

Job Commentary-James Smith

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Job 1:1-10 JOB'S CHARACTER.

This book, supposed to have been first committed to writing by Moses, is regarded by many as the oldest in the world. Its object is to set before us the trial of an "upright man." Job himself is quite unconscious of the fact that he is being used by God as an object-lesson to all generations; he knows nothing at all about the conference that has taken place concerning him, recorded in Job 1:7-12. The days of Job were probably about the time of Abraham, as in the book there is no mention of Israel, the Tabernacle, the Temple, or the Law. The book is of great value as a revelation of the forces that are at work against the life of the righteous. All the characters are representative: Job, the servant of God; Satan, the adversary; the three Friends, the wisdom of the world; Elihu, the wisdom of God; God, the Judge of all. That Job was no mythical character is clearly proven in Ezekiel 14:14 and 20, when his name is mentioned by Jehovah Himself. As the teaching of this book is centered in the person of Job, we shall try and grasp its leading principles through this man, that they may, if possible, become more interesting and powerful in our own individual lives.

I. He was Perfect. "Perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). "There is none like him in the earth" (v. 8). As a man, he was all that a man in those days could be in holiness of character. That there was "none like him in the earth" is not his own testimony, but the statement of Him who knows what is in man. "The Lord knows them that trust in Him" (Nahum 1:7). He was perfect, not in the sense of being sinless, but in the sense of being plainly (Hebrews) devoted to God and to righteousness. He was transparently upright, according to his knowledge and ability. He walked in the light, although that light may have been but twilight. Like an honest man, Job straightened himself up, morally, before God and men. His character is in strong contrast to the multitude of men who, like the woman in the Gospel, are so "bowed down" with the love of the world, and the fear of man, that they can in no wise lift themselves up. Love and lust are fetters that bind the souls of men as with iron bands.

II. He was Rich. "His substance was 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen," etc.; "so that he was the greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1:3). Good men are not always rich; but God had surely put a premium on the goodness and faithfulness of Job, by allowing him to become the wealthiest man in the country. The best man will always be the richest, if not in material goods, certainly in the more enduring treasures that are spiritual and Divine. Although there was a gulf of agony between Job's present and future life, yet he found that it paid to be righteous. The perfect man will be upright, will fear God and hate evil, if all his worldly possessions should need to be sacrificed for this end. If his riches increase—even spiritual riches—he sets not his heart on them.

III. He was Wise. "Job rose up early in the morning and offered burnt-offerings for all his family, for he said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. This did Job continually" (Job 1:5). These family gatherings, for social enjoyment, were in themselves a good testimony to their upright and priestly father. Those seven sons must have been well brought up, when they

sought so often the fellowship of one another, and did not fail to give their three sisters a special invitation to their parties. Job did not forbid such festivities, but he knew human nature too well to suppose that there was no moral danger connected with such seasons. "It may be that my sons have sinned." When it is a question of pleasure-seeking it is so easy to forget God, and to act in such a way as to dishonor His holy Name. So Job, as priest in his own family, offers a sacrifice for each of his sons. As a wise father, he is most concerned that his sons should be kept right with God. It is not enough for the "perfect man" that his family should be healthy and happy and prosperous in the world; he longs intensely, and spares no sacrifice, that they might each one live and walk in the fear and favor of God. Sin against God is that one thing which his upright soul has learned to hate.

IV. He was Protected. "Have You not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?" (Job 1:10). His person, his family, and his property, were hedged about by the special care of God. Three circles of defences had been raised about him. He and his were as the vineyard of the Lord (Isaiah 5:1, 2). Satan seems to have known more about the impregnable position of Job than Job himself. His fear of God had made him safer than he thought. The God of yesterday is the same God today. We cannot see that "angel of the Lord that encamps round about them that fear Him," but the Devil does. Hedges of the Lord's making are too thick even for the cunning hand of Satan. Satan's testimony to the security of God's children is of great value. Without God's permission his great power is utterly useless against the man that is hiding in the bulwarks of his God. "God is our refuge... therefore will not we fear."

V. He was Marked. "The Lord said unto Satan, Have you considered My servant Job. Then Satan answered, Does Job fear God for nothing?" (Job 1:8, 9). Job, being a perfect and upright man, was an object of special consideration to the Lord and to Satan. He was a marked man for the favor of the Lord, and for the envy and hate of Satan. Both God and the Devil marks the perfect man (Psalm 37:37). The divine consideration is all for our safety and usefulness—the Satanic consideration is how to disturb and destroy. Is it not true in a sense, of every "perfect man in Christ Jesus," that they become the special objects of assault by the powers of darkness? When Joshua, the high priest, was seen "standing before the angel of the Lord," Satan was seen "standing at his right hand to resist him" (Zechariah 3:1). Why was Satan so desirous to have Simon Peter that he might sift him as wheat? Did he dread lest that warm impetuous nature should be wholly yielded to the cause of Jesus Christ? Those whom Satan and his host takes no trouble at must be accomplishing very little for God. Heaven and Hell marks the holy man. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.

Job 1:6-22; 2:1-10. JOB'S ADVERSARY.

Job's case was typical. You have heard of his patience, as you have seen the faith of Abraham, and the meekness of Moses. Job's desperate struggle is allowed to take place in the open arena, that we might learn the secret of resistance. It is a battle between the best of men and the worst of enemies. Satan does his best to crush and overthrow the integrity of this "perfect man" who has been incased with the special providence of God, and who can offer but a passive resistance. Although God's environments were everything that could be desired, he was not proof against the powerful temptations of the Devil. The environments of Christ Himself did not save Him from Satanic assaults. Job had a good house, and a good income, but houses and wages are not everything that men need, if they would stand firm against all the deadly wiles of the Devil. About this enemy of all righteousness, let us not forget—

I. His Personality. According to the teaching of Scripture there is but one Devil, but many demons. The apostles and evangelists in referring to him always speak in the singular, and this they do about thirty times. "Get behind Me Satan" could never be said of a mere impersonal influence. He is a liar from the beginning, an influence cannot lie. Only men and devils can lie. All lying is devilish, and devilishness proves there is a Devil.

II. His Origin. "The Lord said unto Satan, Whence come you? Then Satan answered, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7). The same mystery that hangs over the fact of sin, hangs over the origin of Satan. When our Lord says that he was a murderer, and a liar, from the beginning, it is difficult to believe that he has ever been anything better. According to his own confession, his sphere of work is "going to and fro in the earth." His domain is the world; and his condition is one of eternal restlessness. That Satan and his demon host are the disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamic race, that brought the condemnation of God upon them because of sin, is a theory not without some attractions.

III. His Object. His unwavering purpose is to set God and man at variance (Job 1:11). In his devilish business he is, alas, too often successful. Before he attempted the separation of Job from his God, he had succeeded with Adam and with Cain, and afterwards with Saul and with Judas, and a multitude of others. There is no man in all the earth that annoys Satan so much as the "perfect man." He directs all his energy against the praying, sacrificing man. While Jesus Christ was on the earth, the forces of Hell were continually meeting Him in one form or another. The names given to Satan in the Scriptures are strongly indicative of his character and purpose. He is the Adversary; the Accuser of the brethren; the Murderer; the Prince of darkness; the Prince of this world; the roaring lion. He is the God of this lost world; the ruler of its darkness. He is the opposer and the accuser of the brethren; the liar

against the truth, and the murderer of souls. "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

IV. His Power. That Satan is capable of great power as well as great wrath is unquestionable. But he is utterly powerless to touch a child of God, or anything that he has, without His permission. Satan was allowed to send his messengers, one after another, to buffet Job, just as he was afterwards permitted to do with the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7), and blessed be God, with much the same result. Although the Devil may be allowed at times to sift, he is not allowed to devour the wheat: "Behold all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand" (Job 1:12). So far, but no farther. Then when this adversary made his second challenge, the Lord said, "Behold he is in your hand, but save his life" (Job 2:6). It was a long rope this roaring lion got, and he used every inch of it. He had got access to everything but the spirit of this evil-hating man, and having received liberty to exercise his fiendish are, we soon discover where the secret of his power lies. He finds his mighty weapons in the Sabaeans, the Chaldeans, the lightning, and the wind (Job 1:15-19). That he should be able to commandeer such forces is a revelation of his wonderful power and resources. The Devil has two arsenals, one in the heavens, and the other in the earth, namely, the elements, and the hearts of ungodly men. Such an enemy is not to be trifled with.

V. His Manner of Working. His first act is, to get himself away out of the presence of God. "So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord" (Job 1:12). Satan, and all his host, seen and unseen, whether they be men or demons, love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. He has a great task before him—to break down a perfect man's confidence in his God—so he waits for the best time to make the attack. That opportune day arrived when Job's "sons and daughters were eating and drinking in their eldest brother's house" (Job 1:13). To get at Job, the Devil had to break down the outside fences first; this he did by prevailing upon men to steal his oxen, his donkeys, his camels, and to kill his servants. Little, perhaps, did these men think that when they were helping themselves to the property of Job, they were the agents of the Devil carrying out his diabolical ends. The same spirit is now working in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2). Ungodly men are tools lying ready at hand for the work of Satan. He entered Judas just because he was a fit person for the accomplishment of his fiendish purposes against the Son of God. He sent fire from the heavens, and burned up the sheep, to make Job believe that it was a judgment from God. Satan surely thought this was a master-stroke, when the servant whom he had spared to carry the tidings went and said, "The fire of God is fallen from Heaven, and has burned up the sheep" (v. 16). If Satan can only get God's people to believe when the time of affliction and testing comes, that God is against them, he has gained a victory. He was very careful to spare one, who might run to Job, saying, "I only am escaped alone to tell you." The I's here are most emphatic. The method he adopted in breaking the news to Job was in itself devilish. The Devil's wheat is all bran. King Canute promised to make the man who would kill King Edmund, his rival, the highest man in England; he fulfilled his promise by hanging him on the highest tower in London. We fight not against flesh and blood, but against "wicked spirits," which use flesh and blood as their instruments in seeking to overthrow our faith in God. We are not ignorant of his devices: give no place to the Devil.

Job 1:9-11 SATAN AND JOB

"The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord." Proverbs 21:31

Such is the testimony of the Scripture, and the fact is plentifully illustrated in the Christian life. It is not the circumstances by which we are surrounded, nor even the strength of our character, or the vigor of our graces which preserves us—but the Lord.

Satan is powerful, vigilant, and malicious; he is always watching us, and seeking an opportunity, and permission to do us an injury. He has cast down and wounded many strong men, and he will soon cause us to fall, if permitted. What a striking confirmation of this truth, we have in the case of Job. He was prosperous, healthy, and happy. His graces were strong. His character was complete. He was an incomparable man. Hence the testimony of God himself is, that he was a perfect, and an upright man, one who feared God, and turned away from evil. There was none like him in the earth. And yet against him did Satan plot, and against him did he throw out the insinuation, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." Job 1:9-11

What an enemy is Satan to our comfort, peace, and prosperity! He observes us, and seeks an opportunity to injure us. But God has made an hedge about all his people, through which Satan cannot pass without permission. That hedge is a special providence. God himself in the operations of nature and grace, has a special reference to his people. As the objects of his ancient choice, he pre-appointed all things, so as ultimately to secure their best interests. As the children of his infinite love, he sends his angel to guard them, and in all his operations he keeps his eye upon them. His eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear him, and delivers them. This is the hedge, and no wall of fire could secure the traveler from the wild beasts, as this secures them. If they prosper—it is because he smiles; if they are stripped—it is because he grants permission.

In Job's case, Satan comes as the accuser of the brethren, and insinuates that he was a self-seeking professor, serving God from selfish motives. That his religion would only live in prosperity—but would soon die in adversity. That he was no better than a hypocrite, and flourished because he was not tried. Only strip him, said he, turn your hand against him—and he will curse you to your face! And he did curse almost everything but God, and he spoke unadvisedly of him.

Satan knows human nature well. He hates the Lord's people with a bitter hatred, and would use any means to do them an injury. What a daring deceiver he must be, to try to impose upon the Omniscient God! What an implacable enemy to a consistent saint, whose conduct honors the Lord! How assiduous he is to gain permission to worry our souls, and bring us into trouble! He watches our conduct, examines our motives, puts a bad construction on all that we do, and seizes every opportunity to do us harm. Well may the Apostle say, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about, seeking whom he may devour!"

His design was to rob Job of his comforts, stripping him of his property, depriving him of his health, and disturbing his peace of mind; and all this, with a view of betraying him into sin. He knew that Job's sin, if he should fall, would dishonor God, disgrace religion, grieve the godly, and put a stumbling block in the way of sinners. Not only so—but it would bring down the rod of God on his shoulders, and fill him with deep distress. He wanted also, to quench the life and power of religion in his soul; by damping his graces, stirring up his corruptions, injecting his fiery darts, and then employing his friends to tempt and provoke him. His aim was, through Job, to dishonor the Lord himself. This object he keeps in view still, for though he could not succeed as he desired in Job's case, he has succeeded in hundreds of cases since. Let us therefore as Peter exhorts, "Resist the devil," assured that he will flee from us. And let us take encouragement from the case of Job and others, to believe, that we shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of our testimony.

Let us admire greatly, the condescension of the Most High God, in dealing with his creatures. How amazing that he should deign to listen, for a moment, to a foul spirit like Satan! Can we then suppose that he will listen to Satan against us, and not listen to us against him? Will God hear Satan, and refuse to hear his child? Impossible! Let us also admire his wisdom and love, as they appear in allowing Satan to try his utmost, and do his worst—and yet so supporting and working in his people, as to bring them safely through; not only so—but making them conquerors over Satan and all his allies.

Let us bear in mind too, that what Satan suggested against Job, was from a knowledge of human nature. Job would no doubt have cursed God—but for the restraining and sanctifying grace of God. Nor must we forget, that Satan is still the same implacable enemy of the Lord's people. He is a real person. He has astonishing powers of intellect. He has a deep and profound acquaintance with our nature, and knows how most successfully to attack it. He would soon and certainly overcome us, if we had not a wiser, and a stronger One than he, on our side.

What encouragement we may derive from this, that though he was allowed to try Job, and try him to the uttermost—yet he was not allowed to overcome him, so as to gain his ends upon him; so, though he may be allowed to try us, and the conflict may be desperate, long continued, and the outcome seem for a considerable time to hang in the balance, yet the same grace and goodness that enabled Job to overcome, will secure to us the victory. We may be overcome for a time—but we shall overcome at the last. Yes, we shall be more than conquerors through him that has loved us. Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Job 1:13-22; 2:1-10. JOB'S TRIALS.

"Satan desires us, great and small,
As wheat to sift us, and we all are tempted.
Not one, however, rich or great.
Is by his station or estate exempted."
—Longfellow.

The very name of Job means persecuted. In his unique trials he is the prototype of Christ. Every perfect man will have his Eden to enjoy, his Isaac to sacrifice, and his wilderness of severe and prolonged testing. It is through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of God's greater fullness and power. No affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous, but, nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. Was there ever a man more exercised about his troubles than Job? But meanwhile we shall look at—

I. Their Purpose. Two cross-purposes find their center in Job. The one was Divine, the other was Satanic. Satan said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?... Put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face" (Job 1:9-11). Satan

did not believe that any man would remain true to God if bereft of all material and earthly enjoyment. If Job staggered under such a test, Jesus Christ did not. He had not where to lay His head. He was "the Man of Sorrows," yet He always did those things which were pleasing to His Father. Job, being utterly unconscious that he was being used in this fashion as a test case, must have felt it as a severe trial of his faith. Well the Devil knows, that if men are going to overcome the world by faith, his power is broken, and his kingdom lost. It has been so since the beginning; those who would fear God, and eschew evil, must fight the good fight of faith.

II. Their Nature. The character of Job's troubles was of the worst kind. There were no half measures. Every separate trial was a complete catastrophe. There was the—

1. LOSS OF PROPERTY. His "seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred donkeys," were all suddenly stolen, or burned up with fire from Heaven. The richest man in the east had in one day become a bankrupt. That in itself would have driven many a one into absolute despair.

2. LOSS OF FAMILY. Seven sons and three daughters all killed by one terrific stroke (Job 1:19). This judgment must have been "a great deep" to the upright, sensitive soul of Job (Psalm 36:6). There is no natural law by which such workings of the providence of God can be understood. The dominion of faith, for the spirit of man, is beyond nature.

3. LOSS OF HEALTH. "Satan went forth and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7). He was covered with a loathsome disease; there was no soundness in his flesh. Like Lazarus, he was "full of sores." This bodily affliction, like the others, came suddenly. He had no premonition of the approach of this fearful malady—no time to fortify himself even by prayer against the assault. Satan had permission to touch his flesh, and he touched every inch of it. With the exception of the Lord Jesus Christ—for in all things He has the pre-eminence—it is questionable if ever any other mortal was so sorely tried. If there was not something supernatural about faith in God, it could not possibly survive such a shock.

4. LOSS OF POSITION. The "greatest man in the east" has now become the most loathsome object in the east. He who sat among princes is now sitting "among ashes" (Job 2:8). He has been stripped of everything but his life.

5. LOSS OF SYMPATHY. "Then said his wife unto him, Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God and die" (Job 2:9). His wife, the only comfort left him, turns out to be a canker. She cannot understand faith in God in circumstances like these. Fair-weather Christians always get shipwrecked in a storm like this. This taunt through his wife was the Devil's last weight to break the back of Job's integrity. It was the poisoning of his last earthly spring of consolation. Job has at last sounded the abyss of his sufferings; he has found the bottom of this great deep. His is now "a lifeless life," a finished monument to that great master of the malignant are. And this is the master many take pleasure in serving. To serve sin is to be the slave of the Devil.

III. Their Effect. The immediate result of those awful trials which stripped Job naked of every earthly comfort was a clearer revelation of the inward, spiritual man. "He fell upon the ground, and worshiped, and said, The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:20, 21). These words, spoken by this pre-eminent sufferer, have come down as a legacy to the bereaved in every generation since then; on many tombstones they may be read as the language of deep, heart-felt sorrow and submission. "The Lord has taken away." Job saw the Lord behind the Sabeans and the Chaldeans who fell upon his flocks. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). That no murmur escaped those burning lips in such a furnace proves how completely he had given himself and all that he had to God. "What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Has the Giver of all good not the right to withhold that good or His own pleasure? What have we that we have not received? Job may not be a prophet, but he has "spoken in the Name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (James 5:10). There is a life that does not consist of the things which we possess; it is infinitely superior to them and independent of them. After getting a glimpse behind the scenes of the purpose of Job's trials, let us by faith count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations (trials), knowing that the testing of your faith leads to power of endurance (James 1:2, 3).

Job 4-7 JOB'S COMFORTERS—ELIPHAZ.

"How that to comfort those that mourn
Is a thing for saints to try:
Yet, haply, God might have done less
Had a saint been there—not I.

"Alas! -we have so little grace,
With love so little burn,
That the hardest of our works for God
Is to comfort those that mourn."

—Faber.

The beauty and meaning of some pictures are best seen and understood at a distance. We can see deeper into the meaning of Job's sufferings than either Job or his comforters could see. From our sun-lit mountain top, we look down upon these friends as all working in the darkness, just as, perhaps, some of the angels of God may look down upon us in pity as they see us vainly striving to find out the reason why God in His providence so deals with us. The great fundamental lesson of the book of Job is "Have faith in God." These comforters cannot be charged with hardness of heart, or of having impure motives. Men that could "lift up their voice and weep" at the sight of Job's condition, and sit in company with him for "seven days and seven nights" were surely not void of real sympathy and compassion. Their weakness and their sin lay in their self-confidence. Each seemed sure that he was laying his finger on the cause of Job's downfall, although his experience was a new thing in the providence of God. To us, their eloquent reasonings is a powerful evidence of the utter inability of the "wisdom of this world" to explain or to understand the mysteries of Christian experience.

Job began this great wordy warfare by opening his mouth and "cursing the day wherein he was born" (Job 3:1-3). Satan had said, "Touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." Job went perilously near the fulfilling of the Devil's prediction, when he "cursed his day," but yet he did not curse his God. Many a one has been constrained, through sin and suffering, to curse the day of their first birth, but history has never told us of one who had any desire to curse the day of their second birth. Man that is born in sin is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, but the man that is born again is born into the kingdom of peace. During those long, weary, seven days the gold of Job's character seemed to become dim, and the most fine gold changed, for he did speak unadvisedly with his lips (chapter 2:10). In the day of darkness and trial let us beware of that "unruly evil," the tongue. This opening speech of the suffering patriarch betrays a soul overwhelmed with bewilderment. It has many questions. Yet this outburst of agony has taught many to be still under the mighty hand of God. It is no mere hyperbole to say that the sufferings of Job, like the sufferings of Jesus Christ, were for the good of others. The Bible would have been much poorer if there never had been the conflict and the patience of Job. It will be impossible in these brief notes to grasp anything like the full meaning of those great torrent speeches. We shall only attempt to catch a word here and there that might help us to understand the book, and to enter into a deeper experience of the things of God.

I. The Speech of Eliphaz (Job 4, 5).

1. "IF WE ASSAY TO COMMUNE WITH YOU, WILL YOU BE GRIEVED" (Job 4:2). Eliphaz begins very tenderly; he feels that the wound to be dressed is very deep and painful. One needs the tongue that is learned by experience to speak a word in season to him that is so weary and heavy-laden. It is a solemn and gracious work to commune with the sorrowing, but let such missionaries see that their own hearts are at the same time in communion with God, or they may but aggravate the anguish.

2. "YOUR WORDS HAVE UPHELD HIM THAT WAS FALLING ... BUT NOW.. YOU FAINTEST" (Job 4:3-5). This friend knew Job's past life, and ventures to remind him of how he had been a means of blessing to others in their time of need. This was but a small spark of light for Job's great darkness, but still there was a glimmer in it. To tell a man that he once was rich will not console him much now that he is bankrupt. It is easier to speak cheering words to the tempted than to bear the temptation. The comforters of others need at times to be comforted. "They that wait on the Lord shall.. not faint."

"Remember, I pray you, who ever perished, being innocent?" (v. 7). This saying is like a double-edged sword, it cuts both ways. It may mean, if you were innocent, as you profess to be, you would not have been perishing in this fashion; or, because you are innocent, it is impossible for you to perish. The Lord knows them that are His, and how to deliver them out of temptation (2 Peter 2:9). The Lord could do nothing with the guilty Sodomites until the righteous were taken out (Genesis 19:22). The facts of history are well worth remembering.

3. "AFFLICTION COMES NOT FORTH OF THE DUST.. AS FOR ME, I WOULD SEEK UNTO GOD" (Job 5:6-8, R. V.). Affliction does not spring up by chance; it is not the sudden outcome of spontaneous generation. The law of microbes is included here, and if I were you, "I would seek unto God, and unto Him would I commit my cause." What could be better than this? But Eliphaz was not in Job's position, and so it was comparatively easy for him to say what he would do. Still, it is the best thing to do. To whom can we go but unto Him. The Lord alone knew all the reasons why this dark and cloudy day had come. In the day of adversity consider, yes, consider Him who endured contradictions for us.

4. "BEHOLD, HAPPY IS THE MAN WHOM GOD CORRECTS" (Job 5:17). To be reproved of God is a comforting evidence of His love and carefulness. Every true child of God desires to have their thoughts, feelings, and ways corrected by their heavenly Father. We ought to count it a great privilege to be put right by either His word or His rod.

5. "HE SHALL DELIVER YOU IN SIX TROUBLES; YES, IN SEVEN" (Job 5:19). "HEAR IT, AND KNOW IT FOR YOUR GOOD" (v. 27). Solomon says that "a just man fails seven times, and rises up again" (Proverbs 24:16). Six troubles had overtaken Job, and he had not yet been delivered out of any of them; but God is the God of deliverances. Let not the number of our troubles or our

difficulties limit the Holy One. "Hear it." Let not the voices of the world, or an evil heart, so dull the ear that you cannot hear the still small voice of promise (Psalm 34:19).

II. Job's Reply (Job 6, 7). The wonderful words of Eliphaz had little effect. Job begins by saying:

1. "OH, THAT MY GRIEF WERE THOROUGHLY WEIGHED." What is more heavy and more difficult to weigh than grief? But what benefit would it bring the distracted sufferer even could he know the full weight and measure of it. His grief, like the grief of Him who agonized in Gethsemane, was both terrible and mysterious.

2. "THE ARROWS OF THE ALMIGHTY ARE WITHIN ME" (Job 6:4). A week ago he said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away," but now his soul is pierced with the arrows of the Almighty. Still, he does not say with "the fiery darts of the Devil." The arrows have been many and sharp, but they have come from the finger of God (Psalm 38:2). The arrows of the Almighty never miss the mark (Lam. 3:12), and when they are within us, only He who sent them can remove them (2 Corinthians 5:11).

3. "IS MY FLESH BRASS?" (Job 6:12). God could easily have made our flesh to be as hard, as enduring, and as insensible as brass, and our strength as "the strength of stones," if it had not been good for us to be afflicted. The rod of correction would be useless on a brazen body. He knows the frailty of our frame, and will not lay upon us more than we are able to bear.

4. "CAUSE ME TO UNDERSTAND WHEREIN I HAVE ERRED" (Job 5:24). If this calamity has come upon me because of my sin—as Eliphaz seemed to think (chapter 6:8)—then, show me, says Job, where the sin is. Suffering is not always a chastisement or correction, it may be but a narrow gate or a rough road into a place of larger blessing, the Jordan, through which we go into a new land of promise. Job was not conscious of having sinned. The last thing we see him doing, is offering sacrifices for his sons, lest they may have sinned. If in our affliction there is no consciousness of sin, we may be sure God has something new to reveal to us. Wait patiently on the Lord.

5. "I WILL SPEAK... I WILL COMPLAIN" (Job 7:11). This is the language of a spirit in anguish, and a soul in bitterness. We would much rather have heard him say, "I will trust... I will pray." There is a silence and a dimness that savors of unbelief more than submission, but why should a believer in God make up his mind to complain? When the Man Christ Jesus was in an agony He prayed more earnestly. The "perfect man" in the Old Testament comes far short of the perfect Man in the New. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." It is just as easy to call as to complain.

6. "LET ME ALONE" (Job 7:16). It may at times be hard to bear the weight of the heavy hand of God, but it is infinitely worse to be let alone. What becomes of the branch that is let alone by the tree? What would happen to the child that was left alone by its mother? Ephraim is joined to his idols—let him alone. There is a painless disease that speaks of certain death. As saints or as sinners we know not what we do when we ask God to let us alone. It is of the glory of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus that He does not let us alone. There are prayers God graciously refuses to answer.

Job 8-10. JOB'S COMFORTERS—BILDAD.

I. The Speech of Bildad (Job 8). His manner is abrupt to begin with, and seems less sympathetic than Eliphaz. His argument amounts to this, that unless God sends deliverance speedily we must conclude that both you and your family have been guilty of sinning against God, and that this dire calamity is the just reward of your works. Like Eliphaz, he is in total ignorance of the purpose of Job's trials, but speaks with all the confidence of an oracle. Mark some of his key-notes—

1. "DOES THE ALMIGHTY PERVERT JUSTICE?" (Job 8:3). Is it possible for God to be unjust? Can He who sits upon a Great White Throne be unrighteous in His dealings with any one? No. But what comfort can an aching, bleeding heart find in this? That the Law is holy, just, and good, is not much of a consolation to a soul smitten with profoundest anguish. The troubled heart yearns for love, and grace, and pity.

2. "IF YOU WERE PURE AND UPRIGHT, SURELY NOW HE WOULD AWAKE FOR YOU" (Job 8:6). If you are all that you profess to be, surely now, when you have got into such a depth of misery, God would arise to your help. The glitter of the cold steel is easily seen in this merciless thrust. How the tender soul of Job must have felt it. It is the silver not dross that the refiner puts into the fire. "Every branch in me that bears fruit He purges it." Joseph was fruitful in the land of affliction (Genesis 41:52). Yet there is truth in Bildad's statement, for "Whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

3. "PREPARE YOURSELF TO THE SEARCH" (Job 8:8). There is much to be learned from the past, and from God's dealings with the fathers, but that all things are to continue as they were is not the teaching of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 3:4). Job would "prepare himself" in vain to search for the cause of his sorrows in the teaching of a "former age." Man by searching cannot find out God; it is

by trusting that we learn to know Him. The life of faith is on altogether a different plane from the life of reason and of sight. Believe and you shall see.

4. "CAN THE RUSH GROW UP WITHOUT MIRE?" (Job 8:11). The Shuhite now says some plain things about hypocrisy. As the rush cannot grow up without mire, neither can a "hypocrite's hope" flourish without being nourished with that which is suitable to it. If Job has still hope, it is because of the mire of his hypocrisy. If "he is still green before the sun's" withering rays it is because he has within him the waters of deceit (v. 16). Although "the hope of the hypocrite shall perish" that does not prove that because, through excessive trial, a man's hope has fainted that he is perishing without hope. God pity the man whose trust is only in "a spider's web" (Job 8:14). Hope you in God.

5. "BEHOLD, GOD WILL NOT CAST AWAY A PERFECT MAN " (Job 8:20). This, like many others of their sayings, is capable of a double interpretation. If you had been a "perfect man" God would not have cast you away like this or, if you are in reality a perfect man, God will not cast you away although you have been brought so low. It is a mercy to know that when others are misjudging you, that God looks upon the heart. He knows them that are His. "He will not forsake His inheritance" (Psalm 94:14). To Bildad's credit let us say, that he closes his address with a word of hope (Job 8:21, 22). They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

II. Job's Reply (Job 9, 10). Job begins his answer to Bildad by asking a very searching question.

1. "HOW SHALL MAN BE JUST WITH GOD?" (Job 9:2). It is easy to tell a man what he should be, but how is this thing to be done? A man should be just with God, but in what way is this to be accomplished? How is man's iniquity to be put away, and the guilt of his sin cleansed? Who shall make the key that shall fit this lock? On what ground shall a sinner stand righteous before God (r. v.). There is no use of "contending with Him" (Job 9:3). It is a question of how shall we escape. But this question has been fully answered by God Himself who does wonders without number (Job 9:10) in the gift and sufferings of Jesus Christ His Son.

2. "HOW SHALL I... REASON WITH HIM" (Job 9:14). He is not a man as I am. What arguments can an unholy man use with a holy God? If it is a question of sin and judgment then there is absolutely no room for man's reasonings. He cannot justify himself (Job 9:20). Although he should wash himself with snow water, yet will he find himself plunged into a filthy ditch, and his own clothes an abhorrence to him (Job 9:30, 31). But God's own backsliding children are asked to "Come and reason" with Him, (Isaiah 1:18) and a precious promise is herewith given to such. What God asks for those smarting for their sins is, not to come and reason, but to confess, and forsake their sins.

3. "NEITHER IS THERE ANY DAYSMAN BETWEEN US" (Job 9:33). These well-known words truthfully express the deepest need of a sinful suffering spirit. O for one capable to act as umpire between a mighty God and a miserable soul. One who is Divine and human, one able to lay his hand on both and meet the need of each, satisfying the just claims of God and speaking peace to a troubled heart. This great need has been perfectly met in Jesus Christ for, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 2:1, 2). "No man comes unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6).

4. "I WILL SAY UNTO GOD... IS IT GOOD UNTO YOU?" (Job 10:2, 3). Yes, say it unto God. Let the thoughts of the heart come up before Him. There is nothing hid from His eyes, and as a gracious Father He will even listen to our complaints. Many things may seem bad to us which are "good unto Him." If Job could have but known all the meaning of his sufferings, he no doubt would have said, "Good is the will of the Lord." He had said this before (Job 1:21).

5. "YOU KNOW THAT I AM NOT WICKED" (Job 10:7). If our hearts condemn us not then have we confidence toward God. Negative purity is not everything, but it is something. This is not the language of the Pharisee, "I thank God that I am not as other men," it is the honest confession of one who is not conscious of having, through sin, merited such terrible judgments. This is not a boast, but a protest against the idea of punishment, being an explanation of the mystery of his afflictions. We should surely bow with holy reverence, submission, and faith, when His hand is heavy upon us, if our hearts are clean. "The pure in heart shall see God."

6. "REMEMBER... YOU HAVE MADE ME AS THE CLAY" (Job 10:9). Then it is not for the clay to resist the wonder working hand of the Divine Potter. He will not reduce the clay to dust; the potter cannot fashion dry dust into a useful vessel. When we have been brought low by the weight of affliction, so low that we feel as if we had been brought back to that condition of soul in which we were at first, when God, by His Spirit, began to operate upon us. Let us believe that His purpose is to make us into "another vessel" more meet for His service; or in other words, when God's vessels are reduced again to clay it is that they might be refashioned for higher and more honorable work. Job's latter days is an evidence of this.

7. "I AM FULL OF CONFUSION, THEREFORE SEE YOU MINE AFFLICTION" (Job 10:15). This is an honest confession: he cannot understand the meaning of this terrible tragedy. He is covered with shame, yet his conscience is clear, but he makes his appeal to the eye of the Omniscient, "See You mine affliction." My light is turned into darkness, I cannot see, but see You. There is no confusion in the mind of God, no matter how perplexing and inexplicable His providence toward us may be. In the realm of spiritual things, human reasonings can only end in confession. Saul was full of confusion when he said, "What will You have me to

do?" (Acts 9:6). So were many on the Day of Pentecost, when they cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, can still bring order out of confusion. Commit your way unto Him.

JOB 11-14 JOB'S COMFORTERS—ZOPHAR.

The Speech of Zophar. Like the others, he is fully convinced that Job is suffering because of his sins, and like Bildad, he opens his address with some biting questions. He cannot bear to hear Job justifying his "doctrine as pure" and his life as being "clean in your eyes" (Job 11:4). So he says, as in an agony of soul, "Oh that God would speak!" He is sure that if God would but speak, he and his friends would be justified in all that they said, and Job's secret sins revealed, and all his arguments confounded and put to shame. They found it otherwise when God did speak (Job 42:7). We may know much, but let us remember that we don't know everything. He who exalts himself shall be abased. But Zophar goes on to say, "Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection?" A perfection that is "high as Heaven," "deeper than Hell," "longer than the earth and broader than the sea." The soul makes a great find when it finds God, although it may never be able to search out the fathomless depths of His infinite perfections. This is eternal life, to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. The closing part of his speech contains wonderful words and might be called—

A HOMILY ON THE WAY OF LIFE.

I. The Needed Work. He mentions three things that are essential to salvation:

1. "PREPARE YOUR HEART" (Job 11:13), The heart needs preparation, for it is deceitful above all things. The one good thing found in Jehoshaphat was that he "prepared his heart to seek God" (2 Chronicles 19:3). The best way to get the heart prepared is to yield it unto the Lord (Proverbs 16:1).

2. "STRETCH OUT YOUR HANDS." Let the hands of prayer and supplication be stretched toward God. He only can bring about the great deliverance so much needed. He is able to save to the uttermost. Stretch out your empty, helpless hands to Him, whose mighty hands are outstretched in mercy for the uplifting of the poor and the needy.

3. "PUT AWAY INIQUITY" (Job 11:14). Let the wicked forsake his wicked ways, and his unrighteous thoughts about God, and let him turn, and the Lord will have mercy upon him. "He who covers his sins shall not prosper." Those who would draw near to God must confess and forsake their sins. Then, what follows?

II. **The Blessed Result.** Such heart preparation, and stretching out of hands, will certainly be answered in a copious, soul-satisfying measure. Zophar mentions eight privileges that will be enjoyed.

1. "YOU SHALL LIFT UP YOUR FACE WITHOUT SPOT" (Job 11:15). You shall have confidence before God, and a clean countenance. All the boil spots of sin and suffering will be taken away (1 John 3:19).

2. "YOU SHALL BE STEADFAST." Established as a house built upon the rock. Taken from the fearful pit, and the feet established in the ways of truth and righteousness.

3. "YOU SHALL FORGET YOUR MISERY" (Job 11:16). Like Joseph, in the day of his exaltation and glory, you shall forget all the toil of the past (Genesis 41:51). In the joy of the new life in Christ, the wretchedness of the old life of sin is forgotten.

4. "YOU SHALL SHINE FORTH... AS THE MORNING" (Job 11:17). You shall not only be illumined, but shall also become a guiding light to others. This new light is not of your own kindling, but, like the dawning of the day, it is the gift of God—the brightest and the best.

5. "YOU SHALL BE SECURE, BECAUSE THERE IS HOPE" (Job 11:18). You shall have such a hope as will make you and all your higher interests perfectly secure—a hope that makes not ashamed.

6. "YOU SHALL TAKE YOUR REST IN SAFETY." You shall have such a rest, as cannot be disturbed by the turmoils of earth—a God-given rest (Matthew 11:28).

7. "YOU SHALL LIE DOWN, AND NONE SHALL MAKE YOU AFRAID" (Job 11:19). Your salvation will be so perfect that you shall be fearless in the face of men or of devils. This is the blessing with which the Lord shall bless all those who put their trust in Him.

8. "MANY WILL ENTREAT YOUR FACE" (Job 11:19, margin). The face that has been lifted up to God, and cleansed and brightened, is always attractive.

Job's Reply. His answer to Zophar occupies three chapters, and has reference to the unanimity of his three friends in condemning him through a false judgment of his case. "No doubt but you are the people, and wisdom will die with you" (Job 12:2). Perhaps if they had prayed more and argued less, they all would have come sooner to a better understanding of the whole case. As long as they trusted their own wisdom, and depended on the skill and force of their own reasonings, they were all "physicians of no value" (Job 13:4). Their prescriptions were worthless, because their diagnosis was wrong. In this world of mysteries we cannot judge moral principles by physical symptoms. Job's well-known saying in Job 13:15, expresses the true attitude of the soul in the midst of such a storm of bewildered suffering, "Though He slay me—or is slaying me—yet will I trust—or wait for Him." Knowing as we do the Divine purpose in Job's calamities, it makes it much easier for us to say, like the Psalmist, "Yes, though I walk in the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4), or with the apostle, "I am persuaded that neither death... nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God" (Romans 8:38, 39). In the last part of his speech the patriarch deals with man in general (Job 14). This portion might be fitly entitled—

WHAT IS MAN?

It has been said that "man was made to mourn." This chapter begins with "man" and ends with "mourn." But hear the voice of this man of sorrows.

1. Man! HE "IS FULL OF TROUBLE" (Job 14:1). His troubles are so numerous that he is brimful of them. "He is as a rotten thing" (chapter 13:28). Who can bring a clean thing out of this? (Job 14:4). Who is able to prescribe for such a complication of troubles as man's? What a bundle of miseries God has to deal with in saving man.

2. Man! HE "FLEES ALSO LIKE A SHADOW" (Job 14:2). As the cloud shadows rush along the hillside like breathless specters, so man hurries on from the mystery of birth to the mystery of death. Here he has no continuing city. He comes forth like a flower, to be seen and felt by a few, and cut down.

3. Man! HIS DAYS AND MONTHS ARE NUMBERED (Job 14:5). The limit of his life has been fixed by God. He knows not when the end will be. He has not even authority for saying, "I will do so and so tomorrow."

4. Man! HE "DIES AND WASTES AWAY" (Job 14:10). He soon becomes insensible to the pains or pleasures of earth, his mental and physical powers speedily waste away. He has scarcely attained maturity when the wasting process begins.

5. Man! HE "GIVES UP THE SPIRIT, AND WHERE IS HE?" (Job 14:10). He yields up his spirit as one who cannot keep it longer, but where has he gone? Where is he? He must be somewhere. The where depends on the character of that spirit (see Luke 16:22, 23).

6. Man! HE "LIES DOWN, AND RISES NOT UNTIL THE HEAVENS BE NO MORE" (Job 14:12). When he lies down it is until the dawning of the new heavens (Isaiah 65:17). This seemed a long way off to Job, but it is not so far away now (1 Thessalonians 4:14-16).

7. Man! "IF HE DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?" (Job 14:14). "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again" (Job 14:7), and how much better is a man than a tree? Job was not without the hope of immortality; he knew that after his body had been destroyed by worms, that he would yet—in another body—see God (chapter 19:25, 26). This question finds its perfect answer in Rev. 20:12: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

Job 13:23 Job's Inquiry

"How many iniquities and sins have I committed?" Job 13:23

What a solemn question for a sinner to ask! Who can answer it? Alas, who of us can say, I have lived one waking hour without sin? We have sinned every day, every hour, every minute. From our hearts, as from a corrupt fountain, nothing but sin and corruption have proceeded. We have sinned in public and in private, at home and abroad, while awake and even when asleep, our very dreams have been defiled with sin. What hosts of evil thoughts. What a multitude of improper words. What a company of sinful actions. Even a slight examination shows the number to be all but infinite.

"How many iniquities and sins have I committed?" Who can number them? Who can give me the correct account? Yet, however numerous they may be, they are all registered. Every item is in God's book of remembrance. The follies of childhood, the sins of youth, the crimes of manhood—are all recorded! What a solemn thought! All my sins are before God!

He knows the nature, the number, and the aggravation, of all my transgressions. Every thought, word, or deed, whether against man

or God—all lie naked and open before his eye. How, then, can I face him? How can I with any confidence appear before him?

My sins must be very numerous, and every one of them deserves punishment. If God is to punish me for every one of them, and according to the just desert of the whole of them, what will be my doom? To what place shall I be banished? With what scorpions shall I be chastised? By what agents will my just punishment be inflicted? O hell, what must be your horrors! O damnation, what dost you include! Hell is the only place in God's universe where adequate punishment can be inflicted. Damnation is the terrible word that represents the due desert of my sin.

But what is hell? Who, who can correctly represent it? What is damnation? Who can describe the woe, the dread, the pain, the agony, the terrific torments, represented by that word? Oh, my sins, my pleasant sins, my cherished sins, my sins with which I have trifled, and at which I have sometimes laughed—you deserve an eternity of punishment, in the most horrid place, among the most degraded creatures, in all God's universe!

My sins, if not visited on me, require an infinite atonement. God's justice must be satisfied, before my punishment can be remitted. What can satisfy the stern, impartial, unbending justice of the Infinitely holy God? Who, who can make atonement for sins so numberless as mine, so aggravated as mine? Could all the inhabitants of earth? Alas, each one requires an atonement equally with myself. Could all the hosts of heaven? Nay, if they had love enough, they could not do, or suffer, that which would merit my release. In vain I look around this sinful world. In vain I look even to heaven itself, if I look beneath God's glorious throne.

There is one, and one only, that can make an atonement for my sins. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus alone can expiate my guilt. He has taken my nature. He has become my representative. He submitted to have all my guilt transferred to himself, and all my sins placed to his own account. He stood before the bar of justice for me. He was condemned to suffer instead of me. He bore the punishment of my transgressions in the garden, and on the tree. He blotted out my sins with his own blood. He paid the price of my ransom with his own life. He discharged the entire debt. He met the whole demand. Gethsemane and Calvary alone can tell what my sins deserve. Precious Lord Jesus, you suffered my desert, you died in my stead! You were delivered over to justice, to be punished for my offences, and you arose from the dead, to testify that the atonement was made!

A right view of the number and nature of my sins, will urge me to seek, and if possible obtain an immediate pardon. Only through a pardon, can I escape eternal woe; and only through the death of Jesus, can a pardon be obtained. But, blessed be God, he accepted the sacrifice of Jesus, he found satisfaction in the death of his Son; and now he is "ready to forgive." There are no legal impediments in the way. On the ground of what Jesus has done and suffered, God can be just, and yet justify every one believes on Jesus.

Oh, my soul, do you believe on Jesus? Have you faith in his blood? Can you trust his obedient life, and meritorious death, to justify you before God? Are you forgiven? Have you the evidence of it in your heart? God's Holy Word says, "He who believes has the witness in himself." If any one is convinced of sin, repairs to God's mercy-seat, confesses sin, fully and frankly, and exercises faith in Jesus—he is pardoned. And being pardoned, as testified in God's Word—his guilty fears depart, his sorrow and sadness are removed, and he has peace with God. He sees that Jesus has put away his sins, by the sacrifice of himself; and that by his one offering, he has perfected for ever those who are sanctified, or set apart for God.

Now love to God springs up in his heart. He feels Jesus to be precious. He esteems him as the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one. Yes, he joys in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he has now received the atonement. Faith in the blood of Jesus conquers all his fears, and reliance on the word of God's testimony gives him boldness before his foes. Oh, how precious those words are to his soul, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanses us from all sin."

"How many iniquities and sins have I committed?" However many they may be—the mercies of God are more. "How great is my sin?" However great it may be—the merit of Christ is greater. Let a sense of my sinfulness humble and lay me low—very low in the dust before God. But never, never let the sense of my sinfulness lead me to despond, for this were to add sin to sin. Let a view of the greatness of my sins—urge me to flee to Jesus, and cast myself on him. He bids me to come. He will undertake my cause. He will answer for me. He will prove himself to be Jesus, in my case, the almighty Savior; who is able to save unto the uttermost, all that come unto God by him. Oh, my soul seek certainty, the full assurance of hope! Never rest satisfied until you can say, "He loved me—and gave himself for me." If your heart is set on this, if you will be satisfied with nothing less—God will not allow you to be put off with less.

Let us then give diligence, to make our calling and election sure; and when we have done this, we shall be able to rejoice in Christ Jesus, while we have no confidence in the flesh. Great sinners—may enjoy great peace, and rejoice with great joy. Indeed, it is neither the number, nor enormity of our sins which makes us miserable—but the weakness of our faith. If we had a strong faith in God's testimony concerning his Son, if we were steadily relying on the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ, if we understood and believed the Gospel, we must be happy, we must rejoice. Spirit of Jesus, humble us under a sense of the greatness of our sins, give us strong faith in the perfect work of Jesus, fire us with zeal for the His glory, fill us with love to our adorable Redeemer, and teach

us in his name to rejoice all the day long, and in his righteousness may we be exalted!

Blessed be God, for Jesus Christ. Now, now our sins may be pardoned, our souls justified, and a title to everlasting life procured. Blessed be God, for Jesus Christ!

Job 16:7-14 THE WORK OF THE DEVIL.

In this book we see much more than "the patience of Job;" we are face to face with the dreadful deeds of the Devil; for just now Job is in the hand of Satan, but with this Divine limitation, "Save his life" (Job 2:6). The upright patriarch would gladly see the hand of God in it all, and this constrains him to say something about God, that coming from other lips would be sheer blasphemy; but God graciously overlooks it all. He knows that His servant is entirely in the dark as to the purpose and cause of his sufferings. By the Lord's permission, Satan was the cause of all his sorrows. Job, in the midst of his hopeless misery, is a finished specimen of the Devil's workmanship. His purpose and business is to kill and to destroy. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living Devil. The "God of this world" is also a "consuming fire." Our God consumes the chaff and the dross, but this God would burn up the wheat and the silver. The Lord delights to give, but Satan glories in taking away. Note here some of his devices—

I. He Separates from the Best Company. "You have made desolate all my company" (Job 16:7). His family was cut off, and even his wife became strange to him. The fellowships in which he formerly delighted had all been broken up by the hand of the enemy, and his new friends were all miserable comforters. This is what happens when any child of God falls into the condemnation of the Devil through yielding to sin. Christian fellowship is made desolate, and the company that he keeps, in his backsliding state, are miserable helpers in his time of need. Satan is a professional schismatic. Beware of him in the church and in the family.

II. He Disfigures the Face. "You have filled me with wrinkles" (Job 16:8). The joy and peacefulness that used to beam in the countenance of Job has now given place to gloom and discontent. Those who walk in fellowship with the Lord have their faces transfigured with the heavenly light, but those in the power of the Devil have often his own dark image stamped upon their faces. The Devil will so mar and blacken the face that the man is ashamed to lift it up unto God. This satanic change has often been observed in the countenance of backsliders. The wrinkles of sullen despair and God-defiance are easily seen. That face that should be illumined with the glory of God, becomes an index of the darkness of death.

III. He Brings Leanness into the Life. "My leanness bears witness to my face." No wonder the face gets wrinkled and disfigured when the soul is being starved to death. When the Devil gets a man out of touch with God he will soon get him out of touch with His Word. The Devil's corn is all bran, and his wheat nothing but chaff. His dupes mistake quantity for quality; they may eat much, but still leanness "rises up in them." No servant of sin can know anything of the soul-satisfying fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. He Takes Advantage of the Helpless. "He tears me in his wrath; he hates me; he gnashes upon me with his teeth" (Job 16:9). This language is highly figurative, but most terribly expressive. Satan can show no mercy, the weaker we are the better for him. Job has been, for the time, handed over to him to be tested, and he makes it his business to pile on sorrow upon sorrow and agony after agony. If he gets possession of a boy he will tear him and cast him into the fire and into the waters (Mark 9:22), he has no compassion on the helpless lad. If he even gets hold of the helpless swine, he will hurl them out into the sea. To be without Christ is to be without power and without a defense against the wiles and wrath of the Devil. Tears have no effect on him (Job 16:16).

V. He Breaks Asunder, and Shakes to Pieces (Job 16:12). Job "was at ease" in his prosperity, like a ship at sea with a fair wind, but suddenly the ship was overtaken with a crushing tempest, and driven furiously on the rocks, and broken asunder, and shaken to pieces by the violence of the waves. Whenever Satan gets hold of the helm of the life he seeks to make a shipwreck of the faith. He will break the soul asunder, separating all he can get of it from God and spiritual things, and shake in pieces the future prospects of his victims.

VI. He has Many Helpers. "His archers compass me round about" (Job 16:13). The Devil has many angels, or demons, waiting his bidding to surround the soul, guarding every way of escape, and ready to shoot their fiery darts at every attempt made for liberty and salvation. It is no easy matter for some to escape out of the hands of this Giant Despair. His archers are sharp-eyed, and have had long practice in dealing with fugitives. They know when and where to hit to be most effective. Men and women that are likely to do damage to his kingdom are specially watched. His most zealous servants usually prove, when delivered, his bitterest enemies. No garrison of demons can hinder a soul for a moment when the overcoming blood of Christ is trusted.

VII. He Uses Powerful Tactics. "He runs upon me like a giant" (Job 16:14). He does not trifle with his opportunities. When he sees a chance of overcoming any upright man, he runs like one in haste to catch a felon, and grips at once with a giant hand. He lingers about the gates of the soul, with luring temptation and bewitching enticement, until he gets a gate open, then he rushes in like a giant, to overthrow the citadel. He is a strong one, and seeks to get possession of the goods of man's soul, and then make peace, a

peace that means certain death and destruction. But a stronger than he has come to spoil him of his goods, establish a new order of things, making peace and inaugurating the Kingdom of Heaven. "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you." Job longed for "One that might plead for a man with God." To us, Jesus Christ is that One (Job 16:21).

Job 18:5-18. TERRIBLE PROSPECTS.

Bildad begins his second speech, if anything, more exasperated than the others at the reasonings of Job. His wickedness must be very great he thinks, when he still persists in justifying himself in their eyes, and maintaining his integrity in the sight of God. The Shuhite's description of the dreadful calamities that are sure to come upon the wicked, and those that "knows not God" (Job 18:21), is most graphic and appalling in its fullness and truthfulness, but utterly wasted on the innocent patriarch. Still, we feel thankful to Bildad for these burning words. As a description of the condition and prospects of those who are living in lawlessness toward God, it is one of the most powerful within the compass of the Bible. The keynote of this terrible speech is found in the last sentence of it: "And this is the place (portion) of him that knows not God" (Job 18:21). See what this portion is. It implies—

I. Darkness. "The light of the lawless shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine" (Job 18:5). The light of the ungodly is of their own making; it is but the sparks of the fire which they themselves have kindled, and which shall not shine when abiding light is needed (Isaiah 50:10, 11). This light is in their own eyes, and when their eyes grow dim, and faint, and blind, their candle is put out, and darkness settles down in the tabernacle of the soul. How different it is with the man of faith! He can say, "The Lord my God who has lit my candle, He will enlighten my darkness" (Psalm 18:28).

II. Disappointment. "The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down" (Job 18:7). The confidence of the self-righteous and the ungodly is in their strength and their wisdom, but both shall utterly fail to bring them into their desired haven. The steps of his strength shall be suddenly shortened and hindered, so that he will be compelled to give up the objects of his pursuit, and sink down like a weary exhausted traveler who has lost his way and finds it impossible for him to reach his home. "His own counsel shall cost him dear." His boasted wisdom shall turn out to be his confusion. The counsel he has given to others shall cover his own face with shame, when he staggers and falls under the burden of his own folly and failure. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." By the wisdom of this world God is not known.

III. Danger. The position of the ungodly is so fraught with dangers that the fowler's vocabulary is exhausted in describing them. "His feet in a net.... the gin shall take him by the heel.. the noose (R. V.) shall prevail against him.... the snare is laid for him... a trap set for him in the way" (Job 18:8-10). Satan uses every possible means to prevent that man who "knows not God" from escaping out of his hands. But it is with "his own feet" that a man walks into the Devil's net. It is when he yields to temptation that the noose "prevails against him." He falls into the snare of the Devil, because he walks in the Devil's territory. If he neglects the salvation of Jesus Christ, there is no escape for him; but by trusting Him the snare will be broken, and his soul shall escape like a bird.

IV. Dread. "Terrors shall make him afraid on every side" (Job 18:11). He may say peace, peace, but the time will come when terrors shall break in upon him from every side. Terrors behind him, and terrors in front of him; the past, the present, and the future, all full of dread. Terrors crowding in upon him, and "chasing him at his heels," like so many beasts of prey (v. 11, R. V.). What an awful experience, to go into eternity and up to the Judgment Throne of God, chased by the sins and iniquities of a God-neglected life. The terrors of the Lord must follow close upon the "heels" of the sinner. The guilty man's feet are never swift enough to outrun the pursuing justice of God.

V. Desolation. "The firstborn of death shall devour his strength, root up his confidence, and bring him to the king of terrors" (Job 18:13, 14). What a sorrowful plight to be in: strength devoured, confidence rooted up, and face to face with the king of terrors. The firstborn of death is like that disease, or physical disorder, which is the forerunner of death, and is gradually eating up the strength, and tearing the hope of health up by the roots, and bringing the life under the dominion of temporal death. Spiritually the firstborn of death is unbelief, that forerunner of eternal separation from God and Heaven, which devours all strength for the service of Christ, roots up all real confidence before God, and brings the soul into the bondage and dread of the king of terrors (Mark 16:16). After death the judgment. The Lord, the righteous Judge, upon the great White Throne will be the King of Terrors to all who have rejected His redeeming grace (Rev. 6:15-17).

VI. Despair. "His roots shall be dried up:.... his remembrance shall perish:.... he shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world" (Job 18:16-18). Could words present a more dismal picture than this? The "place of him that knows not God" is indeed the place of despair. His roots shall be dried up, because they are not in God, but in the barren wastes of self and the world (Malachi 4:1). His remembrance shall perish, because his name is not written in the Lamb's book of life. He shall be driven from the light of the Gospel into the darkness of hopeless despair. He shall be chased out of the world as unworthy to live in it, as one unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven, and as one who is as loath to leave this world as Lot's wife was to leave Sodom.

VII. Destruction. "Destruction shall be ready for his halting" (Job 18:12, R. V.). All that destruction means is here personified as a powerful enemy. Keeping step with the man that knows not God, watching, and waiting for that moment when death shall cause him to halt, that he might have the opportunity of accomplishing his dreadful work. To the ungodly, death means destruction. It is the destruction of all his coveted fellowships, of all his boasted possessions, of his joy, of that false peace with which he comforted himself, of his hope for time and eternity. It is the destruction of all the faculties of his soul for the seeing or enjoying of those pleasures which are at God's right hand. His God was his belly, his glory was his shame, and his end is destruction.

Job 19 LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

Job's soul was sorely vexed with the words of his would-be comforters. "These ten times have you reproached me," he says. Anybody with enough hardness of heart can easily reproach another in the day of their downfall. "If you will magnify yourselves against me," he continues then, "know now that God has overthrown me" (Job 19:5, 6). The overthrowing was the work of the Devil, and it was complete, permitted by God, as was the crucifixion of Christ, yet the work of "wicked hands." It is most interesting to notice that it was after Job had experienced the weakness and deceitfulness of all earthly kinships, that the vision of the **Kinsman-Redeemer** came upon his desolate spirit. Surely this is the work of the Spirit of God, it is absolutely true to the manner of the Holy Spirit in New Testament times. The unsatisfactory nature, the insufficiency and inability of all earthly friendship to meet the needs of a sinful, sorrowful soul, must be fully realized, before the glories of the **Kinsman-Redeemer** can be fully appreciated. "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25). Who but the Lord Jesus Christ was ever able to record such a melancholy list of broken friendships as Job does in this chapter. Hear what he says about them: "My brethren are far from me... mine acquaintance are estranged from me... my kinsfolk have failed, my familiar friends have forgotten me... my maids count me a stranger... my servant gave me no answer... my breath was strange to my wife... all my inward friends abhorred me" (Job 19:13-19). There was not one arm of flesh left on which he could lean, when this new light dawned upon him constraining him to say, "I know that my **Kinsman-Redeemer** lives," and that apart from my flesh I shall have God on my side (r. v.). We are cautioned by some commentators not to read too much into these words, but we are bound to take them as they stand, and believe they mean all that they say. The teaching of the Spirit of God is not limited to the conditions and circumstances of men. The language of Job here is full of prophetic meaning, and is rich in spiritual consolation. We can at least easily read into these words—

I. The Fact of Redemption. "My Redeemer lives." What a relief for the oppressed and bewildered soul to turn from the failing kinships of earth to the unfailing Kinsman above, who ever lives to make intercession for us. Yes, Job, out of all your troubles this **Kinsman-Redeemer** will yet deliver you. He shall redeem your life from destruction, and crown you with loving-kindness and tender mercies. He vindicates the cause of all who put their trust in Him. He who redeems and purchases the soul by His own blood lives for the salvation and vindication of His own. That He, the eternal Son of God, should condescend to be our Goel (kinsman) is the mystery and marvel of infinite grace.

II. The Joy of Personal Assurance. "I know." He knew that all his earthly friends had forsaken him, but he also knew that his Kinsman in Heaven, the living One would ultimately prove Himself to be good and faithful. There were some things Job did not know. He knew not the reason why he had been so suddenly stripped of every earthly comfort, and crushed down to the dust with a load of sorrow, but he knew and believed that "my Redeemer lives," and lives to make all things work together for good to them that love Him. He could scarcely talk now of my brethren, my kinsfolk, my friends, my servant, for they had all forsaken him, but he could say "my Redeemer." When heart and flesh fail, God will be the portion of the believing soul. It will still be sweet to say, "my Redeemer," when all the joys and friendships of this world have to be left behind.

III. The Prospect of His Appearing. "I know... that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." All that this meant to Job we cannot say, but he surely believed in the personal appearing of his great **Kinsman-Redeemer** on the earth. Now we know that this prophecy has been fulfilled, and that the Redeemer has come, and by the sacrifice of Himself has put away sin—the seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head—and by His own blood has provided a ransom price for the souls of men. The earth needed Him, and He has identified Himself with its sins and sorrows by standing on it and dying for it. To us these words are still prophetic, and we look for the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who shall yet as King of kings stand in the latter day upon the earth.

IV. The Hope of a Beatific Vision. "Though worms destroy this body, yet without my flesh shall I see God" (R. V. margin). The flesh is the veil that hides the vision of God from the spirit of man. Even the Redeemer's flesh had to be rent asunder as a veil, before the new way of entrance could be made for us (Hebrews 10:20). Paul's way of putting it is, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. "The pure in heart shall see God." If there be no God to see, why should the purest of hearts have this longing and hope strongest within them? It surely does not follow, that because a man is good and upright, he is in greater danger of being deluded and deceived in the most important of

all questions—that of future hope.

V. The Confidence of Final Satisfaction. "Whom I shall see on my side.. and not as a stranger" (Job 19:27, R. V., margin). God's present dealings with Job are to him full of mystery and contradictions. All things seem to be against him, but when apart from his flesh he sees God, he knows that he will find that God all along has been on His side, making all things work together for his good. He will not see Him as a stranger, but as a faithful **Kinsman-Redeemer**. Here "we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." What we know not now we shall know hereafter. Our present circumstances may be as perplexing to human reason as Job's was to him; but with the vision of our Divine Kinsman before us, we are assured that in love He is doing all things well. "I shall be satisfied when I awake" (Psalm 17:15) in the presence of His likeness.

Job 20:29. THE WICKED MAN'S PORTION.

Zophar winds up this speech, which is full of the horrors which belong to a life of ungodliness, with these words: "This is the portion of a wicked man from God" (Job 20:29). It is interesting to find that this is the view of wickedness held by these wisest of men, away back in times before the law was given. The word "wicked" here is lawless, and refers to those who are not restrained in any way through the knowledge or fear of God. The description still holds good of the man that obeys not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I. His Triumph shall be Short (Job 20:5-7). He does triumph in a way; he has "joy," he has "excellency," and his head seems to "reach unto the clouds." His success is of such a nature that failure and ruin looks like an impossibility. But his triumph is short, his joy is but for a moment, his excellency shall perish like his own dung. Like the Egyptians, these lawless ones say, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide, my lust shall be satisfied; but God shall blow upon them, and they shall sink like lead in the mighty waters of death and destruction" (Exod. 15:9, 10). Permanent victory only belongs to those who "Overcome by the blood of the Lamb."

II. His Sin shall Abide with Him. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust" (Job 20:11). David dreaded this terrible experience when he prayed, "Remember not the sins of my youth" (Psalm 25:7). Sin is a most uncomfortable bedfellow to lie down with in the grave. No human power can shake it off. It seeks to cling to the soul in death, in resurrection, in judgment, and in eternity. To die in sin is to die out of Christ, and to meet Him with a sin-stained resurrection body.

III. His Moral Appetite shall be Vitiating. "Wickedness sweet in his mouth... yet the gall of asps within him" (Job 20:12-14). He finds that sweet to his taste which he knows shall prove bitter to his conscience. Through practice and force of habit he now clings to the things which, in his innermost nature he condemns. His moral senses are so blunted and perverted that he calls bitter sweet, and sweet bitter. The lie of Satan is more pleasant to him than the truth of God. He loves darkness rather than light, and prefers the broken cisterns to the Fountain of living water.

IV. His Precious Things shall all be Disgorged. "He has swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again" (v15). Many a valuable thing he has swallowed for the satisfaction of his own lust and passion. Much goods have been laid up for the future, as a gourmand would stuff his stomach against coming want, but he shall vomit them up again, as one who is sickened by them, and finds himself unable longer to keep them. The things which formerly delighted him, and in which he trusted for future strength and support, will suddenly become, soul-sickening and turned into a vomit. The riches of Christ will never be so parted with.

V. His Abundance shall not Satisfy. "In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits" (Job 20:22). No matter how much a man may have of the world's riches and honors, he shall still be in straits if the "one thing needful" is lacking—personal acquaintance with God. Sufficiency of perishing things cannot meet all the needs of an imperishable spirit. The rich man mentioned in Luke 12 was in straits when he said: "What shall I do?" But he was in a greater strait when God said unto him: "This night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall these things be?"

VI. His Treasures shall be Found to be Darkness. "All darkness is laid up for his treasures" (Job 20:26, R. V.). What an inheritance this is, reserved for those who die rebels against the grace of God. Darkness laid up for him—all darkness, nothing but darkness—as the reward of his earthly life and labors. Complete disaster is secretly lurking in the future for him. His treasures are not in Heaven, and outside the light of God's presence there is nothing but the blackness of darkness. He loved the darkness of a godless life rather than the light of a godly life. Now all is darkness! The seed sown has brought forth its harvest of blackness.

VII. His Iniquity shall be Revealed. "The Heavens shall reveal his iniquity" (Job 20:27). Even "the earth shall rise up against him." The heavens and the earth shall combine to carry out the unerring word of God. "The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5). "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed" (Luke 12:2). Every unforgiven sin and crooked thing shall be made manifest by the searchlight of Heaven; then who that Have died without Christ shall be able to stand when He appears as the Judge of the quick and the dead? No Achan will ever be able to bury his sins deep enough that the eye of God will not see them. The portion of the wicked (lawless) is indeed a miserable

portion, but, thank God, it may be exchanged for a better portion, if, like Mary, he will choose now the "better part" (Luke 10:42).

Job 21:14, 15 THE PRAYER OF THE WICKED.

In Job's reply to Zophar's last speech, he shows that material prosperity is not sufficient evidence that a man is morally righteous, for the wicked "become old and are mighty in power." But in these verses he lays bare the secret thoughts of the ungodly and lawless soul by putting this prayer into their mouth. The godless man of the world would not perhaps audibly dare to use these words, but nevertheless they are practically the sentiments of his every-day life. Look at—

I. The Meaning of It. It reveals a—

1. DREAD OF GOD'S PRESENCE. "They say unto God, Depart from us." Their carnal mind is enmity against God. They fear His presence as the owl does the approach of the sun, or as the thief dreads the daylight. As a gracious Savior, they may say to Him, "Depart," and He may leave their coast, but, as a Judge, they will yet hear Him say, "Depart from Me."

2. DISLIKE AT GOD'S WAYS. "We desire not the knowledge of Your ways." They are wedded to their own ways, and are not willing to forsake them (Isaiah 55:7). The knowledge of God's ways would make them more miserable in their own sinful ways. They cover their heads with the mantle of ignorance, and say darkness is better than light. Though His ways are pleasantness and His paths peace, their minds are so blinded by the God of this world, and their spiritual appetite so vitiated, that they have no desire for them.

3. DENIAL OF GOD'S CLAIMS. "What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?" They do not even say, "Who," as Pharaoh did, but "What," as if He were a creation of man, instead of the Creator of all. The Almightiness in their estimation is in the "we." What is He who we should serve Him. This exalting of self above all that is called God is the essence of Satanic opposition. Those who make it their business to serve themselves are morally unfit for the service of God. "You cannot serve two masters."

4. DISBELIEF IN GOD'S LOVE. "What profit shall we have if we pray unto Him?" They have no faith in God as a loving Father ready and willing to answer the cry of the needy. They have no consciousness of real need, and so have no faith in prayer. Like the Laodiceans, they have "need of nothing," not even of Him who stands knocking outside their door. They also said in their own way, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Your ways," by keeping the door closed against His entrance. "You have not because you ask not." Men ought always to pray and not to faint.

II. The Cause of It. "Therefore they say unto God," etc. The occasion of it is found in the foregoing verses. In their worldly prosperity they had many marks of the goodness of God, yet they said unto God, "Depart from us," etc. (R. V.). This lawless spirit manifests itself in the grossest ingratitude and thanklessness. The prosperity of the wicked is a mystery to those who know not that "the wicked have their portion in this life." Observe the nature of that prosperity as it appeared to the afflicted patriarch.

1. THEIR INFLUENCE IS GREAT. "The wicked become old, yes, are mighty in power" (Job 21:7). Long years after this the Psalmist said the same thing, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree" (Psalm 37:35). The godly man seeks to spread the knowledge of God, but the godless, selfish worldling spreads himself. The world loves its own, and admires the man who is able to spread himself like a green bay tree, although he should starve to death all the lesser plants that seek an existence beneath his shade.

2. THEIR AFFLICTIONS ARE FEW. "Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them" (Job 21:9). They don't seem to be afflicted as other men. Grey hairs don't seem to come so quickly upon their heads. They are quite unaccustomed to the yoke of discipline. The rod of Divine chastisement does not visit them because they are not harnessed to the will of God, but are, like the wild donkeys, doing their own pleasure. They have a liberty, but it is the liberty of the lawless, the freedom of the rebel. The rod and staff of the Great Shepherd does not guide them, so they rush on comfortably to destruction. "Whom the Lord loves He chastens."

3. THEIR POSSESSIONS ARE MULTIPLIED. "Their bull genders, and fails not; their cow calves, and casts not her calf" (Job 21:10). "Behold the ungodly... they increase in riches" (Psalm 73:12). They add house to house, and land to land, and offer sacrifices to their own genius (Habakkuk 1:16). The rich fool had not where to bestow his goods. The meek shall yet inherit the earth, but meanwhile it seems to be largely the portion of the godless.

4. THEIR CHILDREN ARE HAPPY. "Their children dance... and rejoice at the sound of the organ" (Job 21:11, 12). Well, God bless the "little ones," why should they not be happy? They have not yet become positively lawless by actual transgression. They are in ignorance of the enmity that lurks in the heart of that father to the being and grace of God. But they are in great danger of following in the steps of their world-deluded parents, by setting their affections on the things of earth and neglecting the eternal treasure. This picture of the ungodly is very attractive to many. No wonder the Psalmist said, "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the

prosperity of the wicked (they are not in trouble as other men... their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish)... Until I went into the sanctuary of God and saw them in the light of His presence; then understood I their end" (Psalm 73:3-17). They who said, "Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him!" "shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty" (v. 20). What an awful cup awaits those who refuse the cup of salvation. The rich man died, and in Hell he lifted up his eyes. Better far to lift them up now.

Job. 22:21-30. ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

In closing his third speech, Eliphaz talks like a New Testament prophet. The phraseology is, of course, old, but the teaching is up-to-date, and the moral order in which the truths are presented are almost apostolic. His words suggest—

I. A Great Need. "Acquaint now yourself with Him, and be at peace" (Job. 22:21). Acquaintanceship with God is the first step toward peace. A theoretical knowledge of God cannot satisfy the heart. Acquaintanceship implies a personal intimacy. After Adam, through sin, had separated himself from God, a new acquaintanceship had to be formed. Divine friendship had to be set up on a new basis (Genesis 3:15). Sin implies separation and enmity; acquaintanceship implies reconciliation and peace. No man now can be said to be acquainted with God who is a stranger to the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore the combined image of God and of man. He who was God manifest in the flesh, has made peace by the blood of His cross. Kiss the Son lest He be angry with you, and you perish in the way. "This is life eternal that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

II. A Plain Way. The way back into the favor and fellowship of God is very simple and easy to the willing heart. It is stated here in two words: "Receive!" "Return!" "Receive the law from His mouth... and return to the Almighty" (Job. 22:22, 23). Receive into your heart the word that has come from His mouth, believe what He has said about sin and salvation, and return to God by yielding your will to Him, and resting your soul upon His finished redemption. We can now read into the words of Eliphaz a much deeper meaning than he could at that time understand. Receive the word of the Gospel and return, not to a creed or a church, but to the living God.

III. A Manifold Result. To be closely acquainted with any great personality will certainly affect our manner of thinking and acting; how much more when we are acquainted with God. There will be—

1. A RENEWAL OF THE NATURE. "You shall be built up" (Job. 22:23). The spiritual nature of man has been so broken down by sin that it is a complete ruin. Apart from the knowledge and grace of God, he can never build himself up as a temple of God. It is when we come into the light of His presence that we get rebuilt, and made new creatures. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." "We are His workmanship, created (anew) in Christ Jesus." Return unto Him just as you are, and He shall build you up.

2. GREAT RICHES. "The Almighty shall be your treasure" (Job. 22:25, R. V.). The gold of Ophir is but the dust of the earth compared with the riches that are in Him. Material things cannot meet the needs of an immaterial spirit. Our eternal spirits need the adorning of the eternal God. Your little life shall be filled up out of His infinite fullness. When you get truly acquainted with Him, you will find that Himself is sufficient for you. To know God is to be a spiritual millionaire. "My God shall supply all your need," (Philippians 4:19), not only with His gifts, but with Himself. We have this treasure in the earthen vessel when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

3. UNFAILING JOY. "Then shall you have your delight in the Almighty" (Job. 22:26). Only the pure in heart who see God can find their delight in Him. The unrenewed in nature will still seek after the world's broken cisterns, which cannot hold water enough to quench the thirst of the soul. Those who find their delight in God have the purest of all pleasures from a source which can never fail. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation."

4. BOLDNESS OF ACCESS. "And shall lift up your face unto God." When we become the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, it is but natural that we should lift up our faces unto our Father. The consciousness of unforgiven sin hinders many from lifting up their faces unto God (Luke 18:13). Those who see no beauty in Him who was the Man of Sorrows, hide, as it were, their faces from Him. The open face turned to God is the evidence of a soul at peace with Him. "Our fellowship is with the Father."

5. ANSWERED PRAYER. "You shall make your prayer unto Him, and He shall hear you" (Job. 22:27). What a privilege! The ear of the Almighty God always at your lips to hear you when you speak unto Him. Speak out the desires of your soul, and wait patiently on Him. "If we know that He hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:15).

6. FRUITFUL TESTIMONY. "You shall also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto you" (v. 28). The word of your testimony in His Name shall be made to stand firm. His word shall not return unto Him void. New eyes will be given you to see wondrous things, and your tongue shall speak forth things which God will make to come to pass (Jeremiah 23:28).

7. WALKING IN THE LIGHT. "The light shall shine upon your ways." You shall not walk in darkness, for the guiding light of His presence shall be with you. His Holy Spirit will guide you into the truth, which always illumines the heart and mind. Just now Job was

enveloped in thick darkness, but, by yielding Himself unreservedly to God, light would arise, and he would yet walk with a light step in the sunny paths of peace.

8. ABILITY TO HELP OTHERS. "When men are cast down, then you shall say, There is lifting up" (Job. 22:29). We must be lifted up ourselves before we attempt to lift up others. There be many who are "cast down" through sin and shortcoming, disappointment and failure, many who need this cheering message, "There is lifting up." When crushed and broken spirits are saying, "Who will show us any good?" it is the privilege of those whose faces have been lifted up to God to carry the uplifting Gospel of Jesus Christ, who was "lifted up," that He might draw men to Himself. The man of God is the only man that has the real message of hope for fallen humanity.

Job 26:6-14. THE OUTSKIRTS OF GOD'S WAYS.

Job's three comforters said much, and did the best they could, but their remedies never touched the disease. They were as blind men seeking to lead a blind man. In the previous chapter, Bildad, whose great arguments have all been already spent in vain, has his last little say which closes the whole case for him and his friends. Now when they have exhausted themselves, Job begins his great and final oration, which occupies the following six chapters. These wonderful words bear ample proof that although Satan had brought such ruin and desolation upon Job, he had no power to touch his living spirit within. His mind remained clear, which doubtless made his anguish all the more keen. In brief but striking language we have here parts of His ways set before us. If these are but the "outskirts." (r. v.)—the ripple on the shore of the Divine doings, what must it be to get into the center of the operations of God. What, then, are these merely out-lying acts of the great Creator of all? Here they are—

I. "Hell is naked before Him" (Job 26:6). Sheol, or the shady world of spirits, lies uncovered before His gaze. His eyes pierce the gloom of that awful abyss called "the bottomless pit." If I make my bed in Hell (Sheol) You are there—there in justice and judgment. No darkness, no matter how dense, can cover a human soul from the holy eye of God (Psalm 139:8-11). If Hell is naked before Him, so is your heart and mine. There is many a human heart that is little else than a miniature Hell, yet it, with all other things, is naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13).

II. "He Hangs the Earth upon Nothing" (Job 26:7). Some seem to be afraid lest we should read into these words more than was meant by the afflicted patriarch, lest we credit Job with knowing more about astronomy than he really did. He surely meant what he said when he said, "He hangs the earth upon nothing." He could not mean that He hangs the earth on something. The statement is scientifically accurate, although made thousands of years before the fact was discovered by science. But the point is, this wonderful balancing of worlds in space is but one of the outworks of this wonder-working God. Job may not know anything about the law of gravitation, but, if moved by the Spirit of God, he speaks worthy of God. The Spirit of truth is always in advance of the discoveries of men.

III. "He Binds up the Waters in His Thick Clouds" (Job 26:8). The seemingly fickle clouds are God's. He binds them together with invisible bands so that they cannot be rent to pour out their treasures until He unties them. How often have we seen those great water-carriers rolling along the heavens, and piled up at times like huge bales of wool. "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord."

IV. "He Closes in the Face of His Throne" (Job 26:9. R. V.) Behind all the laws and forces of nature, Job sees the throne of God. The whole visible creation is as a veil spread over the face of His eternal throne, but the glory and majesty of the Divine Personality, who rules over all, shines through this cloudy covering. The material world is like the pillar of cloud in the wilderness. God is in the midst of it. Clouds and darkness are round about Him (Psalm 97:2).

V. "He Describes a Boundary upon the Face of the Waters" (Job 26:10, R. V.). The waters of the great deep are in the hollow of His hand, and by His infinite wisdom He has marked out that line which we call the horizon, where the sea and sky seem to meet and kiss each other. God sets His limitations to every earthly thing. So far, but no farther; but the Spirit-taught soul looks beyond to the things which are eternal and lie hidden in the depths of eternity.

VI. "He Stirs up the Sea with His Power" (Job 26:12, R. V.). The same mighty hand that pushed back the rolling flood and made "dry land" that the Israelites might pass over, still controls the restless billows (Psalm 74:13).

VII. "He Smites through Rahab" (Job 26:12, R. V.). Rahab stands for pride and arrogance. By His understanding is human pride smitten through. The wisdom and power of God, even as seen in the visible creation, ought to pierce the arrogance of man. But how much more ought the wisdom and love of God, as seen in the Cross of Christ, stay the enmity of the carnal mind. Rahab is condemned already.

VIII. "He has Garnished the Heavens by His Spirit" (Job 26:13). The same Spirit who beautified the heavens now beautifies the soul in whom He dwells. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." His moving is always for the glory of God, whether it be in the heart or in the heavens. Bildad said, "Yes, the stars are not pure in His sight." But Job takes a different view of that work which at the beginning was pronounced "good." When the beauty of the Lord our God is put upon us, we are clean and beautiful in His sight. The Spirit of God is a wonderful artist. He who beautified the heavens can beautify your life.

IX. He has Subdued the Swift Serpent (v. 13, R. V.). Whether this swift fleeing serpent is the Devil, or the forked lightning-flash, it matters not, both are under His control. Neither of them can fly so fast that God cannot at any time pierce them through with His arrow. The forked lightning is an apt emblem of the movements and terrible character of Satan, but he is a conquered foe.

What a mighty God our God is, when these are but the outskirts of His ways, part of the fringe of the great garment of His works. In these parts of His ways, Job adds, we hear but "a small whisper of Him" (v. 14, r. v.). From the visible creation there comes an unmistakable "whisper of Him," which any attentive ear may hear. The voice may be "small," but it is the voice of God. In creation, we hear the small whisper of the goodness of God; but in Christ, the loud cry of an agonizing heart of love. This God who in times past whispered into the dull ears of men, through the marvelous works of His hands, now speaks with a loud voice through the death of His Son. "God in these last days has spoken unto us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:2). "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Consider the two cries of Christ: John 7:37; Matthew 27:46.

Job 28:12-28. PRICELESS WISDOM.

In this chapter Job continues his wonderful parable. He has just been showing that there is a place where gold and silver and precious stones can be found (Job 28:1-6), and how that men by searching and digging and overturning (Job 28:9, 10) bring these hidden treasures to light, but as these can never meet all the needs of a human heart, he goes on to ask this great question of world-wide interest, "But where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12). A man may be loaded with the treasures of earth and yet be a fool (Luke 12:19, 20). The soul of man cannot find its perfect satisfaction even in the very best that this world can yield it. Wisdom is the chief thing; with all your getting, get wisdom.

I. Its Nature. Wisdom is not something we can put on like a garment. Wisdom is character; it is the quality of being wise; it is a condition of heart, and has to do with our relationship to God. It begins with fearing the Lord (Job 28:28), and grows as the knowledge of God increases. If Job had not "Christ, the wisdom of God" in his mind when he spoke these beautiful and far-reaching words, doubtless the guiding Spirit of God had, for they are brimful of New Testament meaning to all who are wise in Christ. Men have no difficulty in finding the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God, but a man is not truly wise until he becomes a partaker of the wisdom of God.

II. Its Unearthliness. "Where is wisdom to be found? and where is the place of understanding?" Where is this knowledge of God to be got? this wisdom of heart that enables a man so to act before God and men that it will bring satisfaction to his own soul, good to his fellows, and glory to God. Where? It is not found "in the land of the living" (Job 28:13). This barren wilderness of human beings cannot produce it. "The depth says, It is not in me; and the sea says, It is not with me" (Job 28:14). No created thing, or one, can offer to a thirsty soul this satisfying gift. Out of the land, and the depths, and the sea, men have brought multitudes of valuable things, but the wisdom that makes wise unto eternal life has never yet been found there, although generation after generation have followed in diligent search. These are all as broken cisterns which cannot hold this heavenly water. Is there no answer to this cry of Job, "Where is the place?" Yes, that place is called Calvary, where Christ the wisdom of God is offered to a world perishing for lack of knowledge.

III. Its Preciousness. The language here concerning wisdom is sublimely graphic, if we read it with our eye on Him who is the wisdom of God.

1. IT CANNOT BE PRICED. "Man knows not the price thereof" (Job 28:13). What man on earth would dare to attempt to reckon up the value of the Lord Jesus Christ? "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3)—"unsearchable riches."

2. IT CANNOT BE BOUGHT. "It cannot be gotten for gold" (Job 28:15). All the wealth of the world could never purchase the wisdom of God. It would be an insult to God, even if man had the power, to offer Him a whole world of gold as a price for His Son. Even the gold of man's righteousness is as filthy rags when offered as a recompense to God.

3. IT CANNOT BE EQUALED. "The gold and the crystal cannot equal it" (Job 28:17). "The price of wisdom is above rubies; the topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it" (Job 28:18, 19). The world's best cannot be compared with this gift of God. The joy of finding rubies and diamonds cannot equal the joy of finding the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.

4. IT CANNOT BE EXCHANGED. "The exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold" (Job 28:17). Nothing can take its place. There is no substitute or equivalent for heavenly wisdom. Nothing will ever stand in Christ's stead.

5. ITS POWER CANNOT BE DOUBTED. "Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof" (Job 28:22). We have here the testimony of wisdom's enemies. The fame of this wisdom is that it saves from "destruction and death." They have heard the tidings to their cost.

IV. Its Discovery. Another question is asked, "Whence then comes wisdom?" (Job 28:20), and the answer is, "God understands the way thereof, and He knows the place" (Job 28:23). The way is the way of love and mercy, the place is the place where Christ was crucified. Only God could understand how the deep eternal need of man can be fully met. He only could unveil the secret of everlasting bliss. He alone knew where this soul-satisfying treasure could be found. Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found the Ransom. It will put a new meaning into verse 27 if you read "Him" instead of "it." "He did see Him, and declare Him; He prepared Him, yes, He searched Him out." Then "unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). To be made a recipient of this wisdom, we must so fear the Lord that we shall submit ourselves entirely to Him, and so hate evil that we shall depart from it. Foolishness and evil go together; wisdom and holiness are twin sisters. "Whence then comes wisdom?" Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, which is accompanied with righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. "With all your getting, get wisdom" (Proverbs 4:7).

Job 33 THE MAN IN GOD'S STEAD.

After the words of Job were ended, and the three men had ceased to answer him, Elihu—God is He—broke forth in holy wrath at the manner, or spirit, in which the great controversy had been carried on. Job had been more inclined to justify himself than God, and his three friends had condemned him without discovering a cause (Job 32:1-3). Elihu had evidently been a silent listener during the whole debate; but now, though young, he would unburden his soul before them all. This young man was not one of the "three friends" who came to comfort Job; he is an independent witness—an outsider, so to speak—specially fitted by God to throw fresh light upon the mystery of the whole case, or, at least, to put a new emphasis into some of the phrases commonly used. This is what the "man of God" always does. He does not speak a new language; he does not coin ear-tickling sentences, he speaks plain words with a new power. Elihu, then, comes before us as a typical Spirit-filled man, and as such we shall look at—

I. His Character. This apostle of the Old Testament will compare favorably in many ways with the great apostle of the New Testament. Of course, in judging Elihu by the light of New Testament teaching, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are putting a meaning into his words that perhaps Job or his friends or himself could not understand. But it is a wonderful evidence of the consistency of the Holy Spirit's work and words all down through the ages. He never contradicts Himself. If the Spirit of God fashioned and taught Elihu, He must, in some measure, reveal the same features of a Spirit-filled life today. Light is light, although it is 3000 years old. What are some of these features?

1. HE IS A SPIRIT-MADE MAN. "The Spirit of God has made me" (Job 33:4). This may be true, in a general sense, of all men, but it is true, in a very special and unique sense, of the real "man of God." He is born by the Spirit—quickened by the Spirit into a new life. He is a new creation after the image of God by the Holy Spirit. God needs new vessels for the new wine of His Gospel.

2. HE IS A SPIRIT-INSPIRED MAN. "The breath of the Almighty has given me life." This also may be true, in a measure, of every man, but it is a marvelous description of the new life in God. Those dead in sin need the breath of God to put new life into them (Ezekiel 37:9). Those quickened by the Spirit of God are possessed by Him and inspired, as by the very warmth of the breath of the living God dwelling in them. They can say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ, who is the life of God, lives in me; the breath that I now breathe is the breath of the Almighty; the spirit that I now have is animated by the Spirit of God." Christ breathed on them and said: "Receive you the Holy Spirit."

II. His Position. Job longed for a "Daysman" (Job 9:33). Elihu is bold enough to say: "I am according to your wish in God's stead" (Job 33:6). It was a great statement to make, but the man who is appointed by God to stand in His stead ought surely to know it, and should not be ashamed to confess it before men. Did not the Apostle of the Gentiles say: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled unto God?" The man in God's stead is "an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man what is right for him" (Job 33:23 R. V.). He himself is an example and interpretation of the invisible God. His business is to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and to exhort others to seek these first. He knows nothing about flattering men with self-pleasing titles (Job 32:22), the claims and character of Him whose he is and whom he serves are ever before him. An interpreter of God's mind and will must first be a partaker of that mind and will. We must drink deeply of this water of life, if we would become springs of living water for others. Every spirit-possessed man is an

interpreter for God, and such interpreters are needed, for "the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). A man may have all the wisdom of the world, and yet be unable to interpret the things of God. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

III. His Message. He it is who can say with the utmost confidence, "God speaks" (Job 33:14). He knows in his own soul that God has spoken to him, and that He can still speak in divers ways to the slumbering spirits of men, that He may draw man away from his evil and delusive purpose (vv. 15-17). This is a comforting truth to those who seek the salvation of others, that God in answer to prayer can speak to men "in dreams and visions of the night." Even then He can open the ear, and seal instruction in their hearts. So, the man of God is a man of faith and hope. But he has also a very definite message to deliver. What is that message? There is in it—

1. REDEMPTION. "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom" (Job 33:24). God has found the ransom—the atoning sacrifice in the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5, 6), so He calls upon all those who stand in His stead to say to that man going down to the pit of darkness and death, "There is deliverance." He, as it were, commands His servant and interpreter to "deliver him" who is on the way to the pit, on the ground that He has found and provided the Ransom. Apart from the power and virtue of the Cross of Christ, there is no message of salvation from the pit to give. "The Son of Man came.... to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

2. REGENERATION. "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's" (Job 33:25). This may be figurative language, but it expresses most forcibly the radical change which is wrought by God's redeeming power. Like Naaman—after he had dipped himself seven times in Jordan—he was made a new creature. What the waters did for the famous Syrian captain, the atoning blood of Christ now does for those who believe Him—makes clean. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus not only "satisfies your mouth with good," but also "your youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalm 103:5).

3. FELLOWSHIP. "He shall pray unto God, and He shall be favorable unto him; and he shall see His face with joy" (Job 33:26). After redemption and regeneration comes the privilege of praying and rejoicing in the favor of God. Yes, the pure in heart shall see God's face and rejoice—that face of love and mercy which has been unveiled to us in Jesus. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son" (1 John 1:3).

4. TESTIMONY. They who would preach redemption to others should themselves be examples of its regenerating power. The words here are full of evangelical fervor and personal experience. "He sings before men, and says, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He has redeemed my soul from going into the pit, and my life shall behold the light" (Job 33:27, 28, R. V.). His past life was profitless, because it was one of perversion; but now, being redeemed, he lives in the light of the truth. This man who is as one in "God's stead" was once a sinner like others, but by grace was he saved. "Such were some of you, but you are washed." The personal element must have a place in the preaching of the Gospel.

Job 34:33 An Appeal to Reason and Faith

By Elihu, God asks Job: "Should I do just as you imagine--ought I to consult your whims? Should it be according to your mind?" Job 34:33

Poor Job found his trial too great for his patience, and he complained, he fretted himself, he reflected badly on God's dealings with him, and stumbled at the dispensations of Divine Providence. How often, how very often--do we do the same! We complain--when we ought to be grateful; we fret--when we ought to praise. We reflect badly on God's ways--when we ought to condemn ourselves; and we stumble at divine providences--when we ought to be resting on the promises.

Complain! What can a sinner have to complain of--who is out of hell? Fret! What can a believer have to fret about--whose heaven is secure? Reflect badly on God's dealings! What, when all his ways are mercy and truth--to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies? Stumble at divine providences! What should stumble us, who are assured that all things shall work together for our good?

With such conduct God may well be displeased! For such conduct God may well chastise us. But he condescends to reason with us. He appeals to our sense of right. He makes us reprove and correct ourselves. He asks US: "Should I do just as you imagine--ought I to consult your whims? Should it be according to your mind?"

To what does this apply? To God's dealings with us as individuals. Should the Most High God consult us--before he gives, or takes, works, or suspends his operations? Are we to be consulted as to the way in which he will lead us home, or the means by which he will prepare us for the joys which are at his right hand? If the Lord promises to do us good by all things--is he to consult us as to how he shall work, or by whom, or by what he shall accomplish his purposes?

It will apply, also, to God's dealings with others. It may be our friends, or our foes; our relatives, or strangers; the Church, or the world. God has taken the management of His world, and every individual in it; of the Church, and every believer that composes it--into his own hand! He says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. I will work, and who shall hinder me?" Yes, who has a right to question him, or to find fault with him? Friend, do you claim such a right? From whence did you derive it? How do you vindicate it? Things may be done that baffle your reason, perplex your mind, confound your judgment, and grieve your heart--but may they not be right for all that? May they not be the wisest and the best? "Should it be according to your mind?"

But, why do you think thus?

Are you wiser than God? His wisdom is infinite. He is the only wise God, and he displays his wisdom in all he does, and in all he permits to be done. Is it possible that you can imagine yourself capable of devising a wiser plan, or of executing God's plan in a more judicious manner? But if not, "Should it be according to your mind?"

Are you kinder than God? His loving-kindness to man is declared in his word, proved by his works, and is gloriously displayed in our salvation by his Son. His loving-kindness is great beyond conception, and tender beyond description. Kinder than God! You--kinder than God? But if not, "Should it be according to your mind?"

Are you holier than God? He is holy in his nature, and holy in his works. He does nothing but what is strictly just, perfectly right, and calculated to produce the greatest good. If you are not more holy, more just, more righteous than God, "Should it be according to your mind?"

Are you better informed than God? Do you know more of the nature, dispositions, and tendencies of his creatures than he does? Can you see the end from the beginning, and the working of all things to bring about the end, fixed by his wisdom and grace--better than he does? In him dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He knows the whole and every part, the present and the future, which you do not! Your mind is dark, confused, selfish, unsettled, and often undecided! "Should it be according to your mind?"

In order to calm your mind in trouble, to compose your spirits under losses and crosses, remember that God acts in infinite wisdom. His plan, according to which he governs the world, and manages the affairs of every individual--is the perfection of wisdom. It will admit of no improvement. To alter it--would be to injure it. Whatever God does--he purposed to do; and whatever God purposed to do--is infinitely wise and good.

God's motives are just and gracious. God always has a reason for what he does--though he may not reveal it. Whatever he does--is prompted by his justice and grace. He is just to all--but gloriously gracious to his own people. Whatever God has purposed to do, or permit--is worthy of himself. We often act unworthily, and repent of doing it, feeling ashamed of it; but God never does anything, or permits anything--which is unworthy of his nature and character. We may not see this now, for his work is not finished, his plan is not fully carried out; and until it is, "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing!" But he has told us for our comfort, "You do not realize now what I am doing--but later you will understand."

The least we can do is to submit; we ought to approve and acquiesce. True, many things are very painful to flesh and blood, and are very trying to faith and patience; but we have only to give God time to explain himself--and all will be made clear and plain. Then we shall see why it was that we were: robbed of our property, bereaved of our children, separated from our friends, deprived of our health, and persecuted by the world. "The day shall reveal it!" And we shall see what we now profess to believe, that God is too wise to err--and too good to be unkind!

Oh, Christian, you should prefer God's wisdom, way, and work--to your own! Whatever he does--he does well! In all he does--he keeps your good and his own glory in view! And, therefore, when you are displeased with any of his dispensations, he asks you, "Should it be according to your mind?"

Unconverted sinner, God has devised and revealed a way of salvation, in which he can save you, and if you submit, he will save you--but only in his own way, which is entirely of free grace. Your own works count for nothing, Neither your prayers, nor tears, nor efforts--will count at all in the matter; it is all of grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Against this, your proud heart will rise; to it, you will perhaps raise many objections--but if you do, God's question to you, is, "Should it be according to your mind!" Whose will is to be consulted--the will of the Savior--or of those who need to be saved by him?

He has devised a way in infinite wisdom, he has determined to save in that way, though it cost him the life of his only begotten Son, and he is willing and able to save unto the uttermost, all who come unto God by him. Are you anxious to be saved by him? to be delivered from the wrath to come, to be entitled to and prepared for heaven? If so, God is willing to save you, and to you he says at this moment, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ--and you shall be saved!" "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him!"

Job 38:1; 40:1-5. THE LORD ANSWERED.

"Man's extremity is God's opportunity." It was when the words of Job and his friends were ended that the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind. God's answer is always final. There is no appeal. The book of Job, like the books of the Old Testament, closes with the Theophany —the appearance of God. Here, as when He sent His Son, God's last plea was the manifestation of His own character. Although God answered Job out of the whirlwind, we need not infer that the voice was like a roaring, uprooting tempest, but that the arguments used had a whirlwind effect upon the spirit of Job, completely lifting him out of his present condition of mind into a better way of thinking.

I. Job's Prayer. "Answer You me. How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression" (chapter 13:22, 23). He was set on maintaining his own way. He had lived, no doubt, in all good conscience before God, but there was now a tendency to boast of his integrity, as if it were something independent of the grace of God. If I have sinned, he says, make me to know the number and nature of my transgressions. God's answer to Job reveals the fact that his iniquities lay in a different direction than what he supposed. He is not charged with actual transgression, but he is overwhelmed with a sense of his own ignorance and impotency. His self-confidence has been rebuked and withered up.

II. God's Answer. "Then the Lord answered Job" (chap: 38:1). God's answer comes in the form of an avalanche of questions. There are fifty-seven in chapters 38 and 39 alone. Every question seems to bring with it a flash of self-blinding light. Each interrogation is in itself a revelation and an education to the wavering patriarch. All His "have thous" and "can thous" are evidences of what He has done and can do. These questions are so many revelations of God's wisdom and power—of His perfect control of "the ordinances of Heaven" (chapter 38:33), or of what we call natural phenomena. Those who would find fault with the providence of God should study this divine declaration. The Lord's first question is enough to take Job's breath away: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (v. 4). His word is truly as a "hammer and a fire." Think of these burning inquiries: "Have you commanded the morning?" "Have you entered into the springs of the sea?" "Have you walked in the secret of the depth?" "Have you entered into the treasures of the snow?" "Can you bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" "Know you the ordinances of Heaven?" "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds?" "Can you send lightnings, that they may go and say unto you, Here we are?" The wisdom of man is but foolishness with God, as the brightest of earth's lights is but a black spot in the face of the sun. So man at his best is but a vile speck in the presence of the glory of God.

III. Job's Confession. "Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer You? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth Once have I spoken; yes, twice; but I will proceed no further" (Job 40:4, 5). Job's boasted greatness, like the tower of Babel, ended in utter confusion when God appeared. As long as we compare ourselves with men like ourselves there may be occasion for glorying, but let God speak, then the hand is laid upon the mouth. "Behold, I am vile," for this mouth of mine has been speaking the God-dishonoring thoughts of my mind, but I will "proceed no further" along this way of self-confidence and self-assertiveness. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth, and bow in silent submission to the word and will of the Lord my God. The Lord is in nature as in a holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him. God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoke unto the fathers by the prophets, and to Job through the whirlwind of natural phenomena, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. The voice is the same, but the revelation is vastly different. What have we to say for ourselves in the presence of the Cross of Christ? Here every boastful mouth must be stopped. Although in self justification, I have spoken once, yes, fifty times, "but I will proceed no further" when I see sin in the light of the sufferings and death of the only begotten Son of God. "Behold, I am vile;" my righteousness, in the glare of His light, has turned out to be but "filthy rags." "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Job 42 THE BLISSFUL END.

The storm-tossed soul of Job has got anchored at last in the harbor of God's manifest goodness. As a traveler he has been passing through a dark and dreary desert, hearing anon the howling of ravenous beasts, but is now entered into the light and joys of home. Through much tribulation he entered into this new kingdom of honor and blessing. All great spiritual attainments are reached through suffering. It was so with Moses, Abraham, Joseph, David, Daniel, and Christ. The disciple is not greater here than his Master. "If we suffer, we shall also reign." Now the great climax of Job's history has been reached, but there is about it more of the quietness of a birth than the shock of a revolution. The storm of words is over; the calm of His "Peace be still" has settled upon the troubled waters. In the closing act of this powerful drama there is

I. Confession. Job began his brief answer to the Divine appeal by saying, "I know that You can do everything, and that no thought can be withheld from You." You can do everything, and You do see everything. You are omnipotent and omniscient. The whole universe, visible and invisible, is under Your control, and naked and bare before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. As man is to be judged by his works, so may the Lord be judged by His. By His works you shall know Him. "The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament shows forth His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). But what does the Cross of His Christ declare? What handiwork does the firmament of His infinite love and mercy show forth? In the matter of salvation, as well as creation and government, "I know that you can do everything."

II. Revelation. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye sees You" (Job 42:5). It is one thing to hear another speak about God; it is a very different thing to see Him by the revelation of His own word, spoken personally to the heart, as Job had now seen Him. The sum of the Lord's answer to Job was a manifestation of Himself through His word. The voice of God brought the vision of God to the patriarch's faith. He saw God by the hearing of faith. "Believe, and you shall see" (John 11:40). "The Word of God is quick and powerful,...and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" of man, and is also a revealer of the thoughts and intents of the heart of God. This is the mystery of the incarnation. "The Word which was God was made flesh and dwelt among us,...full of grace and truth." Christ, the Word of God, was to a suffering world the revelation of God. You may have often heard of Him, but has your eye yet seen Him?

III. Humiliation. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Self-abhorrence is the natural consequence of coming face to face with God. When Isaiah saw the Lord upon a throne high and lifted up, he also abhorred himself, saying, "Woe is me!... because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). Oh, these lips! It was Job's lips that had been acting as traitors in the cause of God. But the lips are only the instruments of the heart and will. Where is boasting when the truth of God comes home to the heart? It is excluded. Saul of Tarsus found this out when the light of the exalted Son of God fell upon him on the way to Damascus. Then he abhorred himself and repented.

IV. Intercession. "My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept" (Job 42:8). Job's friends did all that human wisdom and eloquence could do for a man overwhelmed by the power of the Devil, and that was nothing. This kind goes not out but by prayer and sacrifice. "My servant," sweet words to the perplexed and bruised sufferer. It is easy for us to thrash others with our scourge of words, whose prayers we need to save us from our sins. What a privilege and responsibility rests upon the servant of the Lord: "Him will I accept." What an encouragement to those who have found favor with God, to plead for others. This ministry belongs to every one who has been reconciled to God. In this Job is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, who makes intercession for us, and whom God hears always, and in whom we are accepted (Hebrews 10:10-14).

V. Emancipation. "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10). To Job's "miserable comforters," and to himself, praying was much more effectual than arguing. Is it not always so? His friends had misjudged him, but he had all the more need to pray for them. In so doing, the Lord loosed him from the bondage and power of Satan, and made him once more a free man. The Devil had him chained as with iron bands, but God honored prayer as the means of deliverance. Praying for his friends implied a willingness to forgive them and a readiness to return blessing for cursing. Such an attitude of soul, and such a work of grace, cannot but bring greater liberty and blessing into the life of the suppliant. "First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:24),

VI. Satisfaction. "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:10-17). Satan has been defeated, and the mercy and truth of God has triumphed. James said, "You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy" (James 5:11). Yes, the end of all God's dealings with us is mercy. While the number of Job's sheep, camels, oxen, and donkeys was doubled, it was not so with his sons and daughters. He had but the same number that he had before, perhaps implying that his former family were not lost, but only "gone before"—still his, although on the other side of the Jordan of death. If Job was seventy years old when he lost all, his years were also doubled, for he lived after this "an hundred and forty years" (Job 42:16). The Lord's measure is always "heaped up and running over." Those to whom He shows His salvation will be satisfied with long life, yes, eternal life (Psalm 91:16). No one would covet Job's sufferings, but who would not say, "Let my last end be like his." Judge not before the time. If God has begun a good work in you, He will carry it on until the day of perfection. Comfort one another with these words.