

Spurgeon on Job 2

Job 1:6 Satan Among the Saints

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. — Job 1:6

IT is idle to enquire what day this was — Perhaps it was a special Sabbath kept both in earth and heaven, a day of solemn convocation. In the earliest ages the godly gathered together for worship, with the Lord as their center. Both in heaven and earth they so gather: the communion of saints is one. Alas, how soon the evil entered among the righteous! There is no need that the devil should have been in heaven as a place; but looking down from his throne the Lord saw Satan mingling with those who worshipped him; and he had a word for him. In a rightly-ordered congregation even the wicked have their portion.

From Satan's presence among the sons of God we learn:

I. THAT THE MERE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES WITH GOD'S PEOPLE IS OF NO VALUE.

1. Very clearly, it is not acceptable worship to God: for nothing that Satan does can be accepted. His presence among the sons of God is presumption, and not reverence.
2. It is not beneficial to the person's own self; for the fallen spirit remained a devil, and acted like one, even in the presence of God. We must come to the Lord by faith, or our worship is dead and unprofitable.
3. It may be the occasion of more sin; for in the assembly Satan belied Job, and plotted his destruction.

From this we learn:

II. THAT THE BEST ASSEMBLIES ARE NOT FREE FROM EVIL ONES.

1. This should make us continue to meet with the saints even though we know of some in the assembly who are false to their profession. Should the sons of God cease to meet because Satan may come among them?
2. This should cause great heart-searching and the prompt inquiry, "Lord, is it I?" Out of twelve apostles one was a devil, and he was with the Lord at his farewell Passover.
3. This should make us watchful even while we are praying.
4. This should make ministers faithful, so that the devil may not be at home in the congregation, but may be annoyed by the truth which he hates.
5. This should make us long for the perfect assembly above where there will be no mixture, but a sinless congregation.

III. THAT SATAN MAY ASSEMBLE WITH THE SONS OF GOD.

1. To do mischief to saints:

By accusing them before the Lord, even in their holy things.

By calling off their thoughts from heavenly concerns, and making them heavy of heart and distracted with care.

By setting them to criticize instead of hearing to profit.

By sowing dissensions even in their holy service.

By exciting pride in preachers, in singers, in those who publicly pray, and in those who give. This is shown in different persons in their style, their tone, their dress, etc.

By cooling down their ardor, abating their love, chilling their praise, freezing their prayer, and, in general, killing their zeal and joy.

2. To do mischief to unconverted hearers:

By distracting attention from saving truth.

By raising doubts; by suggesting skeptical ideas, raising dark questions, and putting the man before the Master.

By suggesting delay to those who may be impressed.

By quenching prayer, hindering enjoyment, preventing profit, deadening feeling, and robbing God of glory.

By taking away the word which had been sown; as birds peck up the seed scattered on the highway.

IV. THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE ALL THE MORE SATANIC FOR ASSEMBLING WITH THE SONS OF GOD.

Satan showed the cloven foot in that sacred gathering more than ever.

1. He was brazenly impudent with his Maker.

2. He railed at God's people, even at one of the best of them, whom the Lord himself called "perfect?"

3. He resolved to tempt him, to torture him, and to lead him into rebellion against God, if he could.

The devil is here at this moment.

Let us not yield to his suggestions.

Let us cry to the Lord at once, and trust in the Lord Jesus, who can preserve us from the evil one, even when he is present.

Addenda

As soon as the sower goes forth to sow his seed, the fowls of the air go forth also. The more good is being done in any place, the more surely will Satan oppose it. Unusual provocations will be given to lukewarm professors by those whose zeal is aroused; and so there will be bickerings. Ready offense will be taken by cross-grained brethren during a revival; for things are apt to be a little out of the regular order; and here is another root of bitterness. Unusually large numbers of hypocrites will come forward, just as snails and slugs come creeping forth on a rainy day. Unusual bitterness will be felt by worldlings, and, as a consequence, unusual slanders will be current against the more active assailants of the enemy's kingdom. You cannot destroy a wasp's nest without being attacked in return. Yet this is better than stagnation. In a slumbering church it is the adversary's chief business to rock the cradle, hush all noise, and drive away even a fly which might light upon the sleeper's face; Satan's great dread is lest the church should be aroused from her dreamy slumbers.

Since Satan will enter our assemblies, it behooves us to see (1) that no one of us brings him in our company; (2) that no one gives place to him when he enters the congregation; (3) that, like Abram with the ravenous birds, we drive him away; or (4) that we pray with all the more earnestness, "Deliver us from the evil one."

George Marsh, who was martyred in the reign of Queen Mary, in a letter to some friends at Manchester, wrote: "The servants of God cannot at any time come and stand before God, that is, lead a godly life, and walk innocently before God, but Satan cometh also among them, that is, he daily accuseth, findeth fault, vexeth, persecuteth, and troubleth the godly; for it is the nature and property of the devil always to hurt, and do mischief, unless he be forbidden of God; but unless God doth permit him, he can do nothing at all, not so much as enter into a filthy hog?" — Fox's Book of Martyrs

Did Satan review himself at the end of that Sabbath? Did he feel any compunction at having defied his Maker, at having intruded among the saints, and at having done them wrong in their own Father's Palace? We suppose not. But hearers, who are not Satan's, would do well to lay to heart the character of any one of their Lord's-days as God sees it. Sabbath sins well weighed and studied furnish plentiful material for repentance. Perhaps if this theme were well applied to the conscience it might arouse the heart to penitence, and lead it to faith.

Luther was in great danger of being stabbed by a Jew; but a friend sent him a portrait of the assassin, and so he was put upon his guard. We ought to be forearmed by being forewarned. The great enemy cannot now pounce upon us at unawares while we are at our devotions; for we are not ignorant of his devices. We are bidden to watch as well as pray, to watch before we pray, and to watch

when we pray.

Job 3:23 The Sorrowful Man's Question

Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? — Job 3:23

Job's case was such that life itself became irksome. He wondered why he should be kept alive to suffer. Could not mercy have permitted him to die out of hand? Light is most precious, yet we may come to ask why it is given. See the small value of temporal things, for we may have them and loathe them; we may have the light of life and prefer the darkness of death under the sorrowful conditions which surround us. Hence Job asks, "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures?"

We hope that our hearers are not in Job's condition; but if they are, we desire to comfort them.

I. THE CASE WHICH RAISES THE QUESTION: — "A man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in." He has the light of life, but not the light of comfort.

1. He walks in deep trouble, so deep that he cannot see the bottom of it. Nothing prospers, either in temporals or in spirituals. He is greatly depressed in spirit. He can see no help for his burden, or alleviation of his misery. He cannot see any ground for comfort either in God or in man. "His way is hid."
2. He can see no cause for it. No special sin has been committed. No possible good appears to be coming out of it. When we can see no cause we must not infer that there is none. Judging by the sight of the eyes is dangerous.
3. He cannot tell what to do in it. Patience is hard, wisdom is difficult, confidence scarce, and joy out of reach, while the mind is in deep gloom. Mystery brings misery.
4. He cannot see the way out of it. He seems to hear the enemy say, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in" (Exod. 14:3). He cannot escape through the hedge of thorn, nor see an end to it: his way is straitened as well as darkened. Men in such a case feel their griefs intensely, and speak too bitterly.

If we were in such misery, we, too, might raise the question; therefore let us consider:

II. THE QUESTION ITSELF: "Why is light given?" etc.

This inquiry, unless prosecuted with great humility and child-like confidence, is to be condemned:

1. It is an unsafe one. It is an undue exaltation of human judgment. Ignorance should shun arrogance. What can we know?
2. It reflects upon God. It insinuates that his ways need explanation, and are either unreasonable, unjust, unwise, or unkind.
3. There must be an answer to the question; but it may not be one intelligible to us. The Lord has a "therefore" in answer to every "wherefore"; but he does not often reveal it; for "he giveth not account of any of his matters" (Job 33:13).
4. It is not the most profitable question. Why we are allowed to live in sorrow is a question which we need not answer. We might gain far more by inquiring how to use our prolonged life.

III. ANSWERS WHICH MAY BE GIVEN TO THE QUESTION.

1. Suppose the answer should be, "God wills it." Is not that enough? "I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it" (Ps. 39:9).
2. To an ungodly man sufficient answers are at hand.

It is mercy which, by prolonging the light of life, keeps you from worse suffering. For you to desire death is to be eager for hell. Be not so foolish.

It is wisdom which restrains you from sin, by hedging up your way, and darkening your spirit. It is better for you to be downcast than dissolute.

It is love which calls you to repent. Every sorrow is intended to whip you Godward.

3. To the godly man there are yet more apparent reasons. Your trials are sent, —

To let you see all that is in you. In deep soul-trouble we discover what we are made of.

To bring you nearer to God. The hedges shut you up to God; the darkness makes you cling close to him. Life is continued that grace may be increased.

To make you an example to others. Some are chosen to be monuments of the Lord's special dealings; a sort of lighthouse to other mariners.

To magnify the grace of God. If our way were always bright we could not so well exhibit the sustaining, consoling, and delivering power of the Lord.

To prepare you for greater prosperity. Without your life being preserved, you could not reach that halcyon period which is reserved for you; nor would you be fitted for it if you were not disciplined by previous trials.

To make you like your Lord Jesus, who lived in affliction. For him death was no escape from his burdens: he said, "It is finished," before he gave up the ghost.

Be not too ready to ask unbelieving questions.

Be sure that life is never too long.

Be prepared of the Holy Spirit to keep to the way even when it is hid, and to walk on between the hedges when they are not hedges of roses, but fences of briar.

Suggestions

When it is asked why a man is kept in misery on earth, when he would be glad to be released by death, perhaps the following among others may be the reasons: (1) those sufferings may be the very means which are needful to develop the true state of his soul. Such was the case with Job; (2) they may be the proper punishment of sin in the heart, of which the individual was not fully aware, but which may be distinctly seen by God. There may be pride, and the love of ease, and self-confidence, and ambition, and a desire of reputation. Such appear to have been some of the besetting sins of Job; (3) they are needful to teach true submission, and to show whether a man is willing to resign himself to God; (4) they may be the very things which are necessary to prepare the individual to die. At the same time that men often desire death, and feel that it would be a relief, it might be to them the greatest possible calamity. They may be wholly unprepared for it. For a sinner, the grave contains no rest; the eternal world furnishes no repose. One design of God in such sorrows may be to show to the wicked how intolerable will be future pain, and how important it is for them to be ready to die. If they cannot bear the pains and sorrows of a few hours in this short life, how can they endure eternal sufferings? If it is so desirable to be released from the sorrows of the body here, if it is felt that the grave, with all that is repulsive in it, would be a place of repose, how important is it to find some way to be secured from everlasting pains! The true place of release from suffering, for a sinner, is not the grave; it is in the pardoning mercy of God, and in that pure heaven to which he is invited through the blood of the cross. In that holy heaven is the only real repose from suffering and from sin; and heaven will be all the sweeter in proportion to the extremity of pain which is endured on earth. — Barnes

Job 7:20 The Sinner's Surrender to His Preserver

I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? — Job 7:20

Job could defend himself before men, but he used another tone when bowing before the Lord: there he cried, "I have sinned." The words would suit any afflicted saint; for, indeed, they were uttered by such an one; but they may also be used by the penitent sinner, and we will on this occasion direct them to that use.

I. A CONFESSION. "I have sinned."

In words this is no more than a hypocrite, nay, a Judas, might say. Do not many call themselves "miserable sinners" who are indeed despicable mockers? Yet seeing Job's heart was right his confession was accepted.

1. It was very brief, but yet very full. It was more full in its generality than if he had descended to particulars. We may use it as a summary of our life: "I have sinned." What else is certain in my whole career? This is most sure and undeniable.

2. It was personal. I have sinned, whatever others may have done.
3. It was to the Lord. He addresses the confession not to his fellowman but to the Preserver of men.
4. It was a confession wrought by the Spirit. See verse 18, where he ascribes his grief to the visitation of God.
5. It was sincere. No complimentary talk, or matter of ritualistic form, or passing acknowledgment. His heart cried, "I have sinned;" and he meant it.
6. It was feeling. He was cut to the quick by it. Read the whole chapter. This one fact, "I have sinned;" is enough to brand the soul with the mark of Cain, and burn it with the flames of hell.
7. It was a believing confession. Mingled with much unbelief Job still had faith in God's power to pardon. An unbelieving confession may increase sin.

II. AN INQUIRY. "What shall I do unto thee?"

In this question we see,—

1. His willingness to do anything, whatever the Lord might demand, thus proving his earnestness.
2. His bewilderment: he could not tell what to offer, or where to turn; yet something must be done.
3. His surrender at discretion. He makes no conditions, he only begs to know the Lord's terms.
4. The inquiry may be answered negatively.

What can I do to escape thee? Thou art all around me.

Can past obedience atone? Alas! As I look back I am unable to find anything in my life but sin.

Can I bring a sacrifice? Would grief, fasting, long prayers, ceremonies, or self-denial avail? I know they would not.

5. It may be answered evangelically:

Confess the sin. "If we confess our sins," etc.

Renounce it. By his grace we can "cease to do evil and learn to do well."

Obeys the message of peace: believe in the Lord Jesus and live.

III. A TITLE. "O thou preserver of men!"

Observer of men, therefore aware of my case, my misery, my confession, my desire for pardon, my utter helplessness.

Preserver of men.

By his infinite long-suffering refraining from punishment.

By daily bounties of supply, keeping the ungrateful alive.

By the plan of salvation, delivering men from going down into the pit, snatching the brands from the burning.

By daily grace, preventing the backsliding and apostasy of believers.

We must view the way and character of God in Christ if we would find comfort; and from his gracious habit of preserving men we infer that he will preserve us, guilty though we be.

Address upon the point in hand, —

The impenitent, urging them to confession.

The unconcerned, moving them to enquire, "What must we do to be saved?"

The ungrateful, exhibiting the preserving goodness of God as a motive for love to him.

Cross Lights

No sooner had Job confessed his sin, but he is desirous to know a remedy. Reprobates can cry, "Peccavi;" I have sinned; but then they proceed not to say as here, "What shall I do?" They open their wound, but lay not on a plaster, and so the wounds made by sin are more putrefied, and grow more dangerous. Job would be directed what to do for remedy: he would have pardoning grace and prevailing grace, upon any terms. — Trapp

Job was one of those whom Scripture describes as "perfect," yet he cried, "I have sinned." Noah was perfect in his generation, but no drunkard will allow us to forget that he had his fault. Abraham received the command, "Walk before me and be thou perfect," but he was not absolutely sinless. Zecharias and Elizabeth were blameless, and yet there was enough unbelief in Zecharias to make him dumb for nine months. The doctrine of sinless perfection in the flesh is not of God, and he who makes his boast of possessing such perfection has at once declared his own ignorance of himself and of the law of the Lord. Nothing discovers an evil heart more surely than a glorying in its own goodness. He that proclaimeth his own praise publisheth his own shame.

Man is in himself so feeble a creature, that it is a great wonder that he has not long ago been crushed by the elements, exterminated by wild beasts, or extirpated by disease. Omnipotence has bowed itself to his preservation, and compelled all visible things to form the Bodyguard of Man. We believe that the same Preserver of men who has thus guarded the race, watches with equal assiduity over every individual. Our own life contains instances of deliverance so remarkable, that the doctrine of a special providence needs to us no further proof. Kept alive, with death so near, we have been compelled to cry, "This is the finger of God!" Now, this preserving grace is a fair ground for hope as to forgiving love. He who has been thus careful to keep us in being must have designs for our well-being. Marvelously has he protected us, sinners though we be; and, therefore, we need not question his willingness to save us from all iniquity.

The unconditional surrender implied in the question, "What shall I do unto thee?" is absolutely essential from every man who hopes to be saved. God will never raise the siege until we hand out the keys of the city, open every gate, and bid the Conqueror ride through every street, and take possession of the citadel. The traitor must deliver up himself and trust the prince's clemency. Till this is done the battle will continue; for the first requisite for peace with God is complete submission.

Job 14:4 Out of Nothing Comes Nothing

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. — Job 14:4

JOB had a deep sense of the need of being clean before God, and indeed he was clean in heart and hand beyond his fellows. But he saw that he could not of himself produce holiness in his own nature, and therefore, he asked this question, and answered it in the negative without a moment's hesitation. The best of men are as incapable as the worst of men of bringing out from human nature that which is not there.

I. MATTERS OF IMPOSSIBILITY IN NATURE.

1. Innocent children from fallen parents.
2. A holy nature from the depraved nature of any one individual.
3. Pure acts from an impure heart.
4. Perfect acts from imperfect men.
5. Heavenly life from nature's moral death.

II. SUBJECTS FOR PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION FOR EVERYONE.

1. That we must be clean to be accepted.
2. That our fallen nature is essentially unclean.
3. That this does not deliver us from our responsibility: we are none the less bound to be clean because our nature inclines us to be unclean; a man who is a rogue to the core of his heart is not thereby delivered from the obligation to be honest.

4. That we cannot do the needful work of cleansing by our own strength.

Depravity cannot make itself desirous to be right with God.

Corruption cannot make itself fit to speak with God.

Unholiness cannot make itself meet to dwell with God.

5. That it will be well for us to look to the Strong for strength, to the Righteous One for righteousness, to the Creating Spirit for new creation. Jehovah brought all things out of nothing, light out of darkness, and order out of confusion; and it is to such a Worker as He that we must look for salvation from our fallen state.

III. PROVISIONS TO MEET THE CASE.

1. The fitness of the gospel for sinners. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly:" The gospel contemplates doing that for us which we cannot attempt for ourselves.

2. The cleansing power of the blood. Jesus would not have died if sin could have been removed by other means

3. The renewing work of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost would not regenerate us if we could regenerate ourselves.

4. The omnipotence of God in spiritual creation, resurrection, quickening, preservation, and perfecting. This meets our inability and death.

Despair of drawing any good out of the dry well of the creature.

Have hope for the utmost cleansing, since God has become the worker of it.

Observations

The word which we render "clean" signifies shining, beautiful: a substance so pure and transparent that we may see through it, so pure that it is free from all spot or defilement, from all blackness and darkness. Who can bring such a clean thing out of an unclean? The Hebrew word (tama) comes near the word (contaminatum), which is used by the Latins for "unclean," and it speaks the greatest pollution, the sordidness and filthiness of habit, the gore of blood, the muddiness of water, whatever is loathsome or unlovely, noisome or unsightly. All these meet in and make up the meaning of this word, "Who can bring a clean thing out of this uncleanness?" — Caryl

The depravity of man is universally hereditary. Adam is said to have begotten "a son in his own likeness," sinful as he was as well as mortal and miserable. Yea, the holiest saint upon earth communicates a corrupt and sinful nature to his child: as the circumcised Jew begat an uncircumcised child; and as the wheat, cleansed and fanned, being sown comes up with a husk (John 3:6). — Gurnall

It would be labor in vain to endeavor to cleanse the stream of a polluted fountain. No, the source must be changed, or the flow will be unaltered. Prune the crab as you please, it will not bring forth apples: nor will a thorn under the best cultivation produce figs. Regeneration is a change of nature, but it is by no means a natural change; it is supernatural in its origin, execution, and consequences. It must be wrought by a power from above, since there is neither will nor power to work it from below.

Job 19:25 Job's Sure Knowledge

For I know that my Redeemer liveth. — Job 19:25

Difficulties of translation very great. We prefer a candid reading to one which might be obtained by pious fraud. It would seem that Job, driven to desperation, fell back upon the truth and justice of God. He declared that he should be vindicated somehow or other, and even if he died there would certainly come a rectification after death. He could not believe that he would be left to remain under the slanderous accusations which had been heaped upon him. He was driven by his solemn assurance of the justice and faithfulness of God to believe in a future state, and in a Vindicator who would one day or other set crooked things straight. We may use the words in the most complete evangelical sense, and not be guilty of straining them; indeed, no other sense will fairly set forth the patriarch's meaning. From what other hope could he obtain consolation but from that of future life and glory?

I. JOB HAD A TRUE FRIEND AMID CRUEL FRIENDS. He calls him his Redeemer, and looks to him in his trouble.

The Hebrew word will bear three renderings, as follows,—

1. His Kinsman.

Nearest akin of all. No kinsman is so near as Jesus. None so kinned, and none so kind.

Voluntarily so. Not forced to be a brother, but so in heart, and by his own choice of our nature: therefore more than brother.

Not ashamed to own it. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11). Even when they had forsaken him he called them "my brethren" (Matt. 28:10).

Eternally so. Who shall separate us (Rom. 8:35)?

2. His Vindicator.

From every false charge: by pleading the causes of our soul.

From every jibe and jest: for he that believeth in him shall not be ashamed or confounded.

From true charges, too; by bearing our sin himself and becoming our righteousness, thus justifying us.

From accusations of Satan. "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan!" (Zech. 3:2). "The accuser of our brethren is cast down" (Rev. 12:10).

3. His Redeemer.

Of his person from bondage.

Of his lost estates, privileges, and joys, from the hand of the enemy.

Redeeming both by price and by power.

II. JOB HAD REAL PROPERTY AMID ABSOLUTE POVERTY. He speaks of "my Redeemer"? as much as to say, "Everything else is gone, but my Redeemer is still my own, and lives for me."

He means,—

1. I accept him as such, leaving myself in his hands.

2. I have felt somewhat of his power already, and I am confident that all is well with me even now, since he is my Protector.

3. I will cling to him for ever. He shall be my only hope in life and death. I may lose all else, but never the Redemption of my God, the Kinship of my Savior.

III. JOB HAD A LIVING KINSMAN AMID A DYING FAMILY. "My Redeemer liveth."

He owned the great Lord as ever living:

As "the Everlasting Father;" to sustain and solace him.

As Head of his house, to represent him.

As Intercessor, to plead in heaven for him.

As Defender, to preserve his rights on earth.

As his Righteousness, to clear him at last.

What have we to do with the dead Christ of the church of Rome? Our Redeemer lives.

What with the departed Christ of Unitarians? Our divine Vindicator abides in the power of an endless life.

IV. JOB HAD ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY AMID UNCERTAIN AFFAIRS. "I know." He had no sort of doubt upon that matter. Everything else was questionable, but this was certain.

His faith made him certain. Faith brings sure evidence; it substantiates what it receives, and makes us know.

His trials could not make him doubt. Why should they? They touched not the relationship of his God, or the heart of his Redeemer, or the life of his Vindicator.

His difficulties could not make him fear failure on this point, for the life of his Redeemer was a source of deliverance which lay out of himself, and was never doubtful.

His caviling friends could not move him from the assured conviction that the Lord would vindicate his righteous cause.

While Jesus lives our characters are safe. Happy he who can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Have you this great knowledge?

Do you act in accordance with such an assurance?

Will you not at this hour devoutly adore your loving Kinsman?

Rough Thoughts

"My Redeemer." The word has the general meaning "ransomer," "deliverer," and specially denotes one who takes up a man's cause and vindicates his rights, either by avenging him on his foes, or by restoring him or his heirs to possessions of which he has been defrauded. Job has already expressed a wish that there might be an umpire between him and God: then he goes further, and desires an advocate: then declares that he has a witness, one who exactly knows his rights, in heaven: then calls upon God himself to be his advocate. He now takes a stronger position, and declares his certainty that there is One who adds to all these conditions that which gives them solidity, and assures his final triumph: there lives One who will vindicate his righteousness, and clear his cause completely. — Speaker's Commentary

In times of sharp trials believers are: (1) driven out of themselves to look to their God, their Redeemer; (2) driven to look within themselves for a knowledge sure and unquestioning — "I know"; (3) driven to hold by personal faith to that which is set forth in the covenant of grace — "my Redeemer"; (4) driven to live much upon the unseen — the living Redeemer, and his advent in the latter day.

Tried saints, when greatly in the dark, have been led to great discoveries of comfortable truth. "Necessity is the mother of invention." Here Job found an argument from the justice of God for his own comfort. God could not leave his sincere servant under slander: therefore if he died undefended, and years passed away so that the worms consumed his body, yet a Vindicator would arise, and the maligned and injured Job would be cleared. Thus the Spirit revealed to the afflicted patriarch a future state, a living Next-of-Kin, a future judgment, a resurrection, and an eternal justification of saints. Great light came in through a narrow window, and Job was an infinite gainer by his temporary losses.

A weak faith is glad to look off from all difficulties, for it shrinks back at them: as Martha, considering Lazarus was four days dead, and began to putrefy, her faith began to fail her; it was too late now to remove the gravestone. But Faith in its strength considers all these, urges these impossibilities, and yet overcomes them: as Elijah, in his dispute with Baal's priests, took all the disadvantages to himself. "Pour on water," said he; and again, "Pour on more water"; faith shall fetch fire from heaven to enflame the sacrifice. "So," saith Job, "let me die, and rot, and putrefy in the grave, nay, let the fire burn my body, or the sea swallow it, or wild beasts devour it, yet it shall be restored to me; death shall be *praedae suae custos*, like the lion that killed the prophet, and then stood by his body, and did not consume it." Job's faith laughs at impossibilities, is ashamed to talk of difficulties; with Abraham, considers not his own dead body, but believes above and against hope; knew God would restore it. — R. Browning

These words are ushered in with a solemn preface, containing in them some notable truth: "Oh, that my words were now written! Oh, that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know," etc. Surely such a passionate preface will become no other matter so well as the great mystical truths of the Christian faith.

Faith is, or should be, strongly persuaded of what it believeth. It is an evidence, not a conjecture; not a surmise, but a firm assurance. We should certainly know what we believe: "We know that thou art a Teacher come from God" (John 3:2). "We believe,

and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). "We know that we have a building of God" (1 Cor. 5:1). "We know that we shall see him as he is!" (1 John 3:2). "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Invisible things revealed by God should be certainly known, because God hath told us that such clear, firm apprehensions become us. Faith is not a bare conjecture, but a certain knowledge; not "we think," "we hope well," but "we know" is the language of faith. It is not a bare possibility we go upon, nor a probable opinion, but a certain, infallible truth I put you upon this, partly because we have a great argument in the text. If Job could see it so long before it came to pass, should not we see it now? Believers of old shame us, who live in the clear sunshine of the gospel Job lived long before the gospel was revealed; the redemption of souls was at that time a great mystery, being sparingly revealed to a few; only one of a thousand could bring this message to a condemned sinner, that God had found a ransom (Job 33:23). — Manton

If we are sure about anything, let it be concerning the Redeemer. If we have an indefeasible claim to anything, let it be to our Redeemer. If we cling with tenacity to any truth, let it be our Redeemer's resurrection and life. Everything hangs here; this is the keystone of the gospel, the foundation of our faith, and the pinnacle of our hope: "Because I live ye shall live also." Oh for more of Job's certainty, even if the cost were Job's afflictions!

Job 24:13 Rebelling Against the Light

They are of those that rebel against the light— Job 24:13

These evidently had the light, and this should be esteemed as no small privilege, since to wander on the dark mountains is a terrible curse. Yet this privilege may turn into an occasion of evil.

Most of us have received light in several forms, such as instruction, conscience, reason, revelation, experience, the Holy Spirit. The degree of light differs, but we have each received some measure thereof.

Light has a sovereignty in it, so that to resist it is to rebel against it. God has given it to be a display of himself, for God is light; and he has clothed it with a measure of his majesty and power of judgment.

Rebellion against light has in it a high degree of sin. It might be virtue to rebel against darkness, but what shall be said of those who withstand the light, resisting truth, holiness, and knowledge?

I. DETECT THE REBELS.

Well-instructed persons, who have been accustomed to teach others, and yet turn aside to evil: these are grievous traitors.

Children of Christian parents who sin against their early training; upon whom prayer and entreaty, precept and example are thrown away.

Hearers of the word, who quench convictions deliberately, frequently, and with violence.

Men with keen moral sense, who rush on, despite the reins of conscience which should restrain them.

Lewd professors who, nevertheless, talk orthodoxy and condemn others, thereby assuredly pronouncing their own doom.

II. DESCRIBE THE FORMS OF THIS REBELLION.

Some refuse light, being unwilling to know more than would be convenient; therefore they deny themselves time for thought, absent themselves from sermons, neglect godly reading, shun pious company, avoid reproof, etc.

Others scoff and fight against it, calling light darkness, and darkness light. Infidelity, ribaldry, persecution, and such like, become their resort and shelter.

Persons run contrary to it in their lives; of set purpose, or through willful carelessness. Walking away from the light is rebelling against it. Setting up your own wishes in opposition to the laws of morality and holiness, is open revolt against the light.

Many presume upon their possession of light, imagining that knowledge and orthodox belief will save them.

Many darken it for others, hindering its operations among men, hiding their own light under a bushel, ridiculing the efforts of others,

etc.

All darkness is a rebellion against light. Let us "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

III. DENOUNCE THE PUNISHMENT OF THIS REBELLION.

To have the light removed.

To lose eyes to see it even when present.

To remain unforgiven, as culprits blindfolded for death, as those do who resist the light of the Holy Spirit.

To sin with tenfold guilt, with awful willfulness of heart.

To descend for ever into that darkness which increases in blackness throughout eternity.

IV. DECLARE THE FOLLY OF THIS REBELLION.

Light is our best friend, and it is wisdom to obey it: to resist it is to rebel against our own interest.

Light triumphs still. Owls hoot, but the moon shines. Opposition to truth and righteousness is useless; it may even promote that which it aims to prevent.

Light would lead to more light. Consent to it, for it will be beneficial to your own soul.

Light would lead to heaven, which is the center of light.

Light even here would give peace, comfort, rest, holiness, and communion with God.

Let us not rebel against light, but yield to its lead; yea, leap forward to follow its blessed track.

Let us become the allies of light, and spread it. It is a noble thing to live as light-bearers of "the Lord and Giver of Light."

Let us walk in the light, as God is in the light; and so our personal enjoyment will support our Life-work. Light must be our life if our life is to be light.

Lights

Off the coast of New Zealand, a captain lost his vessel by steering in the face of the warning light, till he dashed upon the rock immediately beneath the lighthouse. He said that he was asleep; but this did not restore the wreck, nor save him from condemnation. It is a terrible thing for rays of gospel light to guide a man to his doom.

The sins of the godly have this aggravation in them, that they sin against clearer illumination than the wicked. "They are of those that rebel against the light" (Job 24:13). Light is there taken figuratively for knowledge. It cannot be denied that the wicked sin knowingly; but the godly have a light beyond other men, such a divine, penetrating light as no hypocrite can attain to. They have better eyes to see sin than others; and for them to meddle with sin, and embrace this dunghill, must needs provoke God, and make the fury rise up in his face. Oh, therefore, you that are the people of God, flee from sin; your sins are more enhanced, and have worse aggravations in them, than the sins of the unregenerate. — Thomas Watson

Sins of ignorance are truly sins, for every lawgiver takes it for granted that his subjects seek to know his laws. But the deliberate commission of known trespass, and the willful neglect of known duty, have in them elements of great disloyalty. He who knew his Lord's will and did it not was beaten with many stripes. If a man puts his hand into the fire knowing that it burns, no one will pity him; if he wantonly enters a pest house, no one can wonder that he is smitten with disease. When the ice is marked "DANGEROUS," the warning should be sufficient for any reasonable man; and when the notice is repeated at every corner, and set up in great capital letters, he who ventures on the rotten ice will be not only a fool but a suicide, should he perish in his rashness.

Job 27:10 The Hypocrite Discovered

Will he always call upon God? — Job 27:10

A hypocrite may be a very neat imitation of a Christian. He professes to know God, to converse with him, to be dedicated to his service, and to invoke his protection: he even practices prayer, or at least feigns it. Yet the cleverest counterfeit fails somewhere, and may be discovered by certain signs. The test is here: "Will he always call upon God?"

I. WILL HE PRAY AT ALL SEASONS OF PRAYER?

Will he pray in private? Or is he dependent upon the human eye, and the applause of men?

Will he pray if forbidden? Daniel did so. Will he?

Will he pray in business? Will he practice ejaculatory prayer? Will he look for hourly guidance?

Will he pray in pleasure? Will he have a holy fear of offending with his tongue? Or will company make him forget his God?

Will he pray in darkness of soul? Or will he sulk in silence?

II. WILL HE PRAY CONSTANTLY?

If he exercises the occasional act of prayer, will he possess the spirit of prayer which never ceases to plead with the Lord? We ought to be continually in prayer, because we are:

Always dependent for life, both temporal and spiritual, upon God.

Long as they live should Christians pray,

For only while they pray they live.

Always needing something, nay, a thousand things.

Always receiving, and therefore always needing fresh grace wherewith to use the blessing worthily.

Always in danger. Seen or unseen danger is always near, and none but God can cover our head.

Always weak, inclined to evil, apt to catch every infection of soul-sickness, "ready to perish" (Isa. 27:13).

Always needing strength, for suffering, learning, song, or service.

Always sinning. Even in our holy things sin defiles us, and we need constant washing.

Always weighted with other men's needs. Especially if rulers, pastors, teachers, parents.

Always having the cause of God near our heart if we are right; and in its interests finding crowds of reasons for prayer.

III. WILL HE PRAY IMPORTUNATELY?

If no answer comes, will he persevere? Is he like the brave horse who will pull at a post at his master's bidding?

If a rough answer comes, will he plead on? Does he know how to wrestle with the angel, and give tug for tug?

If no one else prays, will he be singular, and plead on against wind and tide?

If God answer him by disappointment and defeat, will he feel that delays are not denials, and still pray?

IV. WILL HE CONTINUE TO PRAY THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF LIFE?

The hypocrite soon gives up prayer under certain circumstances.

If he is in trouble, he will not pray, but will run to human helpers.

If he gets out of trouble, he will not pray, but quite forget his vows.

If men laugh at him, he will not dare to pray.

If men smile on him, he will not care to pray.

1. He grows formal. He is half asleep, not watchful for the answer. He falls into a dead routine of forms and words.
2. He grows weary. He can make a spurt, but he cannot keep it up. Short prayers are sweet to him.
3. He grows secure. Things go well and he sees no need of prayer; or he is too holy to pray.
4. He grows infidel, and fancies it is all useless, dreams that prayer is not philosophical.

Illustrations

We have heard of a child who said her prayers, and then added, "Good bye, God; we are all going to Saratoga, and pa and ma won't go to meeting, or pray any more till we come back again." We fear that many who go to the seaside, or other holiday resorts, give God the go-by in much the same manner.

There was a celebrated poet who was an atheist, or at least professed to be so. According to him there was no God — the belief in a God was a delusion, prayer a base superstition, and religion but the iron fetters or a rapacious priesthood. So he held when sailing over the unruffled surface of the Aegean Sea. But the scene changed; and with the scene his creed. The heavens began to scowl on him; and the deep uttered an angry voice, and, as if in astonishment at this God-denying man, "lifted up his hands on high." The storm increased until the ship became unmanageable. She drifted before the tempest. The terrible cry, "Breakers ahead!" was soon heard; and how they trembled to see death seated on the horrid reef, waiting for his prey! A few moments more, and the crash comes. They are overwhelmed in the devouring sea? No. They were saved by a singular Providence. Like apprehended evils, which in a Christian's experience prove to be blessings, the wave, which flung them forward on the horrid reef, came on in such mountain volume as to bear and float them over into the safety of deep and ample sea room. But ere that happened, a companion of the atheist who, seated on the prow, had been taking his last regretful look of heaven and earth, sea and sky — turned his eyes down upon the deck, and there, among Papists, who told their beads and cried to the Virgin, he saw the atheist prostrated with fear. The tempest had blown away his fine-spun speculations like so many cobwebs, and he was on his knees, imploring God for mercy. — Guthrie

The hypocrite is not for prayer always. He will pray when he seeth his own time. He will stint God in time as well as in measure. He will be master, not only of his own time, but of God's too. "When will the Sabbath be gone?" (Amos 8:5). Sometimes he will delight himself in the Almighty: but will he always call upon God? Everyone that knows him can make the answer for him, "No, he will not": especially in secret, where none but God's eye can behold him. Upon some extraordinary occasions, in extraordinary cases, he may seem very devout; but he is modest, he will not trouble God too far, nor too often. Ahaz will not ask a sign, even when God bids him, lest he should tempt the Lord (Isa. 7:10-12): a great piece of modesty in show; but a sure symptom of infidelity. He would not ask a sign because he could not believe the thing; not to avoid troubling of God, but himself. He seems very mannerly, but shows himself very malapert.

Thus, this hypocrite will serve God only by fits and starts, when he himself lists. He never troubles God but when God troubles him. In health, wealth, peace, he can comfort himself. He never prays but in trouble: in his affliction he will seek God early (Hos. 5:15). God is fain to go away, and return to his place, else this man would never look after him. When God hath touched him, he ~~acquaints God with his misery, but when times grow better with him, he excludes God from his mirth.~~ — Samuel Crook

Job 34:33 Conceit Rebuked

Should it be according to thy mind?" — Job 34:33

The verse is written in language of the most ancient kind, which is but little understood. Moreover, it is extremely pithy and sententious, and hence it is obscure. The sense given in our version is, however, that which sums up the other translations, and we prefer to adhere to it.

I. DO MEN REALLY THINK THAT THINGS SHOULD BE ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND?

1. Concerning God. Their ideas of him are according to what they think he should be; but could he be God at all if he were such as the human mind would have him to be?

2. Concerning providence on a large scale, would men re-write history? Do they imagine that their arrangements would be an improvement upon infinite wisdom? In their own case they would arrange all matters selfishly. Should it be so?

3. Concerning the Gospel, its doctrines, its precepts, its results, should men have their own way? Should the atonement be left out, or the statement of it be modified to suit them?

4. Concerning the Church. Should they be head and lord?

Should their liberal ideas erase inspiration?

Should Baptism and the Lord's Supper be distorted to gratify them? Should gaudy ceremonies drive the Lord's homely ordinances out of doors? Should priestcraft crush out spiritual life? Should taste override divine commands?

Should the Ministry exist only for their special consolation, and be molded at their bidding?

II. WHAT LEADS THEM TO THINK SO?

1. Self-importance, and selfishness.
2. Self-conceit, and pride.
3. A murmuring spirit which must needs grumble at everything.
4. Want of faith in Christ leading to a doubt of the power of his gospel.
5. Want of love to God, souring the mind and leading it to kick at a thing simply because the Lord prescribes it.

III. WHAT A MERCY THAT THINGS ARE NOT ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND!

1. God's glory would be obscured.
2. Many would suffer to enable one man to play the Dictator.
3. We should, any one of us, have an awful responsibility resting upon us if our own mind had the regulation of affairs.
4. Our temptations would be increased. We should be proud if we succeeded, and despairing if we met with failure.
5. Our desires would become more greedy.
6. Our sins would be uncorrected; for we should never allow a rod or a rebuke to come at us.
7. There would be universal strife; for every man would want to rule and command (James 4:5). If it ought to be according to your mind, why not according to mine?

IV. LET US CHECK THE SPIRIT WHICH SUGGESTS SUCH CONCEIT.

1. It is impracticable; for things can never be as so many different minds would have them.
2. It is unreasonable; for things ought not so to be.
3. It is unchristian; for even Christ Jesus pleased not himself, but cried, "Not as I will" (Matt. 26:39).
4. It is atheistic; for it dethrones God to set up puny man.

Pray God to bring your mind to his will.

Cultivate admiration for the arrangements of the Divine mind.

Above all, accept the gospel as it is, and accept it now.

Helps

Should it be according to thy mind? Many appear to think so. If we may judge by their conduct, they think that the Most High should have consulted their ease, their fancy, and their aggrandizement. The gospel is not just what they would like it to be. Providence does not work as they desire. Few things are exactly as they should be.

Complaining mortal! Should it be according to thy mind? Is not thy mind carnal? Is it not selfish? Is it not prejudiced? If it were according to thy mind, would not God's glory be obscured? Would not others suffer? Would not thy lusts be fed? Would not thy temptations be stronger? Would not thy danger be greater?

Is not thy God wiser, kinder, and holier than thou art? Does he not love justice? Are not his mercies over all his works? True, you may be afflicted, you may be poor, you may be sickly; what then? You are wishing for health, for a competency, for freedom from

trials; but, "should it be according to thy mind?"

Beloved, let us guard against such a spirit. It is common, but it is unreasonable, it is criminal, it is dangerous. The thing is impracticable. Your God must govern, he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. His ways are just, his plans are wise, his designs are merciful, and when the work is complete, every part will reflect his glory. — James Smith

We are all very apt to believe in Providence when we get our own way; but when things go awry, we think, if there is a God, He is in Heaven and not upon the earth. The cricket, in the spring, builds his house in the meadow, and chirps for joy because all is going so well with him. But when he hears the sound of the plow a few furrows off, and the thunder of the oxen's tread, then his sky begins to darken, and his young heart fails him. By-and-by the plow comes crunching along, turns his dwelling bottom-side up, and as he goes rolling over and over, without a house and without a home, "Oh," he says, "the foundations of the world are breaking up, and everything is hastening to destruction." But the husbandman, as he walks behind the plow, does he think the foundations of the world are breaking up? No. He is thinking only of the harvest that is to follow in the wake of the plow; and the cricket, if it will but wait, will see the husbandman's purpose. My hearers, we are all like crickets. When we get our own way, we are happy and contented. When we are subjected to disappointment, we become the victims of despair. — Dr. A. B. Jack, in "The Preacher and Homiletic Monthly"

Man would have God go according to his mind in chastening and afflicting him. He would have God correct him only in such a kind, in such a manner and measure as he would choose. He saith in his heart, If God would correct me in this or that, I could bear it; but I do not like to be corrected in the present way. One saith, If God would smite me in my estate I could bear it, but not in my body; another saith, If God should smite me with sickness, I could bear it, but not in my children; or, If God would afflict me only in such a degree, I could submit; but my heart can hardly yield to so great a measure of affliction. Thus we would have it according to our minds as to the measure or the continuance of our afflictions. We would be corrected for so many days; but to have months of vanity and years of trouble, is not according to our mind.

Man would have God govern (not only himself, but) the whole world according to his mind. Man hath much of this in him. Luther wrote to Melancthon, when he was so exceedingly troubled at the providence of God in the world: "Our brother Philip is to be admonished that he would forbear governing the world." We can hardly let God alone to rule that world which Himself alone hath made. — Caryl

Job 34:33 Pride Catechized

Should it be according to thy mind? He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest. — Job 34:33

It is never wise to dispute with God. Especially upon the matter of salvation. No sinner seeking pardon should be so foolish as to dispute with his Sovereign Savior.

I. A QUESTION. "Should it be according to thy mind?"

Should salvation be planned to suit you? Should beggars be choosers? Should these who profess penitence become dictators?

1. What is it to which you object?

Is there something objectionable in the plan of salvation? Is it too much of grace? Is it too simple? Is it too general? Is it too humbling? Do you dislike the method of substitution? Do you rebel against the Deity of the Savior?

Is there a cause of stumbling in the working out of salvation? Does the cross scandalize you? Do you dislike the work of the Holy Spirit? Are his operations too radical? Is regeneration too spiritual? Is holiness irksome?

Are its requirements too exact? Too Puritanical?

Are its statements too humiliating? Too denunciatory?

Is its term of service too protracted? Would you prefer a temporary faith? A transient obedience?

2. Should not God have his way? He is the Donor of salvation; shall he not do as he wills with his own?
3. Is not God's way best? Is not the Infinitely Good the best Controller, the best Ruler of the feast?
4. Should it be according to a mind that is ignorant? Fickle? Feeble? Selfish? Short-sighted? Is not yours such?
5. Why is your mind to be supreme? Why not another man's mind? You see the absurdity in that case; why not in your own?

II. A WARNING. "He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose."

Whether sinners accept or refuse salvation:

1. God will perform his pleasure.
2. God will punish sin.
3. God will glorify Christ by conversions.
4. God will magnify his own name before an assembled universe.
5. God will carry on his work of mercy in the one way which he has chosen, and he will not alter one jot or tittle to please vainglorious man.

III. A PROTEST. "And not I."

1. I am not the person to be disputed with: you are not dealing with man but with God. "He will recompense it... and not I." Therefore there is no use in deceit or in defiance: thus you may overcome a mortal, but not the Eternal.
2. I will not be responsible for you. You yourself are sinning, and must answer for it, and no friend or minister can stand for you when God recompenses your sin upon you.
3. I will not share in your rebellion. "Not I." We must keep clear of complicity with the obstinate man who dictates to his God. It is a grand thing to be able to say distinctly, "Not I."

IV. AN INVITATION. "Therefore speak what thou knowest."

1. Exercise your freedom. Choose or reject; it is at your own peril.
2. Exercise your reason. Be sure that you know by personal observation and experience, and let your decision be based upon unquestionable knowledge.
3. Exercise your influence and speak as you think; but mind what you do; for an account must be given of your words.
4. Better exercise your truthfulness and bear witness to facts, rather than criticize the methods of the Lord.

Do not cavil at God's methods of grace, for certainly you cannot alter them, and if you could alter them you would not improve them.

Join not with others in their cavilings. It may be fashionable to criticize and doubt, but it is mischievous, presumptuous, and rebellious. Doubters may be in great repute among their own class, but they are poor creatures after all. Those who are wiser than God are fools in capitals.

Decide for yourself, but let it be with knowledge and thought; and when you have decided do not think that everybody else is to bow to your judgment. Bow before the Lord, and let your judgment be more eager to obey the truth for itself, than to rule over others.

Job 38:25-27 Rain and Grace: A Comparison

"Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?" — Job 38:25-27

God challengeth man to compare with his Maker even in the one matter of the rain. Can he create it? Can he send a shower upon

the desert, to water the lone herbs which else would perish in the burning heat? No, he would not even think of doing such a thing. That generous act cometh of the Lord alone.

We shall work out a parallel between grace and rain.

I. GOD ALONE GIVETH RAIN, AND THE SAME IS TRUE OF GRACE.

We say of rain and of grace, God is the sole Author of it.

He devised and prepared the channel by which it comes to earth. He hath "divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters." The Lord makes a way for grace to reach his people.

He directs each drop, and gives each blade of grass its own drop of dew, to every believer his portion of grace.

He moderates the force, so that it does not beat down or drown the tender herb. Grace comes in its own gentle way. Conviction, enlightenment, etc., are sent in due measure.

He holds it in his power. Absolutely at his own will does God bestow either rain for the earth, or grace for the soul.

II. RAIN FALLS IRRESPECTIVE OF MEN, AND SO DOES GRACE.

Grace waits not man's observation. As the rain falls where no man is, so grace courts not publicity.

Nor his cooperation. It "tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men" (Mic. 5:7).

Nor his prayers. Grass calls not for rain, yet it comes. "I am found of them that sought me not" (Isa. 65:1).

Nor his merits. Rain falls on the waste ground.

"Ah, grace, into unlikely hearts,
It is thy wont to come;
The glory of thy light to find
In darkest spots a home."

III. RAIN FALLS WHERE WE MIGHT LEAST HAVE EXPECTED IT.

It falls where there is no trace of former showers, even upon the desolate wilderness: so does grace enter hearts which had hitherto been unblest, where great need was the only plea which rose to heaven (Isa. 35:7).

It falls where there seems nothing to repay the boon. Many hearts are naturally as barren as the desert lisa. 35:6).

It falls where the need seems insatiable, "to satisfy the desolate." Some cases seem to demand an ocean of grace, but the Lord meets the need; and his grace falls where the joy and glory are all directed to God by grateful hearts. Twice we are told that the rain falls "where no man is." When conversion is wrought of the Lord, no man is seen. The Lord alone is exalted.

IV. THIS RAIN IS MOST VALUED BY LIFE.

The rain gives joy to seeds and plants in which there is life. Budding life knows of it; the tenderest herb rejoices in it. So is it with those who begin to repent, who feebly believe, and thus are just alive.

The rain causes development. Grace also perfects grace. Buds of hope grow into strong faith. Buds of feeling expand into love. Buds of desire rise to resolve. Buds of confession come to open avowal. Buds of usefulness swell into fruit.

The rain causes health and vigor of life. Is it not so with grace?

The rain creates the flower with its color and perfume, and God is pleased. The full outgrowth of renewed nature cometh of grace, and the Lord is well pleased therewith.

Let us acknowledge the sovereignty of God as to grace.

Let us cry to him for grace.

Let us expect him to send it, though we may feel sadly barren, and quite out of the way of the usual means of grace.

To Interest the Hearer

A lady traveling in Palestine writes: "Rain began to fall in torrents; Mohammed, our groom, threw a large Arab cloak over me, saying, 'May Allah preserve you, O lady! while he is blessing the fields.'"

Oh, how pleasant are the effects of rain to languishing plants, to make them green and beautiful, lively and strong, fragrant and delightful! So the effects of Christ's influences are most desirable to drooping souls, for enlightening and enlivening them, for confirming and strengthening them, for comforting and enlarging them, for appetizing and satisfying them, transforming and beautifying them. — John Willison

Be not to me as a cloud without rain, lest I be to thee like a tree without fruit. — Spurstowe

My stock lies dead, and no increase
Doth my dull husbandry improve:
O let thy graces without cease
Drop from above!

The dew cloth every morning fall;
And shall the dew outstrip thy Dove?
The dew, for which grass cannot call,
Drop from above!
— George Herbert

The grass springs up, the bud opens, the leaf expands, the flowers breathe forth their fragrance as if they were under the most careful cultivation. All this must be the work of God, since it cannot even be pretended that man is there to produce these effects. Perhaps one would be more deeply impressed with a sense of the presence of God in the pathless desert, or on the boundless prairie, where no man is, than in the most splendid park, or the most tastefully cultivated garden which man could make. In the one case, the hand of God alone is seen; in the other, we are constantly admiring the skill of man. — Barnes

The careful providence of God extends itself to all places, even to places uninhabited. This consideration may strengthen our dependence on God, though we are brought into a wilderness condition, where there is no man to pity us, or give us a morsel of bread. Surely the Lord that feeds the wild beasts where there is no man, can and will provide for his own people, when the hearts of all men are shut up against them; he can make the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth to bring them food, as the ravens did to Elijah. — Caryl

This should tend to humble human pride: humanity is not the only creature that God careth for. Man is not the center and pivot of the world. God cares for oxen, birds, insects, and everything that lives. He works the mystic machinery of heaven to water meadows untrodden of the foot of man. No flower is born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness; for God sees it, and that is enough. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and man is but one servitor out of the many which are created for God's pleasure. Let him take his place as one among many servants, and no longer dream that all things are made for him, and that they are wasted if he does not derive some benefit from them.

DEVOTIONALS

C H Spurgeon

Morning and Evening
Faith's Checkbook

Job 1:5 (Morning and Evening)

“And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.” — Job 1:5

What the patriarch did early in the morning, after the family festivities, it will be well for the believer to do for himself ere he rests tonight. Amid the cheerfulness of household gatherings it is easy to slide into sinful levities, and to forget our avowed character as Christians. It ought not to be so, but so it is, that our days of feasting are very seldom days of sanctified enjoyment, but too frequently degenerate into unhallowed mirth. There is a way of joy as pure and sanctifying as though one bathed in the rivers of Eden: holy gratitude should be quite as purifying an element as grief. Alas! for our poor hearts, that facts prove that the house of mourning is better than the house of feasting. Come, believer, in what have you sinned to-day? Have you been forgetful of your high calling? Have you been even as others in idle words and loose speeches? Then confess the sin, and fly to the sacrifice. The sacrifice sanctifies. The precious blood of the Lamb slain removes the guilt, and purges away the defilement of our sins of ignorance and carelessness. This is the best ending of a Christmas-day—to wash anew in the cleansing fountain. Believer, come to this sacrifice continually; if it be so good to-night, it is good every night. To live at the altar is the privilege of the royal priesthood; to them sin, great as it is, is nevertheless no cause for despair, since they draw near yet again to the sin-atonement victim, and their conscience is purged from dead works.

Gladly I close this festive day,
Grasping the altar's hallow'd horn;
My slips and faults are washed away,
The Lamb has all my trespass borne.

Job 1:9 (Morning and Evening)

“Doth Job fear God for nought?” — Job 1:9

This was the wicked question of Satan concerning that upright man of old, but there are many in the present day concerning whom it might be asked with justice, for they love God after a fashion because he prospers them; but if things went ill with them, they would give up all their boasted faith in God. If they can clearly see that since the time of their supposed conversion the world has gone prosperously with them, then they will love God in their poor carnal way; but if they endure adversity, they rebel against the Lord. Their love is the love of the table, not of the host; a love to the cupboard, not to the master of the house. As for the true Christian, he expects to have his reward in the next life, and to endure hardness in this. The promise of the old covenant is adversity. Remember Christ's words—“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit”—What? “He purgeth it, that it may bring forth fruit.” If you bring forth fruit, you will have to endure affliction. “Alas!” you say, “that is a terrible prospect.” But this affliction works out such precious results, that the Christian who is the subject of it must learn to rejoice in tribulations, because as his tribulations abound, so his consolations abound by Christ Jesus. Rest assured, if you are a child of God, you will be no stranger to the rod. Sooner or later every bar of gold must pass through the fire. Fear not, but rather rejoice that such fruitful times are in store for you, for in them you will be weaned from earth and made meet for heaven; you will be delivered from clinging to the present, and made to long for those eternal things which are so soon to be revealed to you. When you feel that as regards the present you do serve God for nought, you will then rejoice in the infinite reward of the future.

Job 5:19 (Faith's Checkbook)

Deliverance Not Limited

“He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.”—Job 5:19

ELIPHAZ in this spoke the truth of God. We may have as many troubles as the workdays of the week, but the God who worked on those six days will work for us till our deliverance is complete. We shall rest with Him and in Him on our Sabbath. The rapid succession of trials is one of the sorest tests of faith. Before we have recovered from one blow, it is followed by another and another till we are staggered. Still, the equally quick succession of deliverances is exceedingly cheering. New songs are rung out upon the anvil by the hammer of affliction, till we see in the spiritual world the antitype of “The Harmonious Blacksmith.” Our confidence is, that when the Lord makes our trials six, six they will be and no more.

It may be that we have no rest day, for seven troubles come upon us. What then? “In seven there shall be no evil touch thee.” Evil may roar at us, but it shall be kept at more than arm’s length, and shall not even touch us. Its hot breath may distress us, but its little finger cannot be laid upon us.

With our loins girt about us we will meet the six or the seven troubles, and leave fear to those who have no Father, no Saviour, and no Sanctifier.

Job 7:12 (Morning and Evening)

“Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?” — Job 7:12

This was a strange question for Job to ask of the Lord. He felt himself to be too insignificant to be so strictly watched and chastened, and he hoped that he was not so unruly as to need to be so restrained. The enquiry was natural from one surrounded with such insupportable miseries, but after all, it is capable of a very humbling answer. It is true man is not the sea, but he is even more troublesome and unruly. The sea obediently respects its boundary, and though it be but a belt of sand, it does not overleap the limit. Mighty as it is, it hears the divine hitherto, and when most raging with tempest it respects the word; but self-willed man defies heaven and oppresses earth, neither is there any end to this rebellious rage. The sea, obedient to the moon, ebbs and flows with ceaseless regularity, and thus renders an active as well as a passive obedience; but man, restless beyond his sphere, sleeps within the lines of duty, indolent where he should be active. He will neither come nor go at the divine command, but sullenly prefers to do what he should not, and to leave undone that which is required of him. Every drop in the ocean, every beaded bubble, and every yeasty foam-flake, every shell and pebble, feel the power of law, and yield or move at once. O that our nature were but one thousandth part as much conformed to the will of God! We call the sea fickle and false, but how constant it is! Since our fathers’ days, and the old time before them, the sea is where it was, beating on the same cliffs to the same tune; we know where to find it, it forsakes not its bed, and changes not in its ceaseless boom; but where is man-vain, fickle man? Can the wise man guess by what folly he will next be seduced from his obedience? We need more watching than the billowy sea, and are far more rebellious. Lord, rule us for thine own glory. Amen

Job 8:11 (Morning and Evening)

“Can the rush grow up without mire?” — Job 8:11

The rush is spongy and hollow, and even so is a hypocrite; there is no substance or stability in him. It is shaken to and fro in every wind just as formalists yield to every influence; for this reason the rush is not broken by the tempest, neither are hypocrites troubled with persecution. I would not willingly be a deceiver or be deceived; perhaps the text for this day may help me to try myself whether I be a hypocrite or no. The rush by nature lives in water, and owes its very existence to the mire and moisture wherein it has taken root; let the mire become dry, and the rush withers very quickly. Its greenness is absolutely dependent upon circumstances, a present abundance of water makes it flourish, and a drought destroys it at once. Is this my case? Do I only serve God when I am in good company, or when religion is profitable and respectable? Do I love the Lord only when temporal comforts are received from his hands? If so I am a base hypocrite, and like the withering rush, I shall perish when death deprives me of outward joys. But can I honestly assert that when bodily comforts have been few, and my surroundings have been rather adverse to grace than at all helpful to it, I have still held fast my integrity? then have I hope that there is genuine vital godliness in me. The rush cannot grow without mire, but plants of the Lord’s right hand planting can and do flourish even in the year of drought. A godly man often grows best when his worldly circumstances decay. He who follows Christ for his bag is a Judas; they who follow for loaves and fishes are children of the devil; but they who attend him out of love to himself are his own beloved ones. Lord, let me find my life in thee, and not in the mire of this world’s favour or gain.

Job 10:2 (Morning and Evening)

“Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.” — Job 10:2

Perhaps, O tried soul, the Lord is doing this to develop thy graces. There are some of thy graces which would never be discovered if it were not for thy trials. Dost thou not know that thy faith never looks so grand in summer weather as it does in winter? Love is too often like a glow-worm, showing but little light except it be in the midst of surrounding darkness. Hope itself is like a star—not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity. Afflictions are often the black foils in which God doth set the jewels of his children’s graces, to make them shine the better. It was but a little while ago that on thy knees thou wast saying, “Lord, I fear I have no faith: let me know that I have faith.” Was not this really, though perhaps unconsciously, praying for trials?—for how canst thou know that thou hast faith until thy faith is exercised? Depend upon it, God often sends us trials that our graces may be discovered, and that we may be certified of their existence. Besides, it is not merely discovery, real growth in grace is the result of sanctified trials. God often takes away our comforts and our privileges in order to make us better Christians. He trains his soldiers, not in tents of ease and luxury, but by turning them out and using them to forced marches and hard service. He makes them ford through streams, and swim through rivers, and climb mountains, and walk many a long mile with heavy knapsacks of sorrow on their backs. Well, Christian, may not this account for the troubles through which thou art passing? Is not the Lord bringing out your graces, and making them grow? Is not this the reason why he is contending with you?

“Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to his feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.”

Job 13:23 (Morning and Evening)

“How many are mine iniquities and sins?” — Job 13:23

Have you ever really weighed and considered how great the sin of God’s people is? Think how heinous is your own transgression, and you will find that not only does a sin here and there tower up like an alp, but that your iniquities are heaped upon each other, as in the old fable of the giants who piled Pelian upon Ossa, mountain upon mountain. What an aggregate of sin there is in the life of one of the most sanctified of God’s children! Attempt to multiply this, the sin of one only, by the multitude of the redeemed, “a number which no man can number,” and you will have some conception of the great mass of the guilt of the people for whom Jesus shed his blood. But we arrive at a more adequate idea of the magnitude of sin by the greatness of the remedy provided. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s only and well-beloved Son. God’s Son! Angels cast their crowns before him! All the choral symphonies of heaven surround his glorious throne. “God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.” And yet he takes upon himself the form of a servant, and is scourged and pierced, bruised and torn, and at last slain; since nothing but the blood of the incarnate Son of God could make atonement for our offences. No human mind can adequately estimate the infinite value of the divine sacrifice, for great as is the sin of God’s people, the atonement which takes it away is immeasurably greater. Therefore, the believer, even when sin rolls like a black flood, and the remembrance of the past is bitter, can yet stand before the blazing throne of the great and holy God, and cry, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that hath risen again.” While the recollection of his sin fills him with shame and sorrow, he at the same time makes it a foil to show the brightness of mercy—guilt is the dark night in which the fair star of divine love shines with serene splendour.

Job 14:1 (Morning and Evening)

“Man ... is of few days, and full of trouble.” — Job 14:1

It may be of great service to us, before we fall asleep, to remember this mournful fact, for it may lead us to set loose by earthly things. There is nothing very pleasant in the recollection that we are not above the shafts of adversity, but it may humble us and prevent our boasting like the Psalmist in our morning's portion. “My mountain standeth firm: I shall never be moved.” It may stay us from taking too deep root in this soil from which we are so soon to be transplanted into the heavenly garden. Let us recollect the frail tenure upon which we hold our temporal mercies. If we would remember that all the trees of earth are marked for the woodman's axe, we should not be so ready to build our nests in them. We should love, but we should love with the love which expects death, and which reckons upon separations. Our dear relations are but loaned to us, and the hour when we must return them to the lender's hand may be even at the door. The like is certainly true of our worldly goods. Do not riches take to themselves wings and fly away? Our health is equally precarious. Frail flowers of the field, we must not reckon upon blooming for ever. There is a time appointed for weakness and sickness, when we shall have to glorify God by suffering, and not by earnest activity. There is no single point in which we can hope to escape from the sharp arrows of affliction; out of our few days there is not one secure from sorrow. Man's life is a cask full of bitter wine; he who looks for joy in it had better seek for honey in an ocean of brine. Beloved reader, set not your affections upon things of earth: but seek those things which are above, for here the moth devoureth, and the thief breaketh through, but there all joys are perpetual and eternal. The path of trouble is the way home. Lord, make this thought a pillow for many a weary head!

Job 14:14 (Morning and Evening)

“All the days of my appointed time will I wait.” — Job 14:14

A little stay on earth will make heaven more heavenly. Nothing makes rest so sweet as toil; nothing renders security so pleasant as exposure to alarms. The bitter quassia cups of earth will give a relish to the new wine which sparkles in the golden bowls of glory. Our battered armour and scarred countenances will render more illustrious our victory above, when we are welcomed to the seats of those who have overcome the world. We should not have full fellowship with Christ if we did not for awhile sojourn below, for he was baptized with a baptism of suffering among men, and we must be baptized with the same if we would share his kingdom. Fellowship with Christ is so honourable that the sorest sorrow is a light price by which to procure it. Another reason for our lingering here is for the good of others. We would not wish to enter heaven till our work is done, and it may be that we are yet ordained to minister light to souls benighted in the wilderness of sin. Our prolonged stay here is doubtless for God's glory. A tried saint, like a well-cut diamond, glitters much in the King's crown. Nothing reflects so much honour on a workman as a protracted and severe trial of his work, and its triumphant endurance of the ordeal without giving way in any part. We are God's workmanship, in whom he will be glorified by our afflictions. It is for the honour of Jesus that we endure the trial of our faith with sacred joy. Let each man surrender his own longings to the glory of Jesus, and feel, “If my lying in the dust would elevate my Lord by so much as an inch, let me still lie among the pots of earth. If to live on earth for ever would make my Lord more glorious, it should be my heaven to be shut out of heaven.” Our time is fixed and settled by eternal decree. Let us not be anxious about it, but wait with patience till the gates of pearl shall open.

Job 19:25 (Morning and Evening)

“I know that my Redeemer liveth.” — Job 19:25

The marrow of Job's comfort lies in that little word “My”—“My Redeemer,” and in the fact that the Redeemer lives. Oh! to get hold of a living Christ. We must get a property in him before we can enjoy him. What is gold in the mine to me? Men are beggars in Peru, and beg their bread in California. It is gold in my purse which will satisfy my necessities, by purchasing the bread I need. So a Redeemer who does not redeem me, an avenger who will never stand up for my blood, of what avail were such? Rest not content until by faith you can say “Yes, I cast myself upon my living Lord; and he is mine.” It may be you hold him with a feeble hand; you half think it presumption to say, “He lives as my Redeemer;” yet, remember if you have but faith as a grain of mustard seed, that little faith entitles you to say it. But there is also another word here, expressive of Job's strong confidence, “I know.” To say, “I hope so, I trust so” is comfortable; and there are thousands in the fold of Jesus who hardly ever get much further. But to reach the essence of consolation you must say, “I know.” Ifs, buts, and perhapses, are sure murderers of peace and comfort. Doubts are dreary things in times of sorrow. Like wasps they sting the soul! If I have any suspicion that Christ is not mine, then there is vinegar mingled with the gall of death; but if I know that Jesus lives for me, then darkness is not dark: even the night is light about me. Surely if Job, in those ages before the coming and advent of Christ, could say, “I know,” we should not speak less positively. God forbid that our positiveness should be presumption. Let us see that our evidences are right, lest we build upon an ungrounded hope; and then let us not be satisfied with the mere foundation, for it is from the upper rooms that we get the widest prospect. A living Redeemer, truly mine, is joy unspeakable.

Job 19:26 (Morning and Evening)

“In my flesh shall I see God.” — Job 19:26

Mark the subject of Job's devout anticipation “I shall see God.” He does not say, “I shall see the saints”—though doubtless that will be untold felicity—but, “I shall see God.” It is not—“I shall see the pearly gates, I shall behold the walls of jasper, I shall gaze upon the crowns of gold,” but “I shall see God.” This is the sum and substance of heaven, this is the joyful hope of all believers. It is their delight to see him now in the ordinances by faith. They love to behold him in communion and in prayer; but there in heaven they shall have an open and unclouded vision, and thus seeing “him as he is,” shall be made completely like him. Likeness to God—what can we wish for more? And a sight of God—what can we desire better? Some read the passage, “Yet, I shall see God in my flesh,” and find here an allusion to Christ, as the “Word made flesh,” and that glorious beholding of him which shall be the splendour of the latter days. Whether so or not it is certain that Christ shall be the object of our eternal vision; nor shall we ever want any joy beyond that of seeing him. Think not that this will be a narrow sphere for the mind to dwell in. It is but one source of delight, but that source is infinite. All his attributes shall be subjects for contemplation, and as he is infinite under each aspect, there is no fear of exhaustion. His works, his gifts, his love to us, and his glory in all his purposes, and in all his actions, these shall make a theme which will be ever new. The patriarch looked forward to this sight of God as a personal enjoyment. “Whom mine eye shall behold, and not another.” Take realizing views of heaven's bliss; think what it will be to you. “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.” All earthly brightness fades and darkens as we gaze upon it, but here is a brightness which can never dim, a glory which can never fade—“I shall see God.”

Job 22:21 (Morning and Evening)

“Acquaint now thyself with him.” — Job 22:21

If we would rightly “acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace,” we must know him as he has revealed himself, not only in the unity of his essence and subsistence, but also in the plurality of his persons. God said, “Let us make man in our own image”—let not man be content until he knows something of the “us” from whom his being was derived. Endeavour to know the Father; bury your head in his bosom in deep repentance, and confess that you are not worthy to be called his son; receive the kiss of his love; let the ring which is the token of his eternal faithfulness be on your finger; sit at his table and let your heart make merry in his grace. Then press forward and seek to know much of the Son of God who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and yet in unspeakable condescension of grace became man for our sakes; know him in the singular complexity of his nature: eternal God, and yet suffering, finite man; follow him as he walks the waters with the tread of deity, and as he sits upon the well in the weariness of humanity. Be not satisfied unless you know much of Jesus Christ as your Friend, your Brother, your Husband, your all. Forget not the Holy Spirit; endeavour to obtain a clear view of his nature and character, his attributes, and his works. Behold that Spirit of the Lord, who first of all moved upon chaos, and brought forth order; who now visits the chaos of your soul, and creates the order of holiness. Behold him as the Lord and giver of spiritual life, the Illuminator, the Instructor, the Comforter, and the Sanctifier. Behold him as, like holy unction, he descends upon the head of Jesus, and then afterwards rests upon you who are as the skirts of his garments. Such an intelligent, scriptural, and experimental belief in the Trinity in Unity is yours if you truly know God; and such knowledge brings peace indeed.

Job 22:23 (Faith's Checkbook)

Return from Backsliding

"If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up."—Job 22:23

ELIPHAZ, in this utterance, spoke a great truth, which is the summary of many an inspired Scripture. Reader, has sin pulled you down? Have you become like a ruin? Has the hand of the Lord gone out against you, so that in estate you are impoverished, and in spirit you are broken down? Was it your own folly which brought upon you all this dilapidation? Then the first thing to be done is to return to the Lord. With deep repentance and sincere faith, find your way back from your backsliding. It is your duty, for you have turned away from Him whom you professed to serve. It is your wisdom, for you cannot strive against Him and prosper. It is your immediate necessity, for what He has done is nothing compared to what He may do in the way of chastisement, since He is Almighty to punish.

See what a promise invites you! You shall be "built up." None but the Almighty can set up the fallen pillars and restore the tottering walls of your condition; but He can and He will do it if you return to Him. Do not delay. Your crushed mind may quite fail you if you go on to rebel, but hearty confession will ease you, and humble faith will console you. Do this, and all will be well.

Job 23:3 (Morning and Evening)

"O that I knew where I might find him!" — Job 23:3

In Job's uttermost extremity he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God is once more to see his Father's face. His first prayer is not "O that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!" nor even "O that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!" but the first and uppermost cry is, "O that I knew where I might find Him, who is my God! that I might come even to his seat!" God's children run home when the storm comes on. It is the heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul to seek shelter from all ills beneath the wings of Jehovah. "He that hath made his refuge God," might serve as the title of a true believer. A hypocrite, when afflicted by God, resents the infliction, and, like a slave, would run from the Master who has scourged him; but not so the true heir of heaven, he kisses the hand which smote him, and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of the God who frowned upon him. Job's desire to commune with God was intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation. The patriarch turned away from his sorry friends, and looked up to the celestial throne, just as a traveller turns from his empty skin bottle, and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earth-born hopes, and cries, "O that I knew where I might find my God!" Nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator, as when we learn the emptiness of all besides. Turning away with bitter scorn from earth's hives, where we find no honey, but many sharp stings, we rejoice in him whose faithful word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. In every trouble we should first seek to realize God's presence with us. Only let us enjoy his smile, and we can bear our daily cross with a willing heart for his dear sake.

Job 29:2 (Morning and Evening)

"Oh that I were as in months past." — Job 29:2

Numbers of Christians can view the past with pleasure, but regard the present with dissatisfaction; they look back upon the days which they have passed in communing with the Lord as being the sweetest and the best they have ever known, but as to the present, it is clad in a sable garb of gloom and dreariness. Once they lived near to Jesus, but now they feel that they have wandered from him, and they say, "O that I were as in months past!" They complain that they have lost their evidences, or that they have not present peace of mind, or that they have no enjoyment in the means of grace, or that conscience is not so tender, or that they have not so much zeal for God's glory. The causes of this mournful state of things are manifold. It may arise through a comparative neglect of prayer, for a neglected closet is the beginning of all spiritual decline. Or it may be the result of idolatry. The heart has been occupied with something else, more than with God; the affections have been set on the things of earth, instead of the things of heaven. A jealous God will not be content with a divided heart; he must be loved first and best. He will withdraw the sunshine of his presence from a cold, wandering heart. Or the cause may be found in self-confidence and self-righteousness. Pride is busy in the heart, and self is exalted instead of lying low at the foot of the cross. Christian, if you are not now as you "were in months past," do not rest satisfied with wishing for a return of former happiness, but go at once to seek your Master, and tell him your sad state. Ask his grace and strength to help you to walk more closely with him; humble yourself before him, and he will lift you up, and give you yet again to enjoy the light of his countenance. Do not sit down to sigh and lament; while the beloved Physician lives there is hope, nay there is a certainty of recovery for the worst cases.

Job 33:27 (Faith's Checkbook)

Job 28

He Acts on Honest Confession

"He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light."—Job 33:27, Job 28

THIS is a word of truth, gathered from the experience of a man of God, and it is tantamount to a promise. What the Lord has done, and is doing, He will continue to do while the world standeth. The Lord will receive into His bosom all who come to Him with a sincere confession of their sin; in fact, He is always on the look-out to discover any that are in trouble because of their faults.

Can we not endorse the language here used? Have we not sinned, sinned personally so as to say, "I have sinned"? Sinned willfully, having perverted that which is right? Sinned so as to discover that there is no profit in it, but an eternal loss? Let us, then go to God with this honest acknowledgment. He asks no more. We can do no less.

Let us plead His promise in the name of Jesus. He will deliver us from the pit of hell which yawns for us; He will grant us life and light. Why should we despair? Why should we even doubt? The Lord does not mock humble souls. He means what He says. The guilty can be forgiven. Those who deserve execution can receive free pardon. Lord, we confess, and we pray thee to forgive!

Job 35:10 (Morning and Evening)

"God, my maker, who giveth songs in the night." — Job 35:10

Any man can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it. When wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can praise the God who gives a plenteous harvest or sends home a loaded argosy. It is easy enough for an Aeolian harp to whisper music when the winds blow—the difficulty is for music to swell forth when no wind is stirring. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but he is skilful who sings when there is not a ray of light to read by—who sings from his heart. No man can make a song in the night of himself; he may attempt it, but he will find that a song in the night must be divinely inspired. Let all things go well, I can weave songs, fashioning them wherever I go out of the flowers that grow upon my path; but put me in a desert, where no green thing grows, and wherewith shall I frame a hymn of praise to God? How shall a mortal man make a crown for the Lord where no jewels are? Let but this voice be clear, and this body full of health, and I can sing God's praise: silence my tongue, lay me upon the bed of languishing, and how shall I then chant God's high praises, unless he himself give me the song? No, it is not in man's power to sing when all is adverse, unless an altar-coal shall touch his lip. It was a divine song, which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Then, since our Maker gives songs in the night, let us wait upon him for the music. O thou chief musician, let us not remain songless because affliction is upon us, but tune thou our lips to the melody of thanksgiving.

Job 36:2 (Morning and Evening)

"I have yet to speak on God's behalf." — Job 36:2

We ought not to court publicity for our virtue, or notoriety for our zeal; but, at the same time, it is a sin to be always seeking to hide that which God has bestowed upon us for the good of others. A Christian is not to be a village in a valley, but "a city set upon a hill;" he is not to be a candle under a bushel, but a candle in a candlestick, giving light to all. Retirement may be lovely in its season, and to hide one's self is doubtless modest, but the hiding of Christ in us can never be justified, and the keeping back of truth which is precious to ourselves is a sin against others and an offence against God. If you are of a nervous temperament and of retiring disposition, take care that you do not too much indulge this trembling propensity, lest you should be useless to the church. Seek in the name of him who was not ashamed of you to do some little violence to your feelings, and tell to others what Christ has told to you. If thou canst not speak with trumpet tongue, use the still small voice. If the pulpit must not be thy tribune, if the press may not carry on its wings thy words, yet say with Peter and John, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." By Sychar's well talk to the Samaritan woman, if thou canst not on the mountain preach a sermon; utter the praises of Jesus in the house, if not in the temple; in the field, if not upon the exchange; in the midst of thine own household, if thou canst not in the midst of the great family of man. From the hidden springs within let sweetly flowing rivulets of testimony flow forth, giving drink to every passer-by. Hide not thy talent; trade with it; and thou shalt bring in good interest to thy Lord and Master. To speak for God will be refreshing to ourselves, cheering to saints, useful to sinners, and honouring to the Saviour. Dumb children are an affliction to their parents. Lord, unloose all thy children's tongue.

Job 38:16 (Morning and Evening)

“Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?” — Job 38:16

Some things in nature must remain a mystery to the most intelligent and enterprising investigators. Human knowledge has bounds beyond which it cannot pass. Universal knowledge is for God alone. If this be so in the things which are seen and temporal, I may rest assured that it is even more so in matters spiritual and eternal. Why, then, have I been torturing my brain with speculations as to destiny and will, fixed fate, and human responsibility? These deep and dark truths I am no more able to comprehend than to find out the depth which coucheth beneath, from which old ocean draws her watery stores. Why am I so curious to know the reason of my Lord's providences, the motive of his actions, the design of his visitations? Shall I ever be able to clasp the sun in my fist, and hold the universe in my palm? yet these are as a drop of a bucket compared with the Lord my God. Let me not strive to understand the infinite, but spend my strength in love. What I cannot gain by intellect I can possess by affection, and let that suffice me. I cannot penetrate the heart of the sea, but I can enjoy the healthful breezes which sweep over its bosom, and I can sail over its blue waves with propitious winds. If I could enter the springs of the sea, the feat would serve no useful purpose either to myself or to others, it would not save the sinking bark, or give back the drowned mariner to his weeping wife and children; neither would my solving deep mysteries avail me a single whit, for the least love to God, and the simplest act of obedience to him, are better than the profoundest knowledge. My Lord, I leave the infinite to thee, and pray thee to put far from me such a love for the tree of knowledge as might keep me from the tree of life.

Job 38:31 (Morning and Evening)

“Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?” — Job 38:31

If inclined to boast of our abilities, the grandeur of nature may soon show us how puny we are. We cannot move the least of all the twinkling stars, or quench so much as one of the beams of the morning. We speak of power, but the heavens laugh us to scorn. When the Pleiades shine forth in spring with vernal joy we cannot restrain their influences, and when Orion reigns aloft, and the year is bound in winter's fetters, we cannot relax the icy bands. The seasons revolve according to the divine appointment, neither can the whole race of men effect a change therein. Lord, what is man?

In the spiritual, as in the natural world, man's power is limited on all hands. When the Holy Spirit sheds abroad his delights in the soul, none can disturb; all the cunning and malice of men are ineffectual to stay the genial quickening power of the Comforter. When he deigns to visit a church and revive it, the most inveterate enemies cannot resist the good work; they may ridicule it, but they can no more restrain it than they can push back the spring when the Pleiades rule the hour. God wills it, and so it must be. On the other hand, if the Lord in sovereignty, or in justice, bind up a man so that he is in soul bondage, who can give him liberty? He alone can remove the winter of spiritual death from an individual or a people. He looses the bands of Orion, and none but he. What a blessing it is that he can do it. O that he would perform the wonder to-night. Lord, end my winter, and let my spring begin. I cannot with all my longings raise my soul out of her death and dulness, but all things are possible with thee. I need celestial influences, the clear shinings of thy love, the beams of thy grace, the light of thy countenance, these are the Pleiades to me. I suffer much from sin and temptation, these are my wintry signs, my terrible Orion. Lord, work wonders in me, and for me. Amen.

Job 40:4 (Morning and Evening)

“Behold, I am vile.” — Job 40:4

One cheering word, poor lost sinner, for thee! You think you must not come to God because you are vile. Now, there is not a saint living on earth but has been made to feel that he is vile. If Job, and Isaiah, and Paul were all obliged to say “I am vile,” oh, poor sinner, wilt thou be ashamed to join in the same confession? If divine grace does not eradicate all sin from the believer, how dost thou hope to do it thyself? and if God loves his people while they are yet vile, dost thou think thy vileness will prevent his loving thee? Believe on Jesus, thou outcast of the world’s society! Jesus calls thee, and such as thou art.

“Not the righteous, not the righteous;
Sinners, Jesus came to call.”

Even now say, “Thou hast died for sinners; I am a sinner, Lord Jesus, sprinkle thy blood on me;” if thou wilt confess thy sin thou shalt find pardon. If, now, with all thy heart, thou wilt say, “I am vile, wash me,” thou shalt be washed now. If the Holy Spirit shall enable thee from thy heart to cry

“Just as I am, without one plea

But that thy blood was shed for me,

And that thou bidd’st me come to thee,

O Lamb of God, I come!”

thou shalt rise from reading this morning’s portion with all thy sins pardoned; and though thou didst wake this morning with every sin that man hath ever committed on thy head, thou shalt rest to-night accepted in the Beloved; though once degraded with the rags of sin, thou shalt be adorned with a robe of righteousness, and appear white as the angels are. For “now,” mark it, “Now is the accepted time.” If thou “believest on him who justifieth the ungodly thou art saved.” Oh! may the Holy Spirit give thee saving faith in him who receives the vilest.