

Job 23:10-11 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

Job 23:10 But He [knows](#) the [way](#) I [take](#); When He has [tried](#) me, I shall [come forth](#) as [gold](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English of the Septuagint: For he knows already my way; and he has tried me as gold.

Amplified: But He knows the way that I take [He has concern for it, appreciates, and pays attention to it]. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as refined gold [pure and luminous]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

BBE: For he has knowledge of the way I take; after I have been tested I will come out like gold.

KJV: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

NJB: And yet he knows every step I take! Let him test me in the crucible: I shall come out pure gold.

Young's Literal: For He hath known the way with me, He hath tried me--as gold I go forth.

JOB: AN ANCIENT BOOK A STUDY OF JOB 23:10-12

Although there are no specific dates given in Job, this book is considered by most authorities to be one of the oldest books in the Bible. This conclusion based on several observations, including the fact that there is no mention of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc) and no mention of God's covenant nation Israel. Similarly, there is no mention of the Ten Commandments or for that matter any of the Mosaic laws. Although there are clearly discourses dealing with sin and judgment, reward and punishment, these discussions are never in the context of the Old Covenant laws. Clearly God had communicated His standards of righteousness somehow with the pre-Mosaic world for in Genesis God declares that

Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws. (Genesis 26:5)

And so clearly long before Moses, God had given (the exact manner is uncertain) commandments and laws, and Abraham had obeyed them. Similarly we read in the passages we are studying Job's testimony that...

I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. (Job 23:12)

Job's friends also were aware of God's law, for Eliphaz urged Job...

Please receive instruction from His mouth, And establish His words in your heart. (Job 22:22)

Another clue that Job is one of the most ancient of books is the absence of any allusions to idolatry, suggesting that Job antedated the drift that occurred in the early nations toward idolatry after the dispersion at the tower of Babel in Genesis 11. Clearly all of the major characters in Job believed in the God of creation, which would support the early date of this book.

Related Resource: [Highly Recommended](#) - Overview of the entire book of Job by [Dr John Piper](#) - with special emphasis on the topic of suffering - you will be challenged, edified and equipped by this series which I was privileged to hear in person in October, 2008 - [Job - When the Righteous Suffer Part 1, 2, and Q&A - consider watching the video if you have time](#)

Henry Morris comments that...

quite a number of references in Job refer to the early events recorded in Genesis (for example, the creation, the fall, the flood, and the dispersion. A number of ancient tribes and places mentioned in Job such as the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, and Ophir tie into the Table of Nations (Genesis 10) or other early sections of Genesis, but none that characterize later periods.

Job lived 140 years after the events described in the book (Job 42:16). By figuring in the approximate number of years he lived prior to those events (the exact number is unknown, but at least enough to have ten grown children), we can place him in the time of the early patriarchs, perhaps around 2000 B.C. (**Henry Morris. The Remarkable Record of Job. 1988**)

Morris goes on to add this caveat on the "truths" in Job noting that...

many of the views expressed by Job contradict those of his friends, so both cannot be true. All the discourses are divinely inspired in the sense of being correctly reported, but they often illumine the faulty reasonings and attitudes of fallible human beings rather than the inerrant revelations of an infallible God. (Ibid)

Nevertheless, within the pages of one of the most ancient and fascinating books of the Bible, we find timeless words of wisdom by which we as New Testament believers can order our lives. In short, the purpose of these brief commentary notes is to attempt to glean clues as to how Job was able to endure such incredible trials. In short, we will look at Job 23:10, 11, 12 which give us considerable insight into...

JOB'S SECRET OF "SUCCESS"

We've all heard the term "**role model**" to describe an individual who serves as an example to for others to emulate, imitate or follow, and such role models are especially important in the realm of our spiritual life. From a human perspective, **Job** is one of the best examples of **perseverance** or **endurance** recorded and it behooves us to study his life with the aim of imitating his example of endurance in trials. While all believers will experience trials and affliction, fortunately few of us will ever experience them to the degree that Job did. Nevertheless, his response and specifically his "secret of success" can be applied in all of our lives because suffering and trials are an expected "course" in our matriculation to greater and degrees of Christlikeness. So let us take a moment and ponder some of the principles that enabled this great man of God to hold on when it would have been so easy to have given in and given up. As someone said, it's always too soon to quit and Job helps us understand how we can experience the victorious Christian life even when circumstances might seem to dictate otherwise.

Listen to the advice of James...

As an **example** (see word study hupodeigma), brethren, of suffering and patience (see study makrothumia), **take** (aorist imperative = command to do this now! Don't delay! Do it effectively!) the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we count those blessed (see study of root word for blessed - makarios) who endured. You have heard of the endurance (see study of hupomone) of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. (James 5:10-11)

Matthew Henry comments on **James 5:10-11**: Observe here, The prophets, on whom God put the greatest honour, and for whom he had the greatest favour, were most afflicted: and, when we think that the best men have had the hardest usage in this world, we should hereby be reconciled to affliction. Observe further, Those who were the greatest examples of **suffering affliction** were also the best and greatest examples of **patience**: tribulation produces patience (Ro 5:3, 4-notes Ro 5:3; 5:4).

Hereupon James gives it to us as the common sense of the faithful (v11): We count those happy who endure: we look upon righteous and patient sufferers as the happiest people. (See related thought in James 1:2-note; Jas 1:3 4-note Jas 1:5 6-note Jas 1:7 8-note Jas 1:9 10 11-note Jas 1:12-note).

Job is proposed as an example for the encouragement of the afflicted... In the case of Job you have an instance of a variety of miseries,... (which) were very grievous, but under all he could bless God, and, as to the general bent of his spirit, he was patient and humble: and what came to him in the end? Why, truly, God accomplished and brought about those things for him which plainly prove that the Lord is very filled with pity (sympathetic sorrow for one suffering) and tender mercy.

The best way to bear afflictions is to look to the end of them; and the pity of God is such that He will not delay the bringing of them to an end when His purposes are once answered; and the tender mercy of God is such that He will make His people an abundant amends (to put right, rectify, change for the better) for all their sufferings and afflictions. His bowels (= he seat of pity or kindness; hence, tenderness, compassion - see study of **splagchnon**) are moved for them while suffering, his bounty is manifested afterwards. Let us serve our God, and endure our trials, as those who believe the end will crown all.

The writer of **Hebrews** emphasizes the importance of role models writing that...

we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (He 6:11, 12-see notes He 6:11; 12)

From the truth about Job in James and this exhortation in Hebrews, it follows that believers today should be stimulated to study Job's life that we might imitate his example of **faith** and **patience**. The question arises then

"How did Job come to such a faith? How was he able to endure such incredible affliction?"

We will look at Job's secret in the following discussion with the goal being to imitate his **faith** and **endurance**, that we too might be more than conquerors in this brief sojourn on earth. As we focus on the truths in **Job 23:10-12**, I think we will begin to understand Job's "**secret inner strength**". Study this section and see if you do not agree.

Before we begin and especially because we are "yanking" these passages out of **context** (which is always dangerous as it leaves

one vulnerable to misinterpretation), let's review some important background truths to help understand **Job 23:10-12**.

JOB: A REAL MAN NOT A MYTHICAL MAN

First, it is vital to understand that contrary to the liberal misinterpretation that Job was a "mythical" character and not a historical figure, Scripture clearly states otherwise. We have already seen the single New Testament reference to Job as a historical individual. In addition, Ezekiel has two specific references to Job, both declarations by the **Lord God** Himself (which should thoroughly convince even a liberal interpreter that Job was a real, historical human being!) testifying to Ezekiel that...

even though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and **Job** were in its midst, by their own righteousness they could only deliver themselves," declares the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 14:14, cp Ezek 14:20).

JOB: A RIGHTEOUS MAN

Second, notice that Job although clearly living before the Cross of Christ and His death, burial and resurrection, was nevertheless declared by the Lord God to be a **righteous** man. How is this possible in such an ancient book? Was Job **righteous** because he offered sacrifices or because he had not departed from the command of God's lips (cp Job 23:12-note)? Clearly the answer is he was not righteous because of his works, for no man is saved by works (eg, cp Ro 4:6-note) but only **by grace through faith in the Messiah, the Way, the Truth and the Life, for no one comes to the Father but through the Door of the Messiah!** (cp Ep 2:8, 9, 10 notes Ep 2:8; 2:9; 2:10, John 10:9, 14:6) We do not know exactly what Job knew about the Messiah but we do know that he was saved by faith in Him, as were all the Old Testament saints, Moses recording the supreme example of Abraham in Genesis writing that...

Then he (still called Abram at this time) **believed** (not a blind leap but a confident commitment to One about Whom abundant evidence bore ample testimony to Abram! Hebrew = [Aman](#); Septuagint/LXX = **pisteuo - word study**) in the LORD (Jehovah = Jesus - see study of **Jehovah**); and He (God) **reckoned** (imputed, placed on his account; Hebrew = [chashab](#); LXX = **logizomai - word study**) it to him as **righteousness**. (**Genesis 15:6**)

Beloved, if you have not memorized this passage, then you should not go another day without doing so. The truths in this passage are so foundational that it is quoted three times in New Testament (Ro 4:3-note, Galatians 3:6 and Jas 2:23-note). It is fascinating that there are only five words in the Hebrew original of Genesis 15:6, but what a wealth of meaning they contain especially the three key words **believe**, **reckoned**, and **righteousness**. It takes three NT chapters to unpack this single verse!

As an aside note what Paul adds that...

the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham**, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU." (Galatians 3:8)

THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Now let's briefly establish the **context of the book of Job** one of the books normally classified as poetic literature.

J. Sidlow Baxter has a general statement about the **poetic books** noting that...

These books portray real human experience, and grapple with profound problems, and express big realities. Especially do they concern themselves with the experiences of the godly, in the varying vicissitudes of this changeful life which is ours under the sun. Moreover, experiences which are here dealt with were permitted to come to men in order that they might be as guides for the godly ever afterward. These experiences are here recorded and interpreted for us by the Spirit of inspiration through "holy men of old" who spoke and wrote "as they were moved" by Him. Thus, in these poetical books we have a most precious treasury of spiritual truth. (Explore the Book)

Irving Jensen has an excellent summation of the **poetic books**...

Job	The Problem of Pain	Blessing Through Suffering
Psalms	The Way to Pray	Praise Through Prayer
Proverbs	The Behavior of the Believer	Providence Through Precept
Ecclesiastes	The Folly of Forgetting God	Verity Through Vanity
Song of Solomon	The Art of Adoration	Bliss Through Union

[Hardback = Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament - recommended resource](#) or Computer version = [Logos](#)

Here is the chapter and verse outline...

Job 1:1-2:13 gives the **prologue** -- the **trials** allowed by God but wrought by Satan and the **trust** of Job (Job 1:21).

Job 3:1-26 describes Job's **despair**.

Job 4:1-38:41 record the **dialogue** between Job and his four counselors

3 Cycles = Job 4:1-14:22, Job 15:1-21:34, Job 22:1-31:40 and one set of 4 speeches by Elihu in Job 32:1-37:24, followed by God's challenge to Job - Job 38:1-41:34.

Job 42:1-17 is the **epilogue** in which Job receives a new **revelation** from God (Job 42:5), **repents** (Job 42:6) and is **rewarded** by God (Job 42:12-16).

"And Job died,
an old man and full of days"
(Job 42:17)

Irving Jensen feels (and I agree) that the **key verse of the book of Job** is...

**But He knows the way I take;
When He has tried me,
I shall come forth as gold.**
(Job 23:10)

For a well done, simple summary/overview of the book of Job see the free **Discovery House** Pdf booklet entitled [Knowing God Through Job](#) - addressing questions like "How could God do this to me?"

JOB: KNOWING GOD BETTER THROUGH ADVERSITY

PROLOGUE	DIALOGUE		EPILOGUE
Job 1-2	Job 3	Job 4-41	Job 42
Job Tested	Job Despairs	Job Counseled	Job Approved
Satan's Challenge	Job's Complaint	Men's Judgment**	God's Assessment

[Hardback = Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament - recommended resource](#) or Computer version

**Men's Judgment extends thru Job 37. God's Assessment begins Job 38:1-41:34

The book of Job begins with one of the most glowing descriptions of a human being in all of Scripture...

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was **blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil**... and that man was the **greatest** of all the men of the east. (Job 1:1,3)

This glowing character resume is repeated two more times, these declarations coming directly from God Himself (see Job 1:8, 2:3). So don't miss the profound truth that Job's life was pleasing to God before he went into the fiery furnace of affliction!

The subsequent events in the prologue provide some of the most fascinating insights into the supernatural world in all of Scripture and you are strongly encouraged to read (and meditate on this rich epilogue). In short, Satan obtains permission from God to afflict Job with the loss of personal possessions and children to a degree that is difficult to comprehend. And yet James says Job endured, bearing up under the load of unspeakable personal losses.

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped (Hebrew = shachah = bow down, prostrate oneself; LXX = proskuneo - see word study). And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God. (Job 1:20-22)

The New Testament counterpart to Job's declaration is found in **1 Timothy 6:7**

For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Our goal should be to be content as we serve the Lord, thanking God when we have good days choosing to trust Him when days seem not so good, learning to say like Job "**Blessed be the Name of the LORD.**"

WHY DID JOB BLESS THE NAME OF JEHOVAH?

Why did Job bless the Name of Jehovah? Or one might ask how was it even possible for Job to worship and bless the name of Jehovah, not to mention not sinning nor blaming God? The only reasonable answer is that He knew and was convinced of the truth about the character and attributes of Jehovah.

Proverbs gives us some insight into the why Job would bless the name of Jehovah in the midst of overwhelming personal loss. Solomon writes that...

The name of the LORD is a strong tower. The righteous runs into it and is **safe** (Margin note - safe = "set on high") **Proverbs 18:10** (NASB)-note

Here are some other translations of **Proverbs 18:10**-note...

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the [consistently] righteous man [upright and in right standing with God] runs into it and is safe, high [above evil] and strong." (Amplified Version)

"The name of the Lord is of great strength; and the righteous running to it are exalted." Septuagint (Greek translation of Hebrew OT)

"The name of the Lord is like a strong tower; the righteous person runs to it and is set safely on high." (Net)

"The name of the LORD is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe." (New Living Translation)

What is in a name, especially the Name of Jehovah? The Lord's name stands for His person, since it reflects His attributes, character and qualities. Here the name of God is **Jehovah**, His covenant Name by which He made Himself known to Israel. To know God in covenant is a strong tower.

Moses records his conversation with God where

"God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14) (Click for more on the Name Jehovah)

Persons may confidently and safely take refuge in God's covenant Name which conveys an assurance of security to those who are in covenant with Him by grace through faith.

The **Name of Jehovah** is pictured as if it were a strong tower (see discussion of metaphor) because the reader can more easily understand the value of a strong tower. The metaphor "strong tower" indicates that God is a secure refuge. This picture helps us understand the value of knowing and living in the light of the truth of God's Names of which there are many in Scripture. The Septuagint drops the metaphor of a tower and simply states God's Name is "of great strength" which is not quite as easy to understand as is a "strong tower" (a tower is easier to "run into" than a Name) In either case one can readily discern the great value of meditating on the glorious Names of God.

What does a **tower** picture? The **Bible Illustrator** note on ancient towers informs us that...

Strong towers were a greater security in a bygone age than they are now. Castles were looked upon as being very difficult places for attack; and ancient troops would rather fight a hundred battles than endure a single siege. He who owned a strong tower felt, however potent might be his adversary, his walls and bulwarks would be his sure salvation.

The image of a **tower** or **citadel** reminds us that as believers, righteous men and women, we like Job are aliens and strangers in this world and are in a very real struggle every day for the rest of our life until we see Jesus face to face. In the meantime, we need to remember that when the battle wages fierce against us, we have an ever present towering citadel, our Jehovah - Jesus, in Whom we can run and be safe, though the battle continues all around us! God's almighty providence is the surest and strongest defense against all enemies of whatever kind.

What action does the righteous man or woman need to carry out? Or stated another way how did Job and how do we "run

into" the strong tower? There is no safety in looking at the "strong tower". It is necessary to flee to God in order to be protected by Him. **Proverbs 18:10**-note says they must "run". It does not say they are to amble or to stroll or to walk in a leisurely or idle manner but that they are to run. Job hears the horrible news and in almost as a reflex falls in worship, blessing the name of the LORD.

How can we "run" into the Name of Jehovah? Clearly this is not literal running (although that may be what we *feel* like doing when trouble knocks - next time trouble knocks at the door don't send **feelings** [or fear] to answer the door. Instead send **faith**, a faith founded on the truth about God). The metaphor of "running" into the strong tower refers to a **whole-hearted and unwavering trust** in God's Name and His willingness and ability to provide protection. It is only by faith that we can go to an invisible God.

I think **Lane** is correct adding that...

running describes **faith and prayer**, which give direct access to God Who responds by warding off the danger. **Safe** is literally 'lifted high', as if one who trusts God is not only behind thick walls, but above the range of the enemy's weapons." (Lane, E. Focus on the Bible: Proverbs) (Bolding added)

The **Biblical Illustrator** adds the following thought on how we **run** into the Name of Jehovah...

The righteous "runneth into the name" by the exercise of fervent prayer. Praying is the immediate and direct means of imploring the Divine assistance and protection. Faith is the habitual principle, and prayer is the actual application of it. Though God knows all our wants perfectly, He requires that we implore His assistance by prayer. And prayer is the natural remedy to which all are ready to fly in extremity.

In Paul's last known communication, he explained to Timothy that because he was a preacher, an apostle and a teacher of the gospel, he had experienced suffering (he was in a Roman prison as he wrote the letter and knew he would soon die!). But he quickly added that he was not ashamed for (and I loosely paraphrase) he had "run" into the strong tower of the LORD, writing...

for I know Whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. (2Ti 1:12-note)

Paul expressed an unshaken confidence in the LORD's ability to do what he trusted Him to do. He not only **knew** the truth about the LORD (the Strong Tower) but he had become firmly **convinced** of this truth. There is practical difference between **knowing** the truth about God which is inherent in His Names and being **convinced of** the truth.

**The difference is that we hold the former...
While the latter holds us!**

Until the Word of Truth (the Name of God), becomes not just something we hold, but rather something which holds us, then we will likely not fully experience all that is available in the strong tower when the winds of adversity begin to blow. Job knew truth about God and this truth was the anchor of his soul in his hour of great trial. He knew the name Jehovah, I Am... I Am _____. Fill in the blank, not with your greeds, but with your needs. Job who lost everything, but he ran into the "Strong Tower" of Jehovah, the great I Am, I Am everything you will ever need! And remember as far as we can discern Job did not even have this truth in writing but was truth he had heard and had treasured in his heart more than his necessary food! (see Job 23:12-note). Job had learned the secret of surviving the fire of affliction, even if he did not fully understand the reasons for the "fire". (For more discussion of Proverbs 18:10 see - **notes on a simple inductive study** on What it Means to be Safe in Jehovah's Name? and also see C H Spurgeon's sermon on Proverbs 18:10)

And how did he respond to a second volley of afflictions, this time directed at his body, Satan smiting "Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." (Job 2:7)?

(Job) took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Job 2:8 9 10

And we see repeated testimonies that speak of his endurance and ultimately speak of his great faith in a good God.

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Wind And Worship - Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. --Job 1:20

Job's calamities were enormous. His oxen and donkeys were stolen. Fire consumed his sheep. Raiders took his camels. But that was just the beginning. A great wind destroyed the house where his sons and daughters were feasting, and they all perished. His loss seemed unbearable! But notice Job's response. He humbled himself and worshiped God ([Job 1:20](#)).

On April 2, 1977, the sky north of Olivet, Michigan, grew black and ominous. Just another severe thunderstorm, thought Norm

Heddon. But when pressure began building in his ears, he instinctively rushed down the basement stairs—which took about 5 seconds. Then it happened—his house exploded into thousands of pieces from a killer tornado. Minutes later when Norm emerged, he couldn't believe his eyes. All his earthly goods had been swept away, but miraculously his family was unharmed. Bowing in prayer, they thanked God for His goodness. Heddon said, "He has a hand in everything that happens to us."

How can anyone worship while caught up in the fierce winds of adversity? The answer is clear: By anchoring our faith in the love and wisdom of God, we can say through our tears, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). — Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Over - Do you feel abandoned by God, as Job did? Tell Him how you feel. Then ask Him to help you believe the truth about His love for you.

**When you are swept off your feet,
land on your knees.**

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In August 1992, Hurricane Andrew ravaged South Florida, destroying homes, businesses, and lives. The cost of that terrible disaster cannot be estimated only in terms of millions upon millions of dollars. What about the incalculable human suffering - physical, emotional, and spiritual? If people lost faith in God and prayer, they sustained the worst loss of all.

In the spring of 1993, some pastors who had churches in that area gathered to share their experiences and reactions. They all agreed that everyone who had encountered the terrifying power of that hurricane had come to realize how helpless and vulnerable we human beings really are. Proud as we may be of our technological achievements, there are times when we are compelled to confess humbly, "We are not in charge." Some of the people whose trust was tested were able to say in the words of Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Is your trust in God so complete that no matter what takes place you will humbly rely on His wisdom, goodness, and mercy? Trusting in God will enable you to endure trials without despair. -V C Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

My times are in Thy hand;
Why should I doubt or fear?
My Father's hand will never cause
His child a needless tear.
- Lloyd

**God doesn't promise security *from* life's storms
but security *in* life's storms.**

BUT HE KNOWS THE WAY I TAKE:

- Ge 18:19 2Ki 20:3 Ps 1:6 139:1-3 Jn 21:17 2Ti 2:19)

Context: Job 23 and Job 24 represent Job's third reply to Eliphaz.

GOD KNOWS THE WAY

- ([Play - God Will Make A Way](#))

But He knows - This verse begins with a **contrast (but)** so we need to note the preceding **context**. In verse 3 of chapter 23 Job lamented...

Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! (Job 23:3)

In the immediately preceding **context** Job declared...

Behold (a marker to emphasize the following), I go forward but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him. He turns on the right, I cannot see Him.

So in the context of Job not being able to "find" God in front, behind, on his left or on his right, Job knows enough about God to testify that God **knows the way I take**, which speaks of God's **omnipresence** and **omniscience**. God knows that Job is in the furnace of affliction and that is enough for Job to know and it is enough for us to know beloved.

Spurgeon ([Go to p6 for beginning of exposition on Job 23](#)) affirms the importance of Job's (and our) awareness that **God knows** what Job was (we are) going through writing...

**If I do not know His way, He knows mine.
If I cannot find Him, He can find me.
Here is my comfort.**

Henry Morris observes regarding Job's affirmation that even though he cannot see God, he knows that God can see him...

Job's faith is still strong and, by this time, he is beginning to sense that his sufferings somehow are being used by God as a test of his faith.

And why would Job's faith be strong? The answer is found in Job 23:12-note where we see that he treasured the Words of God more than his necessary food. This truth coupled with his obedience to God's Word help understand the "secret of Job's success".

Paul links the hearing of **God's Word** with the growth of **faith** writing that...

faith comes from hearing, and **hearing** by the word of Christ. (Ro 10:17-note)

Of course **hearing** must be followed by **doing** (Jas 1:22-note) and in Job 23:11-note Job affirms that he has been a doer of the Word and not merely a hearer only. In other words he has not just heard but he has obeyed, which is important for there to be growth of one's faith. To hear God's Word and not to do it is to delude one's self. James says it is like looking in a mirror (God's Word) and walking away but immediately forgetting or disregarding what the mirror showed you about yourself...

For if anyone is a **hearer** of the word and not a **doer**, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten (verb = completely forgotten!) what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. (Jas 1:23 24-note).

Job was not a **forgetful hearer** but an **effectual doer** and was **blessed** in the end, as affirmed by James...

Behold, we count those **blessed** who **endured** (**hupomeno**). You have heard of the **endurance** (**hupomone**) of **Job** and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. (Jas 5:11)

To summarize, Job had heard God's Word, believed God's Word, obeyed God's Word and as a result knew God and His character and was confident he could trust Him, even though he could not see Him (cp He 11:1, 2Co 5:7).

Job's **faith** and **endurance** and ability to see God with eyes of faith not sight remind me of Moses...

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to **endure** ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. 27 **By faith** he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he **endured**, as **seeing Him Who is unseen** (He 11:24 25 26-note He 11:27-note)

Evangelist **D. L. Moody** emphasizes the importance of trusting in God...

Trust in yourself and you are doomed to disappointment; trust in your friends, and they will die and leave you; but trust in God, and you will never be confounded in time or eternity.

He knows (**yada**) - Job is saying "*God is intimately acquainted* (see discussion of "yada" below) *with what I am going through.*" The Septuagint translates **yada** with the verb **eido/oida** which signifies fullness of knowledge or absolute knowledge and thus indicates God's knowledge of Job's circumstances and his subsequent journey is beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Knows ([3945](#)) (**yada**) is used 873v in the OT and in general means to have knowledge of something and can be used of knowledge which is intimate and experiential. **Yada** in some context even describes a man "knowing" a woman intimately.

Indeed the Scriptures emphasize that our **omnipresent, omniscient** God is intimate with the righteous man or woman as indicated

by the following passages...

Ps 1:6 (notes) For the LORD **knows** (yada; Lxx = ginosko = experiential knowledge) the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Ps 139:1-3 (notes) O Lord, Thou hast searched me and **known** (yada; Lxx = ginosko) me. 2 Thou dost **know** (yada; Lxx = ginosko) when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar. 3 Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, And art intimately acquainted with all my ways.

2Ti 2:19 (notes) Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord **knows** (ginosko) those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord **abstain** (command to withdraw or depart) from wickedness."

Sustaining consciousness of the soul in sorrow

I. That the great God was fully cognisant of His individual trial. "He knoweth the way that I take." Wherever I am, at home or abroad, in solitude or society, "He knoweth," etc. He knows the way I take--the way my thoughts take, my feelings take, my purposes take. But what support is there in the knowledge of this fact?

1. God's knowledge of the individual sufferer is associated with the profoundest love. "As a father pitieth his children," etc.
2. His knowledge is associated with an almighty capacity to help. The other sustaining fact of which he was conscious was--

II. That the great God was mercifully using his trials as discipline. "When He hath tried me." Why does He try by affliction?

1. Not that He has any pleasure in our suffering. "He doth not afflict willingly," etc. Nor--
2. That He may discover what is in our hearts. He knows all about us.

But He does it--

1. In order to humble us on account of our sins.
2. In order that we may feel our dependence on Him.
3. In order that we may commit ourselves entirely into His keeping.

III. That the great God would turn his painful discipline to his advantage. "I shall come forth as gold," etc. "Tribulation worketh patience," etc. But how does affliction benefit?

1. It serves to raise our appreciation of the Bible.
 2. It serves to develop the powers of the mind. David's afflictions brought out some of the most brilliant of his psalms.
 3. It serves to develop the spiritual life.
 4. It serves to detach us from the world. It gradually breaks down the materialism in which the soul is caged, and lets it flee into the open air and light of spiritual realms. (Homilist.)
-

TRIALS: WHEN NOT IF

When He has tried me - Two truths come forth from the word "when". First, he does not say "if" but "when". Trials are guaranteed (cp 2Ti 3:12-note, Acts 14:22)! Trials came to Job and will come into the life of every believer. Surely if Job, who by God's Own assessment was a **blameless** and **upright** man (Job 1:1 cp "*the greatest of all the men of the east*" Job 1:3), was in need of testing, then none of God's children will escape the Refiner's fire! Secondly, notice that **when** is a time phrase which is defined as "*during the time that*" and so in this verse refers to during the time of the trial. This indicates that the trial has a finite "lifespan" which will come to a blessed end.

See in depth discussion of trials - 1Pe 1:6-note; 1Peter 1:7-note

Trials are the soil in which faith can flourish.

God is the Refiner and His fires of testing are never meant to destroy us but to purify us and remove the "dross" from our life. The great old hymn **How Firm A Foundation** beautifully expresses this eternal truth about our loving Jehovah-Jesus...

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.

(Play [How Firm A Foundation](#))

Tried (0974) (**bachan/bahan**) (See also discussion at **Malachi 3:10**) is a primary (or root) word which depicts examination to determine (and bring out) the essential qualities of something, and in the moral realm speaks particularly of a person's integrity (think of integer = indivisible - undivided ~ think undivided heart or single minded focus/purpose). In Scripture **bachan** is used almost exclusively in this moral/spiritual sense meaning to try, search out, examine or prove one's spiritual heart or character.

To assay (English dictionary) - To try the goodness, purity, weight, value, etc. of metals or metallic substances. Any operation or experiment for ascertaining the quantity of a precious metal in an ore or mineral.

To probe (English dictionary) - To search into and explore with great thoroughness. To subject to a penetrating investigation. In Medicine to probe is to examine the depth of a wound, ulcer or some cavity of the body, by the use of an instrument thrust into the part.

To try (English dictionary) - To prove by a test; as, to try weights and measures by a standard. To melt (fat, lard, etc.) in order to separate out impurities. To extract a material from an ore, mixture, etc., usually by heat; refine.

Bachan/bahan - 27v in **NAS** - For all of these Scriptures see also discussion of bachan at Malachi 3:10.

Ge 42:15 16; 1Chr 29:17; Job 7:18; 12:11; 23:10; 34:3, 36; Ps 7:9-note; Ps 11:4-note Ps 11:5-note; Ps 17:3-note; Ps 26:2-note; Ps 66:10-note; Ps 81:7-note; Ps 95:9-note; Ps 139:23-note; Pr 17:3; Jer 6:27; 9:7; 11:20; 12:3; 17:10; 20:12; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:10, 15.

NAS = assay(2), examine(2), proved(1), test(7), tested(3), tests(3), tried(5), tries(2), try(3).

Below are several of the uses of Bachan...

1Chronicles 29:17 "Since I know, O my God, that You **try (bachan)** the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You.

Psalms 11:4 The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids **test (bachan; LXX = exetazo = intently, carefully examine, scrutinize)** the sons of men.

Spurgeon: He narrowly inspects their actions, words, and thoughts. As men, when intently and narrowly inspecting some very minute object, almost close their eyelids to exclude every other object, so will the Lord look all men through and through. God sees each man as much and as perfectly as if there were no other creature in the universe. He sees us always; He never removes His eye from us; He sees us entirely, reading the recesses of the soul as readily as the glancings of the eye. Is not this a sufficient ground of confidence, and an abundant answer to the solicitations of despondency? My danger is not hid from Him; He knows my extremity, and I may rest assured that He will not suffer me to perish while I rely alone on Him. Wherefore, then, should I take wings of a timid bird, and flee from the dangers which beset me?

Psalms 11:5 The LORD **examines (bachan; LXX = exetazo = intently, carefully examine, scrutinize)** the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates.

Spurgeon on Ps 11:5: The Lord tries the righteous: He doth not hate them, but only tries them. They are precious to Him, and therefore He refines them with afflictions. None of the Lord's children may hope to escape from trial, nor, indeed, in our right minds, would any of us desire to do so, for trial is the channel of many blessings.

It is my happiness below

Not to live without the cross;

But the Saviour's power to know,

Sanctifying every loss.

"Trials make the promise sweet;

Trials give new life to prayer;

Trials bring me to his feet

Lay me low, and keep me there."

"Did I meet no trials here --

No chastisement by the way --

Might I not, with reason, fear

I should prove a cast away?"

Unbelievers may escape the rod,

Sunk in earthly vain delight;

But the true born child of God

Must not -- would not, if he might."

William Cowper

Is not this a very cogent reason why we should not distrustfully endeavour to shun a trial? -- for in so doing we are seeking to avoid a blessing.

Psalm 26:2 Examine me, O Lord, and try me; Test my mind and my heart.

Psalm 139:23 **Search** (red = commands) me, O God, and **know** my heart; **Try** (**Bachan**) me and **know** my anxious thoughts;

Spurgeon: Exercise any and every test upon me. By fire and by water let me be examined. Read not alone the desires of my heart, but the fugitive thoughts of my head. Know with all penetrating knowledge all that is or has been in the chambers of my mind. What a mercy that there is one being who can know us to perfection! He is intimately at home with us. He is graciously inclined towards us, and is willing to bend his omniscience to serve the end of our sanctification. Let us pray as David did, and let us be as honest as he. We cannot hide our sin: salvation lies the other way, in a plain discovery of evil, and an effectual severance from it.

Proverbs 17:3 The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord **tests** (**bachan**) hearts.

Jeremiah 6:27 "I have made you an assayer and a tester among My people, That you may know and **assay** (**bachan**; **LXX** = **dokimazo**) their way."

Jeremiah 17:10 "I, the LORD, search the heart, I **test** (**bachan**; **LXX** = **dokimazo**) the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.

Jeremiah 20:12 Yet, O LORD of hosts, You Who **test** (**bachan**; **LXX** = **dokimazo**) the righteous, Who see the mind and the heart; Let me see Your vengeance on them; For to You I have set forth my cause.

Zechariah 13:9 (Context = Terminus of 3.5 years of Great Tribulation) "And I will bring the third part (of Jews = **the believing remnant**) through the fire, Refine (tsaraph) them as silver is refined, And **test** (**bachan**; **LXX** = **dokimazo**) them as gold is **tested** (**bachan**). They will call on My name (Because of His outpouring of the Spirit of grace - Zech 12:10), And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God (fulfillment of His New Covenant promise in Je 31:31 32 33 esp v33)'"

Malachi 3:10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and **test** (**bachan** = command) Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

The **Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament** notes that...

In only five of the occurrences is **bachan** used without explicit theological reference. These are found in Ge 42:15-16; Ezek 21:13; Job 12:11; 34:3. All of the remaining occurrences (twenty-two times), except three, refer to **God's examination of his people**. In the exceptions, it is God Who is tested. It is evident that this is abnormal procedure. In Ps 95:9 the people are reminded of the folly of **testing** God at Meribah. In Malachi, it is only because of the people's apathy that God calls them **totest** him (Mal 3:10, 15).

As is indicated in Hebrews (see **notes** Hebrews 12:5; 12:6; 12:7; 12:8), part of the privilege of being God's people is that of being tested (Jer 20:12; Ps 11:5; Ps 139:23). Unlike the Egyptian doctrine where the heart is weighed after death, Yahweh continually assays the hearts of his people that in the end they may come forth as gold (Zech 13:9; **Job 23:10**). ([Harris, R L, Archer, G L & Waltke, B K Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Moody Press](#))

When metals are refined and purified they are heated to extremely high temperatures to remove the impurities or **dross**.

Warren Wiersbe comments that Job was not just in any furnace...

But it was a furnace of God's appointment, not because of Job's sin; and God would use Job's affliction to purify him and make him a better man. This is not the only answer to the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?" but it is one of the best, and it can bring the sufferer great encouragement.

Scripture often uses the image of a furnace to describe God's purifying ministry through suffering.

"See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction" (Isa 48:10NIV).

Israel's suffering in Egypt was like that of iron in a smelting furnace (Dt. 4:20), and her later disciplines were also a "furnace experience."

"For You, O God, tested us; You refined us like silver" (Ps. 66:10NIV) ([Spurgeon's note](#)).

This image is used by Peter (1Pe 1:6-note; 1Pe 1:7-note 1Pe 4:12-note) of believers going through persecution.

**When God puts His own people into the furnace,
He keeps His eye on the clock
and His hand on the thermostat.**

He knows how long and how much. We may question why He does it to begin with, or why He doesn't turn down the heat or even turn it off; but our questions are only evidences of unbelief. **Job 23:10 is the answer:**

"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (NKJV).

Gold does not fear the fire. The furnace can only make the gold purer and brighter. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament = "Be Patient". Victor](#)) (**Bolding** added)

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible describes **dross** as ...

the residue left at the end of the smelting process after metal has been separated from the impurities. **Dross** was a symbol for the imperfection of sinful Israel. In the smelting process, heat is applied to ore that contains precious metal. This causes the imperfections to separate, leaving only the pure metal. The prophet Isaiah warned the nation of Israel that it had become impure and would require purging in this way (Isaiah 1:22-25). ([Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#))

Unger adds that **dross** (Hebrew =sig = refuse) represents...

The impurities separated from silver, etc., by the process of melting (Prov. 25:4; 26:23); also the base metal itself prior to smelting (Isa. 1:22, 25; Ezek. 22:18-19). **Figurative**. Dross is used to represent the wicked (Ps. 119:119; Prov. 26:23), sin (Isa. 1:25), and Israel (Ezek. 22:18-29). ([Unger, M. F., Harrison, R. K., Vos, H. F., Barber, C. J., & Unger, M. F. The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Spurgeon in his comments on Ps 66:10 writes of the **tests**...

Searching and repeated, severe and thorough, has been the test; the same result has followed us as in the case of precious metal, for the dross and tin have been consumed, and the pure ore has been discovered. Since trial is sanctified to so desirable an end, ought we not to submit to it with abounding resignation...

(Spurgeon has this additional note) Convinced from the frequent use of this illustration (**of the refining of precious metals**), that there was something more than usually instructive in the process of assaying and purifying silver, I have collected some few facts upon the subject. The hackneyed story of the refiner seeing his image in the molten silver while in the fire, has so charmed most of us, that we have not looked further; yet, with more careful study, much could be brought out. To assay silver requires great personal care in the operator.

"The principle of assaying gold and silver is very simple theoretically, but in practice great experience is necessary to insure accuracy; and there is no branch of business which demands more personal and undivided attention. The result is liable to the

influence of so many contingencies, that no assayer who regards his reputation will delegate the principal process to one not equally skilled with himself. Besides the result ascertainable by weight, there are allowances and compensations to be made, which are known only to an experienced assayer, and if these were disregarded, as might be the case with the mere novice, the report would be wide from the truth." (Encyclopaedia Britannica.)

Pagnini's version reads: "Thou hast melted us by blowing upon us," and in the monuments of Egypt, artificers are seen with the blowpipe operating with small fire places, with cheeks to confine and reflect the heat; the worker evidently paying personal attention, which is evident also in Malachi 3:3,

"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

To assay silver requires a skillfully constructed furnace. The description of this furnace would only weary the reader, but it is evidently a work of art in itself. Even the trial of our faith is much more precious than that of gold which perisheth (1Pe 1:7-note). He has refined us, but not with silver. He would not trust us there, the furnace of affliction is far more skillfully arranged than that. To assay silver the heat must be nicely regulated.

"During the operation, the assayer's attention should be directed to the heat of the furnace, which must be neither too hot nor too cold: if too hot, minute portions of silver will be carried off with the lead, and so vitiate the assay; moreover, the pores of the cupel being more open, greater absorption will ensue, and there is liability to loss from that cause. One indication of an excess of heat in the furnace, is the rapid and perpendicular rising of the fumes to the ceiling of the muffle, the mode of checking and controlling which has been pointed out in the description of the improved furnace. When the fumes are observed to fall to the bottom of the muffle, the furnace is then too cold; and if left unaltered, it will be found that the cupellation has been imperfectly performed, and the silver will not have entirely freed itself from the base metals. (Encyclopaedia Britannica.)

The assayer repeats his trying process. Usually two or more trials of the same piece are made, so that great accuracy may be secured. **Seven times silver is said to be purified, and the saints through varied trials reach the promised rest**" C. H. S.

GOLD FROM THE REFINER'S FIRE

I shall come forth as gold - How could Job have made such an incredible declaration? To be sure Job's assurance on the one hand undoubtedly reflects his certainty that he is innocent of accusations made by his "friends". More important however is the fact he knew His God and He trusted (had faith) in His God, even though he could not see Him at the time he was going through the trial. He had a steadfast trust in Jehovah Who tests hearts, Solomon writing that...

The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD **tests** (same verb as in Job 23:10 = bachan) hearts. (Job 17:3)

In the excerpt from **Spurgeon's** sermon (**which I recommend that you read - [Job 23:10 Whither Goest Thou](#)**), you will notice the Prince of Preachers asks and answers the question...

Hath He not promised that we shall never perish? Shall we not, therefore, come forth as gold?

What is **Spurgeon's** answer?

This confidence is grounded on the Lord's knowledge of us.

I would be presumptuous to disagree with this master expositor of Holy Writ, but his answer does beg another question --**How is it that Job knows about "the Lord's knowledge of us" to use Spurgeon's words?** I would suggest that the secret to Job's endurance lies in Job 23:12 (notes) - Job knew His God because he had **treasured His Word** and **obeyed His Word**. Therefore **Job was confident** that God would not destroy him but bring him forth as gold (cp Paul's confidence in God's "keeping ability" because he knew Whom he had believed - 2Ti 1:12-note).

H A Ironside agrees noting that Job declares...

"I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12), and this at a time when the ways of God with His dear servant seemed quite inexplicable, and he floundered in the vain effort to find Him out. Still "the words of His mouth" he loved to dwell upon, and, relying on them, dared to say, "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

Adam Clarke

If that which is reputed to be gold is exposed to the action of a strong fire, if it be genuine, it will lose nothing of its quality, nor of its weight. If it went into the fire gold, it will come out gold; the strongest fire will neither alter nor destroy it. So Job: he went into this furnace of affliction an innocent, righteous man; he came out the same. His character lost nothing of its value, nothing of its luster. ([Job 23 Commentary](#))

H G Bosch compares God's care for us in trials to the pattern of vines clinging to trees writing that...

The vines that sometimes grow up the side of oak trees cling to them during the fiercest storms. Although the wind beats upon them, the tendrils hold tightly to the tree's bark. If the vine is on the side opposite the wind, the great oak is its protection; if it's on the exposed side, the wind presses the vine more closely to it. As Christians, we are sometimes sheltered by God, while other times He allows us to be exposed so we will be pressed more closely to Him. After years of faithfulness, some Christians suddenly find themselves greatly tested and in deep distress--seemingly without reason. They are subjected to terrific battles with doubts, fears, and unbelief. Doesn't God care how much they suffer? Of course He does. But He has a special purpose in withholding immediate relief... Our afflictions are designed not to break us but to bend us toward God. (**Pressed Close to God**)

Dave Guzik ([Job 23](#)) notes that Job's attestation that he will come forth as gold...

is another bright flash of faith upon a generally black background. Job admitted that he could not get through to God, yet clung to the confidence that God was still over this crisis. With wonderful faith, Job seemed at this fleeting instant to understand what he could and should in his present crisis. He understood that:

- God still observed Job carefully and had not forgotten him (**He knows the way that I take**).
- God had a purpose in the crisis, and the purpose was not to punish Job (**when He has tested me**)
- God would one day bring the trial to an end (**I shall come forth**)
- God would bring something good would from it all (**I shall come forth as gold**)
- God still valued Job; only precious metal is put through the fire (**as gold**)

Paul has a similar affirmation of **faith in the midst of the furnace** writing...

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For **momentary, light affliction** is producing for us an **eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison**, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2Co 4:16-note 2Co 4:17-note 2Co 4:18-note)

Spurgeon writes that...

Here the true Job comes to the front. You get the gracious man once more on his feet. He staggered a little; but he stands firm now: "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." So will you, my tried sister, my afflicted brother. The **trial of your faith** is but for a time; there will come an end to this **furnace-work**; and when God has **tried** you, **tested** you, and **taken away your dross**, (**Ed**: Dross = impurities separated from silver, etc., by the process of melting -- the scum that forms on the surface of metal subjected to smelting) he will bring you forth, and you will be pure gold, meet for the Master's use.

"In the furnace God may prove thee,
Thence to bring thee forth more bright;
But can never cease to love thee:
Thou art precious in his sight:
God is with thee,
God thine everlasting light."

It is grand to be able to say that while you are in the fire. It is very easy to say it about another man who is in the furnace; but when you are in there yourself, then to say, "I shall come forth as gold," is the sublimity of faith! It is a very simple matter to say, "If I were again put into the fire, I know I should come forth as gold;" but it is when the burning heat is melting you, when you seem yourself to be shriveled up in the crucible, and so little of you is left, then is the time still to say, "When the Lord hath finished his work upon me, when he hath thoroughly assayed me, I shall come forth as gold."

This is beautiful faith on the part of Job. It is very easy for us to read these lines, and to say, "No doubt, tried men do come out of the furnace purified like gold;" but it is quite another thing to be ourselves in the crucible, and to read such a passage as this by the light of the fire, and then to be able to say, "We know it is true, for we are proving its truth even now."

This is the kind of chapter that many a broken heart has to read by itself alone. Many a weeping eye has scanned these words of Job, and truly blessed has that troubled one been who has been able to chime in with the sweet music of this verse:

**"He knoweth the way that I take:
when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."**

Dt 8:2 — "And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He

might humble you, **testing** you, to know what was in your **heart**, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Ps 17:3 — Thou hast **tried** my **heart**; Thou hast visited me by night; Thou hast **tested** me and dost find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.

Pr 17:3 — The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the **LORD tests hearts**.

1Pe 1:7 — that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ

C H Spurgeon addresses the purpose of trials in the believer's life in his message on Job 23:10 entitled **Whither Goest Thou?**...

Trials are no evidence of being without God, since trials come from God. Job says, "When he hath tried me." He sees God in his afflictions. The devil actually wrought the trouble; but the Lord not only permitted it, but he had a design in it. Without the divine concurrence, none of his afflictions could have happened.

It was God that tried Job, and it is God that tried us.

No trouble comes to us without divine permission.

All the "dogs of affliction" are muzzled until God sets them free.

Nay, against none of the seed of Abraham can a dog move its tongue unless God permits. Troubles do not spring out of the ground like weeds that grow randomly, but they grow orderly as plants set in the garden. God appoints the weight and number of all our adversities. If He declares the number ten they cannot be eleven. If He wills that we bear a certain weight, no one can add half an ounce more.

Since Every trial comes from God, afflictions are no evidence that you are out of God's way.

Besides, according to the text, these trials are tests:

"When he hath tried me."

The trials that came to Job were made to be proofs that the patriarch was real and sincere. Did not the enemy say:

"Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face" [Job 1:10].

The devil will have it that as dogs follow men for bones, so do we follow God for what we can get out of Him. The Lord lets the devil see that our love is not bought by temporal goods; that we are not mercenary followers, but loving children of the Lord, so that under dire suffering we exclaim,

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" [Job 13:15].

By the endurance of grief our sincerity is made manifest, and it is proven that we are not mere pretenders, but true heirs of God.

Once more upon this point: if you have met with troubles, remember they will come to an end. The holy man in our text says,

"When he hath tried me."

As much as to say, He will not always be doing it; there will come a time when He will have done trying me. Beloved, put a stout heart to a steep hill and you will climb it before long. Put the ship in good trim for a storm; and though the winds may howl for a while, they will at length sob themselves asleep.

There is a sea of glass for us after the sea of storms.

Only have patience and the end will come. Many a man of God has lived through a hundred troubles when he thought one would kill him; and so will it be with you.

You young beginners, you that are bound for the kingdom, but have only lately started for it, be not amazed if you meet with conflicts. If you very soon meet with difficulties, be not surprised. Let your trials be evidence to you rather that you are in the right, than that you are in the wrong way;

for what son is there whom his father does not chasten? (He 12:7-note)

He that will go to hell will find many to help him thither; but he that will go to heaven may have to cut his way through a host of adversaries (cp Acts 14:22 where Paul and Barnabas were "*strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."*).

Pluck up courage (cp Jn 16:33 Jesus encouraged His fearful small band of disciples declaring "*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*).

The rod is one of the tokens of the child of God. If thou were not God's child you might be left unchastened; but inasmuch as you are dear to Him, He will whip you when you disobey (He 12:5,6-note).

If thou were only a bit of common clay God would not put you into the furnace; but as you are gold and He knows it, you must be refined; and to be refined it is needful that the fire should exercise its power upon you (cp 1Pe 1:6-note; 1Peter 1:7-note). Because you are bound for heaven you will meet with storms on your voyage to glory (cp 1Th 3:2, 3- notes; 1Th 3:4 - note - "*and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.*).

HAVE YOU CONFIDENCE IN GOD AS TO THESE STORMS? Can you say, in the language of the text,

"When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"?

If you are really trusting in Jesus, if He is everything to you, you may say this confidently; for you will find it true to the letter. If you have really given yourself up to be saved by grace, do not hesitate to believe that you will be found safe at the last. I do not like people to come and trust Christ with a temporary faith as though He could keep them for a day or two, but could not preserve them all their lives. (cp Ro 5:9, 10-notes Ro 5:9; 5:10 "*saved from the wrath...saved by His life*")

Trust Christ for everlasting salvation: mark the word **'everlasting.'** I thank God, that when I believed in His Son Jesus Christ, I laid hold upon final perseverance: I believed that where He had begun a good work He would carry it on and perfect it in the day of Christ (Php 1:6-note "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*"). I believed in the Lord Jesus, not for a year or two, but for all the days of my life, and to eternity. I want your faith to have a hand of that kind, so that you grasp the Lord as your Savior to the uttermost. I cannot tell what troubles may come, nor what temptations may arise; but I know in Whose hands I am, and I am persuaded that He is able to preserve me (2Ti 1:12-note), so that when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. I go into the fire, but I shall not be burned up in it;

"I shall come forth."

Like the three holy children, though the furnace be heated seven times hotter, yet the Son of man will be with me in the furnace (Da 3:25), and "I shall come forth" with not even the smell of fire upon me (Da 3:27).

Yes, "I shall come forth," and none can hinder me. It is good to begin with this holy confidence, and to let that confidence increase as you get nearer to the recompense of the reward (cp Jas 1:12-note 2Cor 4:17-note, 2Co 4:18-note, He 10:34-note He12:28, 29-note). Hath He not promised that we shall never perish? Shall we not, therefore, come forth as gold? This confidence is grounded on the Lord's knowledge of us.

"He knows the way that I take" [Job 23:10]: therefore, "when he hath tried me, shall come forth as gold."

If something happened to us which the Lord had not foreseen and provided for, we might be in great peril; but He knows our way even to the end, and is prepared for its rough places. If some amazing calamity could come upon us which the Lord had not reckoned upon, we might well be afraid of being wrecked; but our Lord's foreseeing eye hath swept the horizon and prepared us for all weathers. He knows where storms do lurk and cyclones hide away; and He is at home in managing tempests and tornadoes. If His far-seeing eye has spied out for us a long sickness and a gradual and painful death, then He has prepared the means to bear us through. If He has looked into the mysterious unknown of the apocalyptic revelation, and seen unimaginable horrors and heart melting terrors, yet He has forestalled the necessity which He knows is coming on. It is enough for us that our Father knows what things we have need of and "when he hath tried us, we shall come forth as gold." Amen.

On affliction

1. The best saints have in them a mixture of dross.
2. Trials, and sometimes fiery trials, are necessary to separate the dross from the gold. God has various methods of trying mankind.
3. The prospect of being benefited and brightened by affliction, reconciles believers to the severest of trials. "Tribulation worketh patience." "Patience worketh experience." "Experience worketh hope." It may be that we are so often afflicted, because we have so much dross, that requires the fire, and many times a fierce fire, to separate it from the metal. (S. Lavington.)

The purification of the mind by troubles and trials

The afflictions of life, though often grievous enough in themselves, become much more so by that state of doubt and perplexity into which the mind of the sufferer is brought by them. He is tempted to despair, as thinking God has forsaken him; or to impiety, as imagining there can be no God who governs the world in wisdom and righteousness. In such a case, a wrong notion of human life is at the bottom of those desponding and murmuring thoughts, which arise in our hearts, on finding ourselves encompassed and oppressed by a larger share than ordinary of its cares and troubles. We look not forward as we ought to do. This life is no more than a preparation for another. There is no need to prove that this life is a state of trial. In general, we sink under temptation, because we do not sufficiently accustom ourselves to expect, and are therefore unprepared to encounter it. With this idea--that the present life is a state of trial--firmly impressed upon our minds, we should then stand armed for the fight, and by Divine assistance be enabled to overcome. Of the temptations or trials to which we are subject, some proceed from without, and others from within. The world endeavours at one time to seduce, at another to terrify us from the performance of our duty. Another source of trouble and uneasiness is that produced by the cross tempers, untoward dispositions, and other failings of those about us. Other trials have their origin from within, from the frame, or constitution either of body or mind. Either sickness or melancholy. Time would fail to enumerate all the different temptations that arise in our minds. They are as many and as various as our different passions and propensities, each of which will, at times, strive for the mastery, and all of which are to be kept, with a strong and steady hand, in due subordination and obedience. (J. Horne.)

Saints compared to gold

- I. Gold is generally found buried in the earth, mixed with sand or other material, and therefore requires to be dug out and separated from those materials. So Christians have been taken out from the elements of this world. They have been hewn from nature's quarry by the hammer of God's Word and made separate (Ephesians 2:1, etc.).
- II. Gold, though regarded as a pure metal, has yet some dross in it. At the same time, there is not any metal more free from dross and rust than gold. Christians, though holy and precious to God, are not without sin; there is some dross of corruption in the best of them.
- III. Gold is refined in the fire, by which it is rendered pure, solid, and strong. Christians are put into the fire, or furnace of affliction, to purge and to refine them from their dross (Zechariah 13:9; 1 Peter 4:12-13; 1 Peter 1:7).
- IV. Gold is precious. It is esteemed the most valuable on earth. Hence things of very great value are in the Scriptures represented by gold. Christians are a precious people, the excellent ones in all the earth. God esteems them as His portion.
- V. Gold is very pliant. You may bend and work it as you please. So are Christians. God having infused His grace into their hearts, they have hearts of flesh; and God, by putting them into the fire, makes them more resigned and teachable, while others rebel and repine.
- VI. Gold, though it be frequently put in the furnace, loses nothing but the dross. The fire purifies it and cannot destroy its precious nature. However fierce and raging the flames, gold retains its excellency. So the people of God endure the trial. They are not burned up or consumed in the furnace of affliction, though heated sevenfold.
- VII. Gold is often formed into vessels for the pleasure, honour, and use of princes. So God forms His people

for most excellent service--vessels of honour to hold the treasure of the Gospel, to communicate it to others (2 Corinthians 4:7), and are stewards of the Gospel.

VIII. To obtain gold, men endure much fatigue, losses, sacrifices, etc. So Jesus Christ endured great pain and loss for His people. He laid down His life for them.

IX. Gold is useful. It is that by which we obtain what is essential for life, etc. So Christians are useful--in their families, neighbourhood, to the world at large. They seek the salvation of sinners and the glory of God. The purposes of God, in reference to the diffusion of His glory in the world, will not be affected without them. (Homilist.)

So what is the value of perseverance in the context of trials? James teaches us...

James 1:2 Consider (aorist imperative = Do it without hesitation! Make certain to to this!) it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance (see study of hupomene) . 4 And let endurance (see study of hupomene) have its perfect result, that you may be **perfect** (see study of teleios) and **complete** (see study of holokleros) lacking in nothing.

James uses the verb form of **perseverance** (hupomene) a few verses later writing...

Blessed is a man who **perseveres** (present tense = as their lifestyle, not perfectly - Job was not perfect - but as the general tenor of their life) under **trial** (see study of peirasmos); for once he has been **approved** (see study dokimos), he will receive the crown (stephanos) of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love (see study agapao) (present tense = not perfectly for we are sinners but as one's general Spirit enabled practice lifestyle) Him.

Fanny Crosby's Secret of Endurance in Her "Job-like" Experience

Fanny Crosby was not born blind but like the blind man in **John 9**, her blindness would also turn out to be for the glory of God (John 9:24), "*in order that the works of God might be displayed in*" her (cp Jesus' words in John 9:3)! In May of 1820, when she was six weeks old, Fanny caught a cold, and her eyes became slightly inflamed. The regular physician in Putnam County, New York, was out of town, and a man posing as a doctor gave her the wrong treatment. Within days, her eyesight was destroyed, and the man fled town in a panic. Fanny was never bitter about the stranger's intervention.

I have not for a moment in more than eighty-five years felt a spark of resentment against him, because I have always believed... that the good Lord... by this means consecrated me to the work that I am still permitted to do.

And so this precious saint lived for almost a century a testimony of God's amazing grace, living into her nineties, composing over 9,000 beloved hymns of praise and worship, as well as over 1,000 secular poems. On her 92nd birthday (she died at the age of 95 in 1915) she cheerfully said

If in all the world you can find a happier person than I am...

What enabled Fanny Crosby to experience such joy in the face of what the natural man terms a "tragedy"? At an early age made the choice to "rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4). In fact, Fanny carried out a resolution she made when she was only 8 years old...

**How many blessings I enjoy that other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind, I cannot and I won't.**

And yet what "**secret**" lay behind Fanny's ability to consider it all joy? **What** was Fanny Crosby's "**secret of success**"? Dear reader, I submit that it was the same secret that Job had come to understand and to which he testified in Job 23:12! Like Job, from a young age, Fanny Crosby had dedicated herself to **imbibing the Word of God** and before she was ten years old, she had **memorized most of the New Testament and more than five books of the Old Testament!** By some accounts she eventually came to know the entire Bible BY HEART! (see [Fanny Crosby: Her Early Education Experience](#)).

These words from one of her final hymns express the foremost hope of her life

**And I shall see Him face to face
And tell the story - saved by grace.**

G Campbell Morgan observes that...

Suddenly, in the midst of this bitter complaining, there flamed out a most remarkable evidence of the tenacity of his faith. He declared with conviction that God knew the way he was taking. He even affirmed his confidence that it was God Who was trying him, and that presently he would come forth from the process as gold.

Spurgeon adds that...

It looks very hard to believe that a child of God should be tried by the loss of his Father's presence, and yet should come forth uninjured by the trial. Yet no gold is ever injured in the fire. Stoke the furnace as much as you may, let the blast be as strong as you will, thrust the ingot into the very center of the white heat, let it lie in the very heart of the flame; pile on more fuel, let another blast torment the coals till they become most vehement with heat, yet the gold is losing nothing, it may even be gaining.

I shall ask four questions of every man within reach of my voice. God knoweth the way that you take. I will ask you first: Do you know your own way? Secondly: Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way? Thirdly: Are you tried in the way? And, if so, fourthly: Have you confidence in God as to the result of that trial? Can you say with Job, 'When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold'?

Job 23:11 My [foot](#) has [held fast](#) to His [path](#); I have [kept](#) His [way](#) and not [turned aside](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English of the Septuagint: And I will go forth according to his commandments, for I have kept his ways; and I shall not turn aside from his commandments,

Amplified: My foot has held fast to His steps; His ways have I kept and not turned aside. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

BBE: My feet have gone in his steps; I have kept in his way, without turning to one side or to the other.

KJV: My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

NJB: My footsteps have followed close in his, I have walked in his way without swerving;

Young's Literal: On His step hath my foot laid hold, His way I have kept, and turn not aside,

MY FOOT HAS HELD FAST TO HIS PATH:

- **My foot** - 1Sa 12:2 3 4 5 Ps 18:20 21 22 23 24. 44:18. Acts 20:18, 19, 33, 34. 2Co 1:12. 1Th 2:10) (**His path** - Job 17:9)

NET - My feet have followed His steps closely

Observe Job's repeated affirmation of his obedience to God - he strings together **four** statements that attest to his obedience (3 in this verse and 1 in Job 23:12).

Such was the godly prophet Samuel's testimony before Israel...

1Sa 12:2 "Now, here is the king walking before you, but I am old and gray, and behold my sons are with you. And I have walked before you from my youth even to this day

Matthew Poole...

My foot hath held, i.e. made a free and fixed choice, and taken fast hold of them; been firmly and strongly settled, and resolved to continue in them, as the word signifies. **His steps**; either, 1. Actively, the steps or ways in which God himself walks; the paths of holiness, justice, mercy, etc., wherein he walked with or after God, as the phrase is, Ge 5:24; 2Ki 23:3, following his example. Or, 2. Passively, the steps or paths which God hath appointed men to walk in, as Job 21:14.

Held fast ([0270](#)) ('**achaz**) means to seize, grasp, hold firmly and in this context speaks of Job's tenacity in holding to God's ways.

As a corollary - Job held to God's ways because he held fast to God's Words which in turn held him fast! **Beloved, this dynamic is still valid today!** It begs the question - are you holding fast His faithful, trustworthy Word? Be honest - are you setting aside time

to savor the Scriptures? I did not say scan them or speed read them. To suck on the pure honey from one verse is better than to superficially sample an entire chapter or book (see the advantages God promises for meditation - Ps 1:2-)

'**Achaz** is used in Genesis 22:13 to describe the "**ram caught ('achaz) in the thicket by his horns.**" What a great picture of how firmly all believers should grip the Word of Life which speaks of the Lamb of God, the Incarnate Word, our **Jehovah Jireh: The LORD Who Provides!**

'**Achaz** - 63 verses - acquire property(1), acquired property(1), attached(1), bolt(1), catch(1), caught(3), drawn(2), fastened(3), grasp(2), grasped(1), grasps(1), gripped(1), grips(1), handle(1), have possessions(1), held(4), held fast(1), hold(3), holding(1), inserted(1), lay hold(1), obscures(1), possessed(1), seized(10), seizes(3), take hold(6), take possession(1), taken(2), taken hold(3), takes hold(2), took(1), took hold(3), trapped(1), wielders(1).

Gen 22:13; 25:26; 34:10; 47:27; Exod 4:4; 15:14f; Num 31:30, 47; 32:30; Deut 32:41; Josh 22:9, 19; Judg 1:6; 12:6; 16:3, 21; 20:6; Ruth 3:15; 2 Sam 1:9; 2:21; 4:10; 6:6; 20:9; 1 Kgs 1:51; 6:6, 10; 1 Chr 13:9; 24:6; 2 Chr 9:18; 25:5; Neh 7:3; Esth 1:6; Job 8:17; 16:12; 17:9; 18:9, 20; 21:6; 23:11; 26:9; 30:16; 38:13; Ps 48:6; 73:23; 77:4; 119:53; 137:9; 139:10; Eccl 2:3; 7:18; 9:12; Song 2:15; 3:4, 8; 7:8; Isa 5:29; 13:8; 21:3; 33:14; Jer 13:21; 49:24; Ezek 41:6

First use - Gen 22:13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram**caught** in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

W F A in his homily on Job 23:11, 12 uses Job as an illustration of **a faithful life...**

Its course. 1. A course of conduct. Job speaks of his foot holding, etc. He is reviewing his actions. It would have been of little use for him to have vindicated his creed and his sentiments if his conduct had been faithless. The most important question is as to how a man lives, not as to what he thinks or how he feels.

2. A continuous course. It is a way, and Job has had to keep to it. A momentary spasm of virtue will not satisfy the requirements of the Divine Law. To achieve a single heroic deed that makes the world ring with one's fame, and then sink into idle apathy, is not the way to earn the commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

3. A Divine course. It is easy to persist in one's own way. The difficulty is to leave that and to accept and follow faithfully in God's way. Yet he has marked out the course of service for every one of his people, and the plain duty is to find it and follow it.

4. An arduous course. It is not easy to keep to God's steps. The way is narrow (Mt. 7:13, 14). Many temptations urge us to forsake it for flowery paths or for the broad road. The Christian life is a course of self-denial. The path leads uphill. Even while we only think of standing still we are really slipping back. It is a mistake to suppose that the Christian life is necessarily a growth and a progress. There is danger of worse than stagnation, of declension and decay. We may have done well in the past, and yet have been hindered later on in life. To be true Christians we must be ever watchful, earnest, active in pressing forward along God's way. ([The pulpit commentary](#))

Spurgeon exhorts us first with a general exhortation regarding one's path and the relationship with holiness and godliness ...

Let us sit down before this sketch of JOB'S HOLY LIFE: it will well repay a meditative study.

Note, first, that Job had been all along a man fearing God and walking after the divine rule. In the words before us he dwells much upon the things of God- "**His steps,**" "**His way,**" "**the commandment of his lips,**" "**the words of His mouth.**" He was pre-eminently one that "**feared God and eschewed evil.**" ([Job 1:1](#)) He knew God to be the Lord, and worthy to be served, and therefore he lived in obedience to His law, which was written upon his instructed conscience. His way was God's way; he chose that course which the Lord commanded. He did not seek his own pleasure, nor the carrying out of his own will: neither did he follow the fashion of the times, nor conform himself to the ruling opinion or custom of the age in which he lived: fashion and custom were nothing to him, he knew no rule but the will of the Almighty.

Like some tall cliff which breasts the flood, he stood out almost alone, a witness for God in an idolatrous world. He owned the living God, and lived "as seeing him who is invisible." (see note Hebrews 11:27) God's will had taken the helm of the vessel, and the ship was steered in God's course according to the divine compass of infallible justice and the unerring chart of the divine will.

This is a great point to begin with; it is, indeed, the only sure basis of a noble character. Ask the man who seeks to be the architect of a great and honorable character this question- **Where do you place God? Is**

he second with you? Ah, then, in the judgment of those whose view comprehends all human relationships you will lead a very secondary kind of life, for the first and most urgent obligation of your being will be disregarded. But is God first with you? Is this your determination,

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"? (see note [Joshua 24:15](#))

Do you **seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness**? (see note Matthew 6:33) If so, you are laying the foundation for a whole or holy character, for you begin by acknowledging your highest responsibility. In this respect you will find that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Proverbs 9:10) Whether the way be rough or smooth, uphill or down dale, through green pastures or burning deserts, let God's way be your way. Where the fiery cloudy pillar of His providence leads be sure to follow, and where His holy statutes command, there promptly go. Ask the Lord to let you hear His Spirit speak like a voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." (Isaiah 30:21)

As soon as you see **from the Scriptures**, or **from conscience**, or **from providence**, what the **will of the Lord** is, make haste and delay not to keep His commandments. Set the Lord always before you. Have respect unto His statutes at all times, and in all your ways acknowledge Him. No man will be able to look back upon his life with complacency unless God has been sitting upon the throne of His heart and ruling all His thoughts, aims, and actions. Unless he can say with David, "My soul hath kept thy testimonies and I love them exceedingly," (Ps 119:167) he will find much to weep over and little with which to answer his accusers.

We must follow the Lord's way, or our end will be destruction; we must take hold upon Christ's steps, or our feet will soon be in slippery places; we must reverence God's words, or our own words will be idle and full of vanity; and we must keep God's commands, or we shall be destitute of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (see note Hebrews 12:14). I set not forth obedience to the law as the way of salvation; but I speak to those who profess to be saved already by faith in Christ Jesus, and I remind all of you who are numbered with the company of believers that if you are Christ's disciples you will bring forth the fruits of holiness, and if you are God's children you will be like your Father.

Godliness breeds God-likeness.

The fear of God leads to imitation of God, and where this is not so, the root of the matter is lacking. The scriptural rule is "by their fruits ye shall know them," (Mt 7:20-note) and by this we must examine ourselves.

Let us now consider Job's first sentence. He says:

"My foot hath held His steps."

This expression sets forth great carefulness. He had watched every step of God, that is to say, he had been minute as to particulars, observing each precept, which he looked upon as being a footprint which the Lord had made for him to set his foot in; observing, also, each detail of the great example of His God; for in so far as God is imitable He is the great example of His people, as He saith- "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (see notes 1 Peter 1:15; 16): and again, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (see note Matthew 5:48)

Job had observed the steps of God's justice, that he might be just; the steps of God's mercy, that he might be pitiful and compassionate; the steps of God's bounty, that he might never be guilty of churlishness or want of liberality; and the steps of God's truth, that he might never deceive.

He had watched God's steps of forgiveness, that he might forgive his adversaries; and God's steps of benevolence, that he might also do good and communicate, according to his ability, to all that were in need. In consequence of this he became eyes to the blind and feet to the lame; he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

"My foot," he saith, **"hath held his steps"**: he means that he had labored to be exact in his obedience towards God, and in his imitation of the divine character. Beloved, we shall do well if we are to the minutest point hourly observant of the precepts and example of God in all things. We must follow not only the right road, but His footprints in that road. We are to be obedient to our heavenly Father not only in some things, but in all things: not in some place but in all places, abroad and at home, in business and in devotion, in the words of our lips and in the thoughts of our hearts.

There is no holy walking without careful watching.

Depend upon it, no man was ever good by chance, nor did anyone ever become like the Lord Jesus by a happy accident. "I put gold into the furnace," said Aaron, "and there came out this calf," but nobody believed him. If the image was like a calf it was because he had shaped it with a graving tool; and if it is not to be believed that metal will of itself take the form of a calf, much less will character assume the likeness of God himself, as we see it in the Lord Jesus. The pattern is too rich and rare, too elaborate and perfect, ever to be reproduced by a careless, half-awakened trifler. No, we must give all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength to this business, and watch every step, or else our walk will not be close with God, nor pleasing in his sight. O to be able to say, "**My foot hath held his steps.**"

Notice here that the expression has something in it of tenacity, he speaks of taking hold upon God's steps. The idea needs to be lit up by the illustration contained in the original expression. You must go to mountainous regions to understand it. In very rough ways a person may walk all the better for having no shoes to his feet. I sometimes pitied the women of Mentone coming down the rough places of the mountains barefooted, carrying heavy loads upon their heads, but I ceased to pity them when I observed that most of them had a capital pair of shoes in the basket at the top; and I perceived as I watched them that they could stand where I slipped, because their feet took hold upon the rock, almost like another pair of hands. Barefooted they could safely stand, and readily climb where feet encased after our fashion would never carry them. Many Orientals have a power of grasp in their feet which we appear to have lost from want of use. An Arab in taking a determined stand actually seems to grasp the ground with his toes. Roberts tells us in his well-known "Illustrations" that Easterns, instead of stooping to pick up things from the ground with their fingers, will take them up with their toes; and he tells of a criminal condemned to be beheaded, who, in order to stand firm when about to die, grasped a shrub with his foot.

Job declares that he took hold of God's steps, and thus secured a firm footing. He had a hearty grip of holiness, even as David said, "I have stuck unto thy testimonies." ([Ps 119:31](#)) That eminent scholar Dr. Good renders the passage, "in His steps will I rivet my feet." He would set them as fast in the footprints of truth and righteousness as if they were riveted there, so firm was his grip upon that holy way which his heart had chosen. This is exactly what we need to do with regard to holiness: we must feel about for it with a sensitive conscience, to know where it is, and when we know it we must seize upon it eagerly, and hold to it as for our life.

The **way of holiness** is often craggy, and Satan tries to make it very slippery, and unless we can take hold of God's steps we shall soon slip with our feet, and bring grievous injury upon ourselves, and dishonor to his holy name. Beloved, to make up a holy character there must be a tenacious adherence to integrity and piety. You must not be one that can be blown off his feet by the hope of a little gain, or by the threatening breath of an ungodly man: you must stand fast and stand firm, and against all pressure and blandishment you must seize and grasp the precepts of the Lord, and abide in them, riveted to them. Standfast is one of the best soldiers in the Prince Immanuel's army and one of the most fit to be trusted with the colors of His regiment. "**Having done all, still stand.**" (see note Ephesians 6:13)

To make a holy character we must take hold of the steps of God in the sense of promptness and speed. Here again I must take you to the East to get the illustration. They say of a man who closely imitates his religious teacher, "his feet have laid hold of his master's steps," meaning that he so closely follows his teacher that he seems to take hold of his heels.

This is a blessed thing indeed, when grace enables us to follow our Lord closely. There is His foot, and close behind it is ours; and there again He takes another step, and we plant our feet where He has planted his. A very beautiful motto is hung up in our infant class-room at the Stockwell Orphanage,

"What would Jesus do?"

Not only may children take it as their guide, but all of us may do the same, whatever our age. "What would Jesus do?" If you desire to know what you ought to do under any circumstances, imagine Jesus to be in that position, and then think, "What would Jesus do? for what Jesus would do that ought I to do." In following Jesus we are following God, for in Christ Jesus the brightness of the Father's glory is best seen. Our example is our Lord and Master, Jesus the Son of God, and therefore this question is but a beam from our guiding star. Ask in all cases- "What would Jesus do?" That unties the knot of all moral difficulty in the most practical way, and does it so simply that no great wit or wisdom will be needed. May God's Holy Spirit help us to copy the line which Jesus has written, even as scholars imitate their writing master in each stroke, and line, and mark, and dot.

Oh, when we come to die, and have to look back upon our lives, it will be a blessed thing to have followed the Lord fully. They are happy who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Blessed are they in life and death of whom it can be said, -as He was so were they also in this world. Though misunderstood and misrepresented, yet they were honest imitators of their Lord. Such a true-hearted Christian can say,

"He knoweth the way that I take. He tried me, and I came forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps"

Many a sorrow will you avoid if you keep close at your Master's heel. You know what came of Peter's following afar off; try what will come of close walking with Jesus. Abide in Him, and let His words abide in you, so shall you be His disciples (John 8:31). You dare not trust in your works, and will not think of doing so, yet will you bless God that, being saved by His grace, you were enabled to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, by a close and exact following of the steps of your Lord.

Three things, then, we get in the first sentence

- (1) an exactness of obedience,
- (2) a tenacity of grip upon that which is good, and
- (3) a promptness in endeavoring to keep touch with God, and to follow him in all respects.

May these things be in us and abound.

We now pass on to the second sentence. I am afraid you will say, "Spare us, for even unto the first sentence we have not yet attained." Labour after it then, beloved; forgetting the things that are behind except to weep over them, press forward to that which is before. (see notes Philippians 3:13; 3:14) May God give you those sensitive grasping feet which we have tried to describe: feet that take hold on the Lord's way, and may you throughout life keep that hold; for "blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." (Ps 119:1)

Spurgeon...

He fought the battle right manfully; not, perhaps, without a little display of temper and self-righteousness, but still with much less of either than any of us would have shown had we been in the same plight, and had we been equally conscious of perfect integrity. He has in this part of his self-defense sketched a fine picture of a man perfect and upright before God. He has set before us the image to which we should seek to be conformed. Here is the high ideal after which every Christian man should strive; and happy shall he be who shall attain to it. Blessed is he who in the hour of his distress, if he be falsely accused, will be able to say with as much truth as the patriarch could, "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."

I ask you, first, to inspect the picture of Job's holy life, that you may make it your model. After we have done this, we will look a little below the surface, asking the question, "How was he enabled to lead such an admirable life as this? Upon what meat did this great patriarch feed that he had grown so eminent?" We shall find the answer in our second head, Job's holy sustenance- **"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."** May He, who wrought in Job his patience and integrity, by this our meditation teach us the like virtues by the power of the Holy Ghost.

I HAVE KEPT HIS WAY AND NOT TURNED ASIDE:

- Job 17:9. Ps 36:3 Ps125:5. Zeph 1:6. Lk 8:13 14 15. Ro 2:7. 2 Pe 2:20 2122)

Kept ([08104](#)) (**shamar/samar**) means to watch over carefully, to guard or be on one's guard.

The first use of **shamar/samar** in Ge 2:15 is notable, for God clearly instructed Adam and Eve to **'keep'** (guard, watch over) the garden of Eden and we see the consequences of their failure to obey God's instruction.

TWOT - The basic idea of the root is "to exercise great care over."... Secondly it expresses the careful attention to be paid to the obligations of a covenant, to laws, statutes, etc. This is one of the most frequent uses of the verb. Thus in Gen 18:19 Abraham is to command his children to keep the way of the Lord, that is, give careful heed to God's ways (cf. also Ex 20:6; Lev 18:26; Deut 26:16;

Ezek 1 1:20). It should be noted that the observance of God's laws was not to be a matter of theory only or of perfunctory compliance. The expression "to do them" is frequently appended, such as in Ezek 37:24. Proverbs 4:21 states they are to be kept in the heart... A third ramification is "take care of," "guard." This involves keeping or tending to things such as a garden (Gen 2:15), a flock (Gen 30:31), a house (2Sam 15:16)... A fourth category is the meaning "regard" "give heed to." It is used of a man's attitude of paying attention to, or reverence for, God or others. Thus in Hos 4:10, Israel has abandoned paying heed to God. ([Harris, R L, Archer, G L & Waltke, B K Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Moody Press](#))

The **Septuagint (LXX)** translates **shamar/samar** with the verb **phulasso** which means to watch, to carry out the function as a military guard or sentinel (cp Ac 23:35, 28:16), to keep watch, to have one's eye upon lest one escape, to guard a person that he might remain safe (from violence, from another person or thing, from being snatched away, from being lost). The NT uses phulasso of guarding truth (eg, 1Ti 5:21, 6:20, 2Ti 1:14-note) **Phulasso** is the verb used to describe the shepherds '**keeping watch** (phulasso) over their flock by night (Lk 2:8), which congers up the image of savage wolves seeking to devour the helpless sheep. The parallels with the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd Who keeps watch over His sheep should not go unnoticed.

David uses **shamar** twice in his attestation that he had conducted himself with righteousness before the LORD...

Psalm 18:20 ([notes](#)) The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. 21 For **I have kept (shamar/samar)** the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 22 For all His ordinances were before me, And I did not put away His statutes from me. 23 I was also blameless with Him, And **I kept (shamar/samar)** myself from my iniquity.

Spurgeon comments on v21: I have and I have not, both of which must be blended in a truly sanctified life; constraining and restraining grace must each take its share. The words of this verse refer to the saint as a traveller carefully keeping to the ways of the Lord, and not wickedly, that is, designedly, willfully, persistently, defiantly forsaking the ordained pathway in which God favors the pilgrim with his presence. Observe how it is implied in the expression, and have not wickedly departed from my God, that David lived habitually in communion with God, and knew him to be his own God, whom he might speak of as "my God." God never departs from his people, let them take heed of departing from him.

Matthew Poole...

His way have I kept, and not declined; the same thing with that in the former part of the verse, in different expressions.

Spurgeon comments on Job's declaration

I HAVE KEPT HIS WAY...

Job had adhered to God's way as the rule of his life. When he knew that such-and-such a thing was the mind of God, either by his conscience telling him that it was right, or by a divine revelation, then he obeyed the intimation and kept to it. He did not go out of God's way to indulge his own fancies, or to follow some supposed leader: to God's way he kept from his youth, even till the time when the Lord himself said of him

Hast thou considered my servant Job, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? (Job 1:8)

The Lord held out Job's character to the devil, who could not deny it, and did not attempt to do so, but only muttered,

Doth Job serve God for nought? Hast thou not set a hedge about him and all that he hath? (Job 1:9)

When he uttered our text Job could have replied to the malicious accuser that, even when God had broken down his hedges and laid him waste, he had not sinned nor charged God foolishly. He heeded not his wife's rash counsels to curse God and die (Job 2:9), but he still blessed the divine name even though everything was taken from him (Job 1:21). What noble words are those:

Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. (Job 1:21)

Though bereft of all earthly comfort, he did not forsake the way of holiness, but still kept to his God.

Keeping to the way signifies not simply adherence, but continuance and progress in it. Job had gone on in the ways of God year after year. He had not grown tired of holiness, nor weary of devotion, neither had he grown sick of what men call straight-laced piety. He had kept the way of God on, and on, and on, delighting in what Coverdale's version calls God's "high street" or the highway of holiness. The further he went the more

pleasure he took in it, and the more easy he found it to his feet, for God was with him and kept him, and so he kept God's way. **"Thy way have I kept."**

He means that notwithstanding the difficulties that were in the way, he continued to persevere in it. It was stormy weather, but Job kept to the old road; the sleet beat in his face, but he kept his way: he had gone that path in fair weather, and he was not going to forsake his God now that the storms were out; and so he kept his way. Then the scene changed, the sun was warm, and all the air was redolent (exuding fragrance) with perfume, and merry with the song of birds, but Job kept his way.

If God's providence flooded his sky with sunshine he did not forsake God because of prosperity, as some do, but **kept his way**. He **kept his way** when it was rough, **kept his way** when it was smooth.

When he met with adversities he did not turn into a bye-road, but traveled the King's highway, where a man is safest, for those who dare to assail him will have to answer for it to a higher power. The high street of holiness is safe because the King's guarantee is given that "no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon."

The righteous shall hold on his way, and so did Job, come fair, come foul. When there were others in the road with him, and when there were none, he kept his way. He would not even turn aside for those three good men, or men who thought themselves good, who sat by the wayside and miserably comforted, that is to say, tormented him; he kept God's way, as one whose mind is made up and whose face is set like a flint. There was no turning him, he would fight his way if he could not have it peaceably.

I like a man whose mind is set upon being right with God, a self-contained man by God's grace, who does not want patting on the back and encouraging, and who on the other hand does not care if he is frowned at, but has counted the cost and abides by it.

Give me a man who has a backbone; a brave fellow who has grit in him. It is well for a professor when God has put some soul into him, and made a man of him for if a Christian man is not a man as well as a Christian, he will not long remain a Christian man.

Job was firm: a well-made character that did not shrink in the wetting. He believed his God, he knew God's way, and he kept to it under all circumstances from his first start in life even until that day when he sat on a dunghill and transformed it into a throne, whereon he reigned as among all mere men, the peerless prince of patience. Ye have heard of the patience of Job (Jas 5:11), and of this as one part of it, that he **kept the way** of the Lord.

Now, dear brethren, on this second clause let me utter this word of self-examination. Have we, kept God's way? Have we got into it and do we mean to keep it still? Some are soon hot and soon cold; some set out for the New Jerusalem like Pliable (yielding readily to others), very eagerly, but the first slough (place of deep mud or mire) of despond (being cast down, losing heart or hope) they tumble into shakes their resolution, and they crawl out on the homeward side and go back to the world again. There will be no comfort in such temporary religion, but dreadful misery when we come to consider it on a dying bed. Changeful Pliables will find it hard to die.

O to be constant even to the end, so as to say, "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept." God grant us grace to do it, by his Spirit abiding in us. ([Job 23:11-12 Fair Portrait of a Saint](#))

I have... Not Turned aside ([05186](#)) (natah) means to stretch out (hand, arm, staff Ex 7:19) or spreading one's tent or with the nuance of to turn as in the present passage (Nu 20:17; 21:22; 22:23, 26, 33; 2Sa 6:10).

The **Septuagint (LXX)** translates **natah** with the verb **ekklino** which means to turn away from or aside as deviating from the right path (Ro 3:12). Josephus has a use that refers to staying clear of prickly shrubs!

Hartley states that

Job rests his confidence in a redemptive outcome to his trial solidly on his faithful obedience to God. He has directed his feet to follow the steps God has laid out for him without any deviation. (Hartley, J. E. The Book of Job. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament . Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co)

The **psalmist** uses shamar/samar in a similar declaration of obedience to the Lord...

Psalm 44:18 Our heart has not turned back, And our steps **have not deviated** (natah) from Your way

Spurgeon as usual offers insightful comments noting: Heart and life were agreed, and both were true to the Lord's way. Neither within nor without had the godly sufferers offended; they were not absolutely perfect, but they were sincerely free from all wilful transgression. It was a healthy sign for the nation that her prophet poet could testify to her uprightness before God, both in heart and act; far oftener the case would have worn quite another color, for the tribes were all too apt to set up other gods and forsake the rock of their salvation.

Thomas Brooks: Upright hearts will hold on in the ways of God, and in the ways of well doing, notwithstanding all afflictions, troubles, and discouragements, they meet withal.

Hints for pastors and laypersons: (1) The position of the heart in religion -- it comes first. (2) The position of the outer moral life in religion -- it follows the heart. (3) Necessity of the agreement of the two. (4) The need that both should be faithful to God.

Spurgeon comments on Job's declaration...

I HAVE NOT TURNED ASIDE

Job **had not declined** from the way of holiness, nor declined in the way.

First, he had not declined from it. He had not turned to the right hand nor to the left. Some turn away from God's way to the right hand by doing more than God's word has bidden them do; such as. invent religious ceremonies, and vows, and bonds, and become superstitious, falling under the bondage of priest craft, and being led into will-worship, and things that are not Scriptural. This is as truly wandering as going out of the road to the left would be. Ah, dear friends, keep to the simplicity of the Bible. This is an age in which Holy Scripture is very little accounted of. If a church chooses to invent a ceremony, men fall into it, and practice it as if it were God's ordinance. Ay, and if neither church nor law recognize the performance, yet if certain self-willed priests choose to burn candles, and to wear all sorts of bedizenments, and bow, and cringe, and march in procession, there are plenty of simpletons who will go whichever way their clergyman chooses, even if he should lead them into downright heathenism. "Follow my leader" is the game of the day, but "Follow my God" is the motto of a true Christian. Job had not turned to the right.

Nor had he turned to the left. He had not been lax in observing God's commandments. He had shunned omission as well as commission. This is a very heart-searching matter; for how many there are whose greatest sins lie in omission. And remember, sins of omission, though they sit very light on many consciences, and though the bulk of professors do not even think them sins, are the very sins for which men will be condemned at the last. How do I prove that? What said the great Judge? "I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, sick and in prison and ye visited me not." It was what they did not do that cursed them, more than what they did do. So look ye well to it, and pray God that you may not decline from the way of his precepts, from Jesus who, himself is the one and only way.

Furthermore, I take it Job means that he had not even declined in that way. He did not begin with running hard and then get out of breath, and sit by the wayside and say, "Rest and be thankful;" but he kept up the pace, and did not decline. If he was warm and zealous once he remained warm and zealous; if he was indefatigable in service, he did not gradually tone down into a sluggard, but he could say, "I have not declined." Whereas we ought to make advances towards heaven, there are many who are, after twenty years profession, no forwarder than they were, but perhaps in a worse state.

Oh, beware of a decline. We were accustomed to use that term years ago to signify the commencement of a consumption (tuberculosis), or perhaps the effects of it; and indeed, a decline in the soul often leads on to a deadly consumption. In a spiritual consumption the very life of religion seems to ebb out by little and little. The man does not die by a wound that stabs his reputation, but by a secret weakness within him, which eats at the vitals of godliness and leaves the outward surface fair. God save us from declining. I am sure, dear friends, we cannot many of us afford to decline much, for we are none too earnest, none too much alive now; but this is one of the great faults of churches, so many of the members are in a decline that the church becomes a hospital instead of a barracks. Many professors are not what they were at first: they were very promising young men, but they are not performing old men. We are pleased to see the flowers on our fruit-trees, but they disappoint us unless they knit into fruit, and we are not satisfied even then unless the fruit ripens to a mellow sweetness. We do not make orchards for the sake of blossoms, we want apples. So is it with the garden of grace, our Lord comes seeking fruit, and instead thereof he often finds nothing but leaves. May God grant to us that we may not decline from the highest standard we have ever reached. "I would," said the Lord of the church of Laodicea, "that thou wert either cold or hot." Oh, you lukewarm ones take that warning to heart.

Remember, Jesus cannot endure you; he will spue you out of his mouth; you make him sick to think of you. If you were downright cold he would understand you; if you were hot he would delight in you; but being neither cold nor hot he is sick at the thought of you, he cannot endure you; and indeed, when we think of what the Lord has done for us, it is enough to make us sick to think that any one should drag on in a cold, inanimate manner in his service, who loved us, and gave himself for us.

Some decline because they become poor: they even stay from worship on that account. I hope none of you say, "I do not like to come to the Tabernacle because I have not fit clothes to come in." As I have often said, any clothes are fit for a man to come here in if he has paid for them. Let each come by all manner of means in such garments as he has, and he shall be welcome. But I do know some very poor professors who, in the extremity of their anxiety and trouble, instead of flying to God, fly from him. This is very sad. The poorer you are, the more you want the rich consolations of grace. Do not let this temptation overcome you, but if you are as poor as Job, be as resolved as he to keep to the Lord's way and not decline. Others fly from their religion because they grow rich. They say that three generations never will come on wheels to a dissenting place of worship, and it has proved to be sadly true in many instances, though I have no cause to complain of you as yet. Some persons when they rise in the world turn up their noses at their poor friends. If any of you do so you will be worthy of pity, if not of contempt. If you forsake the ways of God for the fashion of the world you will be poor gainers by your wealth. The Lord keep you from such a decline. Many decline because they conform to the fashion of the world, and the way of the world is not the way of God. Doth not James say, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Others wander because they get into ill company, among witty people, or clever people, or hospitable people, who are not gracious people. Such society is dangerous. People whom we esteem, but whom God does not esteem, are a great snare. It is very perilous to love those who love not God. He shall not be my bosom friend who is not God's friend, for I shall probably do him but little service, and he will do me much harm. May the grace of God prevent your growing cold from any of these causes, and may you be able to say, "I have not declined." ([Job 23:11-12 Fair Portrait of a Saint](#))

Spurgeon...

Job 23:11 My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

Happy Job, to be able to say that, and to speak the truth; but there is a touch of self about it which we cannot quite commend. Be holy; but do not claim to be holy. Be thou steadfast before God, firm in thine obedience to him; but do not mention it; for thy hope lies somewhere else. Yet we cannot condemn Job for declaring that he had kept God's way. His friends were pleading against him, so he felt that he must defend himself.

You cannot talk like that in the time of trouble if you have not led a sincere, and upright, and gracious life. Those battles into which men come in the Valley of Humiliation, are often brought about by their tripping when they are going clown the hill. Our sins find us out at length; but if God enables us to walk uprightly, then we feel very confident,—not in our own uprightness, but in God's love and grace.

It is a great thing to be able to say that, as Job truly could, for we have the witness of the Spirit of God that Job was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." It was not self-righteousness that made him speak as he did; he had the right to say it, and he did say it.

Pulpit Commentary Homily on Job 23:8-12 ([The pulpit commentary](#))

([See also sermons](#)) ([See also more sermons](#))

Job 23:8 9 10 11 12.—Job to Eliphaz:

A child of light walking in darkness.

I. The child of light. That Job was entitled to be so described will appear from a consideration of:

1. The creed he professed. It is obvious that Job believed in:

(1) The existence of God. He was not one of those fools who in their hearts say, "No God!" (Ps 14:1). Throughout this, as throughout his previous discourses, the personality of God is assumed, and indeed is frequently referred to without being named.

(2) The providence of God. As little was the patriarch one of those practical atheists to whom he himself had alluded (Job 21:14). Eliphaz insinuated such a charge against the suffering saint whom he pretended to comfort. But Job implicitly repelled the imputation by recognizing that God's presence, if unseen, was still

around him, and God's hand, though ever veiled, was always working.

(3) The authority of God. Job recognized that the supreme Lawgiver for man was this invisible but omnipresent and continually working Deity, the commandment of whose lip and the word of whose mouth was the perpetually and universally binding rule of life and obedience, rather than the inward resolves, purposes, determinations of the individual, as is commonly but mistakenly supposed by the natural heart (ch. 21:15; Exod. 5:2; Jer. 18:12; Luke 19:14).

(4) The omniscience of God. Job believed not simply that God exercised a general superintendence over mundane affairs, but that his inspection of the world embraced a knowledge of particulars. Like Hagar in the wilderness, he could say, "Thou God seest me!" (Gen. 16:13). Like David, he could sing, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me" (Ps 40:17). Like Jeremiah, he could pray, "Lord, thou knowest all their counsel against me" (Jer 18:23). Like Peter, he could protest, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (Jn 21:17). Job regarded his whole life as lying continually beneath the eye of God: "He knoweth the way that is with me." So God's eyes are always upon the ways of man (Job 34:21), and in particular of the righteous (Ps. 1:6). It is the part of a good man to walk before God (Ge. 17:1), and to rejoice that he can say, "All my ways are before thee" (Ps 119:168).

2. The character he maintained. Besides being an intellectual believer in God, Job was:

(1) An earnest seeker after God. Not content with knowing that God's presence filled the universe around him, and that God's hand was constantly working beside him in the mysterious phenomena of nature and providence (Job 9:11), Job desired a visible manifestation of and a personal acquaintance with this unseen Deity. Many believe in God's existence, character, and work who never seek to know God himself, or make the slightest effort to secure his favour. Such a visible manifestation of God as Job craved, and afterwards obtained (Job 38:1), has been vouchsafed to men in Christ, the Image of the invisible God (2Co 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3), in whom alone, accordingly, God can now be found.

(2) A faithful servant of God. Recognizing his allegiance to God, Job not only used means to acquaint himself with God's will, as all saints should do, but accepted that will as the rule and pattern of his life:

(a) cheerfully, making God's way his way, like the Messianic Sufferer (Ps. 40:7, 8), and like Christ (John 6:38);

(b) perpetually, adhering to God's commandment always (Ps. 119:44), rendering obedience not alone to precepts which accorded with his inclination, but to every word that proceeded from God's mouth (Ps. 119:88);

(c) firmly, holding, fast to God's steps by his foot, resisting all attempts to cause him to decline or turn aside (Ps. 44:18; 119:31);

(d) appreciatingly, esteeming the words of God's mouth more than his necessary food (Authorized Version), like David (Ps 19:10; Ps 119:72), Jeremiah (Jer 15:16), Daniel (Da 6:5, 10), Mary (Luke 10:39 40 41 42), and New Testament believers generally (1Pe 2:2); according to another translation,

(e) carefully, treasuring up God's Word in his breast, like the Hebrew psalmist (Ps. 119:11); and

(f) sacrificingly, preferring God's commandments to the inclinations, resolves, and purposes of his own heart, when at any time these came into collision, like St. Paul (Ro 7:22);—all which proclaimed Job a genuinely pious man. (Ed Note: other translations have "more than my necessary food.")

II. The child of light in darkness. The passage exhibits Job in three different situations.

1. Encompassed by the darkness. The darkness alluded to not the cloud of outward pain and distress by which Job was overshadowed, but the inward mental and spiritual obacuration which these occasioned—the horrible eclipse which his faith suffered, the terrible revulsion of unrequited love which his soul experienced. A genuine believer and lover of God, who was conscious in his inmost soul of sincerity, who with admirable fortitude had shunned every evil way, and who with unrelaxing tenacity had adhered to the path of truth and right, preferring on every occasion God's will to his own, he had yet lost all sense of the Divine favour as well as all consciousness of the Divine presence. Though he earnestly longed to meet and made frantic efforts to obtain an interview with God, it was always in vain. "Behold, I go eastward, but he is not there; and westward, but I perceive him not. Northwards where he worketh, but I behold him not; he turneth aside southwards, and I see him not." Job meant that he looked in all directions for some visible manifestation of God before which he might come and plead his cause. Job's spiritual desolation and fruitless longing after God are not without their counterparts in the experiences of Old Testament saints and New Testament believers (Isa. 50:10; John 20:14), who sometimes, like David on account of sin (Ps. 30:7), or like Ethan through calamity (Ps 89:46), of

like Mary through bereavement (Jn 20:14), or like the travelers to Emmaus through spiritual dejection (Lk 24:17), are altogether unable to realize the comfortable shining of God's favour and Christ's love upon their souls. Job's inward condition had its highest exemplification in the soul-desertion of Christ upon the cross.

2. Supported in the darkness. As God did not leave Christ entirely without consolations in the hour of his great sorrow, so neither does he leave any of his people (Isa 43:2; He 13:5). Job was upheld in the gloom by three considerations.

(1) The knowledge of God's presence. He could not see God, but he was perfectly aware that God could see him. Though God seemed far removed, Job knew that he was close at hand—if a veiled presence, yet still a presence. So Christ believed his Father to be nigh though his face was hid. And faith should teach saints to believe in the continual encompassing of God's gracious presence, even when all inward sense of that presence has departed from the soul.

(2) The consciousness of personal integrity. David could not, have enjoyed this when he lost God's favour in consequence of sinning with Bathsheba. It is a terrible aggravation to the soul's distress to know that through personal transgression one has relapsed into the gloom. On the other hand, the calm clear persuasion that one's conduct has been such as not only conscience but God commends, must prove a rock of adamant beneath the fainting spirit.

(3) The discernment of God's purpose in affliction. This seemingly a new discovery to the patriarch. Formerly inclined to view his misfortunes as a token of Divine anger, he now regards them as sent for his trial, as designed to test his spiritual character as fire is employed to assay gold. So God did tempt Abraham (Ge 22:1), and so believers are subjected to manifold temptations for "the trial" of their faith (1Pe 1:7). That saints are so tried proves them to be saints. This thought, conjoined with the gracious purpose aimed at in affliction, makes it possible for God's people to glory in tribulations (Ro 5:3; 1Pe 1:6; Jas 1:12).

3. Emerging from the darkness. Indirectly alluded to, but contemplated as certain.

(1) At what time? "When he hath tried me," when the process of assaying has been completed, but not till then. Trouble and adversity are not removed from a child of God till they have done their work in him (Ro 5:3; He 12:11) as well as for him (2Co 4:17). But the great Refiner never keeps a soul in the furnace longer than is needful to accomplish its purification and salvation (Mal 3:3).

(2) In what manner? "As gold;" i.e. true as gold and shining like gold. Sincere saints are never injured by affliction, as pure gold is never hurt by the refiner's pot. Heat only evinces the genuine quality of precious metal, and the fires of adversity only manifest the saint's integrity of character. Adulterated metal is always harmed by the process of assaying, and untrue disciples are without fail detected in times of persecution and seasons of affliction (Mt. 24:12). But the sufferings of this present life only serve to refine and purify, to burnish and beautify, the faithful disciple and humble believer.

(3) With what result? That he no longer walks in darkness, but in the light of God's countenance, in the enjoyment of his friendship and favour for evermore.

Learn:

1. It is better to be a child of light walking in darkness than a child of darkness walking in light, i.e. in the sparks of his own kindling.
2. Though God's way is sometimes hid from a saint, the saint's way is never hid from God.
3. It is a special privilege which the good man enjoys that he is never afflicted but with an eye to his improvement.
4. The severest season of trial through which a follower of God may be called to pass is certain to have an end.
5. The sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us.
6. The only way to happiness for man is the way of God.
7. It is a sure mark of wisdom to prefer God's commandment to the wishes or resolves of self. [The pulpit commentary](#))