold, that great God, who surpasses our science; the number of his years cannot be counted. 27 He bears the drops of rain and pours out showers like torrents 28 which flow from the clouds and cover everything from above. 29 If he wills to unfold the clouds as his tent and to make lightening with his light from above, 30 even the roots of the sea he will cover. 31 Through these he judges the peoples and he gives food to many mortal men.