

Job

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Job 1 - 7.

We regard it as little short of a miracle that this very ancient book should have been accepted by the people of Israel as part of "the oracles of God," which were "committed" to their hands (see, Romans 3: 2). Job may have been a contemporary of Abraham but he was certainly not of Abrahamic stock, and therefore a Gentile, and yet introduced to us with such words of commendation as we hardly find accorded to any son of Israel. In the book moreover is no allusion to the law in which the Jew made his boast. There was therefore in it nothing that would particularly appeal to the Jew, but rather that which might offend. Yet there through the centuries it has stood, and been handed down to us.

In this we see not only the wisdom of God but His mercy also. Directly sin entered the world a baffling problem presented itself in the slaying of righteous Abel. Why should the godly suffer? If a man's life really pleases God, why should that pleasure not be indicated by special good being his in this life? There is, of course, the alternative problem (Why should the ungodly prosper) — and this is dealt with in Psalm 73. But long before the days of the Psalmists God saw fit in His mercy to solve the enigma for us by permitting extreme disaster to come upon Job, and then causing the story to be recorded and preserved in an inspired writing. The solution was given as soon as "the oracles of God" began to appear.

In the very first verse the inspired writer — whoever he was — makes the exceptional character of Job very clear, and in verse 8 he records that a precisely similar description of him had come from the lips of Jehovah Himself, but with the addition that in his piety he surpassed his contemporaries, for there was "none like him in the earth." Of all men, therefore, here was the man upon whom the smile of the Almighty should rest.

And indeed he had been greatly prospered in the providence of God. He had a well favoured family, and immense possessions of those animals, in which wealth consisted in those days. He was the **greatest** among the men of the east, as well as the **most godly**. His piety embraced his family as well as himself, for he offered burnt offerings for them in the days of their festivities lest they should have in any way offended. Such is the picture presented of this remarkable man.

In verses 7-12, we are granted a glance behind the scenes of this world. Satan, though a fallen creature, still is permitted access to the presence of God. His casting down to earth, mentioned in Revelation 12, is still future. He is spoken of in that chapter as, "the accuser of our brethren," and that

is just what we see him doing here: he does not change. He accused Job of self-seeking in his apparent piety: in other words, that he was in large measure a hypocrite — just what presently we shall find the three friends insinuating. He virtually challenged God to test him by some catastrophe, when Job's skin-deep piety would be broken through, and he would curse the God whom he professed to regard.

The Lord accepted Satan's challenge and permitted the adversary to act against all that he had, but not against himself. Satan promptly acted and the disasters fell with devastating effect.

It was a most instructive scene. We perceive three **causes** and two **effects**. The great First Cause is God. The second inferior cause is Satan. The third still lesser cause — or rather, causes — the Sabaeans, the Chaldeans, and what men would call the forces of nature. The first effect was a complete sweeping away of all Job's family and possessions: the second and ultimate effect was a crushing blow delivered against Job.

What must have made it so crushing to Job was the fact that four different agents were employed. If one gigantic calamity had engulfed the lot, the effect on his mind would probably not have been so great. But **four** separate calamities, **all** in **one** day, and two of them what we should now call "**acts of God**," must have made Satan's malicious deed staggering beyond all our thoughts or words. We venture to think that such a collection of catastrophes, falling upon one man in one day, has never been equalled in the whole history of the world.

The piety of Job was proved not to be skin-deep merely. God knew how to sustain His true servant, and he stood the test and did not curse God. Satan was proved a liar and defeated. Job's words, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," have been repeated millions of times by sorrowing saints, who also have blessed God instead of cursing Him, even as Job did.

Satan, however, returned to the charge, though God could again give His testimonial to Job's remarkable character. He knew very well that a man's own bodily self is nearer and dearer to him than all he may possess, so he said, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." This remark of the devil was once quoted in court by a barrister, wishing to further his case. He prefaced it by saying, "As a great authority has said . . .," feeling he was quite safe in his authority since he quoted from the Bible! The judge knew his Bible better than the counsel, so he quietly said, "I am interested to observe **whom** the learned counsel quotes as, 'a great authority!'"

It will be useful therefore to remind our readers that in this book we have quoted not only the words of Satan, but also many words of men, some of them true enough, as other scriptures show, but others much open to question. None of these men who spoke were inspired in their utterances, though we have an inspired account of what they said, so that the picture presented is perfectly true. We must never overlook the difference between **revelation** and **inspiration**. All Scripture is inspired of God, but not every word found therein is a revelation from God. When Solomon wrote, for instance, "There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink . . ." (Eccles. 2: 24), he was not uttering a **revelation** from God but rather his own foolishness — **inspired** to put it on record for our warning.

But to return to our story: given permission by God, Satan afflicted poor Job with as virulent a disease as has ever been on record, though not permitted to take his life. His state became so fearful and repulsive that his own wife urged him to the sin that Satan designed to lead him into. She only was left to him and thus she became, perhaps unwittingly, an abettor of Satan's design. But again, supported by God, Job stood the test and did not sin with his lips. The record of Job's reaction is this time more negative than positive, we notice still Satan was defeated, and from this point he disappears from the story.

Here, therefore, the story might end, if the point of it were only to show us how the power of God triumphs over the malign doings of the adversary. This is indeed made clearly manifest, but there was the further point of demonstrating how that same power, coupled with His searching kindness, triumphed in the conscience and heart and life of His tried saint, ultimately turning the blackest disaster into rich blessing, of a spiritual sort as well as material.

As a first move toward this, Job's three friends appeared on the scene. At the end of Job 2, they are introduced to us, and what is recorded indicates that they came full of sympathy and with the best of intentions. The record of his disasters and the horror of his bodily state moved them to tears, and so staggered them that for a whole week they sat in his presence speechless. The reality of it all far exceeded what they had heard. Dreadful it must have been to reduce them to this speechless condition. The expressions of sympathy they intended to make froze upon their lips.

But the week of silence had to end. Their presence, their tears, their rent mantles, the dust upon their heads, affected Job, and led him at last to break the silence. He opened his mouth and cursed his day. He did not curse God, be it noted. He called down a curse upon the day he was born; deploring the fact that he had not died when his mother gave him birth. He anticipated that, had he never seen the light, he would have "been at rest," and not in this dire affliction. In Job's day there was not much light as to the unseen world, yet he knew that death did not mean extinction of being, but for the saint rest, and freedom from the trouble caused by the wicked, such as he had experienced by Sabeans and Chaldeans. "There the wicked cease from **troubling**," (Job 3: 17); from troubling other people, not from being troubled themselves. There those, whose strength is worn out, are at rest.

Amongst mankind almost universally, a birthday is an occasion of remembrance and rejoicing. To poor Job it seemed a moment to be deplored and cursed. In his days of prosperity he had feared some kind of adversity might supervene. Now it had come upon him with unparalleled force. His agonized utterance, recorded in Job 3, surely moves our sympathy as we read it, some four thousand years after it was spoken.

The silence of a week being broken, Eliphaz was moved to speak. His earliest words, at the beginning of Job 4, have a gentle and considerate spirit. He acknowledged that Job had been a helper and sustainer of others, but asked a pertinent question in verse 6, which in Darby's New Translation is rendered, "Hath not thy piety been thy confidence, and the perfection of thy ways thy hope?"

Here, we believe, he did put his finger upon the weak spot in Job, as is shown in the remainder of the book. That Job's character and ways were excellent has been guaranteed by God Himself, but that being the case, how subtle the snare to make them the basis of one's confidence and hope, and to build everything upon them, before God as well as before men. It is what many a very godly saint has done since the days of Job.

But in his next paragraph (verses 7-11) Eliphaz completely misunderstands the situation. He asks, "Who ever perished, being innocent?" Doubtless he had no knowledge of Genesis, that book probably not having been written in his day, yet ancient things were known by carefully preserved tradition. What about Abel? He perished being innocent. Why, the first disaster recorded after sin entered the world disproved the position Eliphaz took up. The righteous Abel was cut off. Hence the idea, which he elaborated by his figure of the lions, broke down. The reaping of disaster does not mean of necessity that those who reap, "plow iniquity, and sow wickedness."

From verse 12 onwards, the standpoint that Eliphaz takes comes more clearly to light. He begins to relate a rather terrifying experience of his own, when he saw some spirit apparition, and received a word of warning as to man's frailty and impurity in the presence of his Maker. What he heard is

perfectly true. No mortal man can be more pure or just than God. In both he falls infinitely short of God's glory.

As we open Job 5, we find Eliphaz continuing on this note and again he refers to what he had seen. Verse 3 begins, "I have **seen** . . .," and if we turn to Job 15, where his second speech is recorded, again we find him saying, "That which I have **seen** I will declare" (verse 17). It is evident then that his argument mainly rests for its validity upon his own powers of **observation**. In those powers he trusted for his opinion of the meaning of the calamities that had fallen upon Job.

Some of the sayings of Eliphaz in this chapter are perfectly true: for instance, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward," in this world of sin. Again, it is certainly true that God, "taketh the wise in their own craftiness," and that, "Happy is the man whom God correcteth." But we can see that all these facts are advanced in a way that turned them against poor Job. He had **seen** men taking root and then suddenly cursed, but these were "the foolish." And further, their children were smitten, and robbers swallowed up their possessions. It is obvious that all these remarks carried an insinuation against Job. He had appeared to be wise but was now taken in his craftiness — so it appeared to Eliphaz.

The advice given toward the end of his discourse was good. Job should not despise the chastening of the Almighty, but rather accept the correction, and then the tide of evil would turn and blessing come in. The closing verses speak of God's deliverance coming in; of renewed prosperity. Verse 24 has been rendered, "Thou shalt know that thy tent is in peace; and thou wilt survey thy fold, and miss nothing." Verse 25 speaks of a numerous posterity, and verse 26 of Job himself coming to his end in ripe old age.

These things did indeed mark Job's latter days as we know, but the insinuation was that the absence of any such prosperity at that moment was punishment from God for his sin, which had lain beneath the surface of his life in the past. Eliphaz closed by confidently asserting the truth of his remarks. "So it is," he declared, for he had **searched it out** and **seen it** for himself.

Job 6. By all this Job was stirred to reply, and he begins by acknowledging that the arrows that had smitten him were from the Almighty but these friends of his had no proper sense of the weight of his calamity and grief. Well fed animals do not express distress by braying or lowing, so he did not cry out without ample cause. He was being fed on "sorrowful meat," and he desired that God would cut him off completely rather than prolong his misery.

From verses 14-23, Job upbraids his friends. He was the afflicted one to whom his friends should show pity, if they desired to walk in the fear of God, but on the contrary they were beginning to deal deceitfully with him. They were like streams that dried up in the heat, just when they were most needed by caravans of Tema or Sheba.

At verse 24 a more direct appeal begins. He challenged his friends to leave vague insinuations for direct accusation. Let them show where he had erred, so that, taught by them, he might hold his tongue. He rightly remarked, "How forcible are right words," but what did Eliphaz's "arguing," or "upbraiding," effect? How often among brethren in Christ have vague insinuations, or even accusations, wrought havoc, where "right words," based on specific facts, would have proved forcible and wrought good.

Job's reply continues into Job 7, and here his discourse seems to divide into two parts verses 1-10, and, 11-21. One cannot read the first section without being struck by the pathos of his plight. He felt it deeply himself and hence expressed it in moving fashion. "Months of vanity" and "wearisome nights" had been his portion, so that, just as a servant or hireling longed for the shadow of evening and the wages, he was longing for the end. Like the weaver's shuttle his days fled away and he was hopeless.

His pathetic state is most vividly described and his friends should have been more filled with compassion.

But in the second part Job evidently turned Godward, and began to address Him with his bitter complaint. He realized his own littleness. He was not something great as a sea or a sea-monster, and, in verses 13-16, he cries out that his very nights are a torment with dreams and visions of terror which, he feels, come to him from God. He loathes his present life and tells God that he desires to die.

But it is noticeable how the tone of his complaint and cry changes, when he turns to God from the presence of his friends. He at once is made to realize the insignificance and even the sinfulness of mankind. His cry is, "What is man . . .?" and though he could not answer the question with the clearer light vouchsafed to David in Psalm 8, or the full light of the New Testament, he knew enough to admit that man is not what he ought to be, and that it is a wonder that God should set His heart upon him.

In verse 20, he goes even further. He realized God would not let him alone and he confesses to sin. The New Translation renders the opening of that verse, "Have I sinned, what do I unto Thee, Thou Observer of men?" and we understand that "Observer" and not "Preserver" is the correct translation. He knew he was under God's eye, who could perceive error where he was hardly aware of it. And why did God not grant pardon and remove the weight of his load?

Thus from the outset Job admitted some consciousness of guilt, but as yet, fortified by a life of piety and outward correctness, he did not realize its greatness. God was beginning the process which would lead him to see how deep and black it was.

What have we seen of the same thing in ourselves? Have we reached Paul's confession, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7: 18)?

Job 8 - 14.

As Job closed his reply to Eliphaz, he made the confession, "I have sinned," realizing that God is the Observer of mankind. We might have expected that Bildad, as he began to speak, would have made some allusion to this, but he does not appear to do so. Instead he accused him of uttering words like the blowing of a strong wind, and, to maintain the rightness of all God's judgments, he insinuated that Job's children must have been cast away as the penalty of their transgression. This must have been a bitter stroke at Job, since he had so regularly offered sacrifice on their behalf. Nevertheless he advised Job that if only he would be upright and seek God, he would be blessed in his latter end.

In verses 8-10, Bildad revealed his own standpoint in the argument that was developing. He set great store by the accumulated treasures of human wisdom. Even in these remote times it was possible to search in the records preserved from even remoter times. If Eliphaz argued from his own **observation** — what he personally had seen, — Bildad argued from **tradition** — what could be learned from the records of earlier days. He distrusted a deduction from one's personal experience, since the days of a man upon earth are but "a shadow."

Hence in the rest of the chapter he summarized what tradition would teach, illustrating his point by things in nature, like the rush and the spider's web. He claimed that all history showed that God requited man according to his deserts. If evil, he is cut off. If good, he is prospered. To tell Job that, "the hypocrite's hope shall perish," was a cut this time not at Job's children but at Job himself.

This brought forth from Job the striking words recorded in Job 9. He began by acknowledging the rightness of God's disciplinary ways, but raised the all-important question, as to how a man could be

right with God. In our day the pithy sentence, "Get right with God," has been used to awaken interest in the Gospel message. It might well provoke the reply, "Yes, but how is it to be achieved?" This is just the enquiry that Job made in verse 2, and the rest of the chapter reveals how earnest and sincere he was in asking it, for he suggested and examined four possible answers. Each suggestion commences with an, "If."

The first is of course verse 3. Supposing man adopts a **defiant attitude** and contends with God; what then? Disaster, and no justification! Sin has made mankind into rebels, hence to defy God is their first instinct. But Job saw how ruinous such an attitude would be. God is so infinitely great that no rebel can prosper, and down to verse 19 he continues this theme. The earth and the heavens with their constellations proclaim the Creator's greatness and glory.

At verse 20, Job suggested another possible answer, How could he be just with God? Well, could he justify himself? This would at least mean a forsaking of the defiant attitude and the tacit admission of being wrong, and thus needing to be justified. **Self-justification** is a very attractive proposition, yet Job only stated it to dismiss the idea as impracticable. He knew he had only to open his mouth to condemn himself. Moreover he who would justify himself before the searching eye of God must be able to establish his own perfection. Nothing short of that would satisfy, as verse 20 shows. He went on to assert that even if he were perfect God would judge and destroy him, for he only knew perfection as it is estimated according to human standards.

In verse 27, we find his third "If . . ." He could not defy the God of heaven nor could he justify himself: then should he give up hope, abandon his quest for the answer, and give himself up to the **careless pursuit of enjoyment**? Human nature has not changed, for many of us have pursued just the line of thought which Job disclosed here; only he immediately discarded the idea, realizing how vain it was. If we carelessly forget, God does not forget. The sinner will not evade the judgment of God by declining to face the question.

The fourth "If . . ." occurs in verse 30. Job has discarded three suggested answers to his question those of **defiance**, of **self-justification**, of **careless forgetfulness**. What about a course of **self-improvement**? Would that help in **the** solution of the question? He has only to state it, to reject it with equal decision. He knew that melted snow would give distilled water of the purest kind, having the greatest power of absorbing and removing defilement. The figure he used is most graphic. If he achieved something like this in his own character and life, what then? Why, God would plunge him in a dirty ditch as the only fit place for him. And even then, **he himself**, beneath his clothes, would be dirtier than they! The defilement was in himself and not in his surroundings. His rejection of the idea of achieving justification by a process of self-improvement could not be more decisive.

How evident it is that Job knew that he was a sinful creature before his holy Creator, and that he possessed in himself no means of getting right. That being so, his only hope was in the intervention of a third party; but no such third party, or "daysman," was known to him. His three friends could not act the part, nor could any other man, since the daysman must be **great** enough to lay one of his hands upon Almighty God, and **gracious** enough to lay the other upon poor diseased and sinful Job.

How pathetic are the words that close this chapter! If only there were an efficient intermediary, how different it would be; but, says Job, "it is **not so** with me." Have we ever thanked God with sufficient fervour that **it is so with us**? The fact is that though he may not have known it, Job was sighing for the advent of CHRIST. We can now rejoice in the "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2: 5). By Him the ransom price was paid, so that it is possible for a man to be just with God.

But for Job there was no apparent answer to his question, so we are not surprised that Job 10 is filled with his further words of complaint and sorrow coupled with pathetic appeals to God. He had just said of God, "He is not a man, as I am," hence he was aware that he was as nothing before His holy eyes, that searched him through and through. In verse 2 he appealed to God to show him the reason why He contended with him by these disasters. In verse 6 he again admitted "iniquity" and "sin," yet in the next verse he said, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked," using this term evidently in the sense in which Eliphaz uses it when we come to Job 22: 15.

Yet, on the other hand, he knew that God's standards were far higher than his, and hence woe would come upon him if he were wicked, and that even if he were righteous he could not lift up his head in the presence of God. He was filled with confusion; his affliction increased; he again complained that he had ever been born, and as to the future he had no light. Death was to him as "**a land of darkness**," as we see in verses 21 and 22. We have to pass on to New Testament days to get such a word as that, "the true light now shineth" (1 John 2: 8).

Yet even today there are all too many who regard death as the taking of "a leap in the dark." And indeed it is that to them if the Christ, presented to them in the Gospel, be neglected or rejected. For such there is no excuse, whilst for Job there was every excuse. Again we affirm that the gloom of this excellent saint of Old Testament days should move us to much thanksgiving to God, who has brought us out of darkness into His "**marvellous light**."

In Job 11 we have the brief speech of Zophar, the third of Job's friends, and reading it, we note that his tone is a little more severe even than Bildad's was. Possibly he was irritated by the fact that Job had not accepted the charges and arguments of the other two, but it was overshooting the mark and unfriendly to charge him with a "multitude of words," of being "full of talk," of uttering "lies," and of mocking. Nor had he claimed to be "clean" in the sight of God. Zophar does not as yet reveal the standpoint from which he speaks, but he oracularly declared that Job really deserved from God's hands severer punishment than he was getting. Seeing that his suffering exceeded any other of which we have record, and that the discussion centred around God's disciplinary dealings **in this life**, and did not look into eternity, this again strikes us as harsh and dogmatic in the extreme.

From verse 7 onwards, however, he did say some striking things that have truth in them, as other Scriptures show. It is indeed true that man cannot by his searching find out God. It is equally true that man, being sinful, is "vain," or, "empty," or, "senseless," and is born like "a wild ass's colt." Zophar evidently felt that Job needed to recognize these things, without much consciousness of how they applied to himself. If the men of this twentieth century recognized them, it would puncture their inflated pride. They may find out means of destroying human lives by the hundred thousand, but they cannot find out God. He can only be found in Christ, who has revealed Him.

Zophar's final words of counsel (verses 13-20) also have truth in them. Verse 14 in the New Translation begins, "If thou put far away the iniquity which is in thy hand;" that is, he again **assumes**, like the others, that Job **is** after all an evil man, holding tight to his sins. Here he was wrong, though his counsel to put away evil and turn to God was good, and his description of the happy result of so doing was correct enough.

Job 12. The tone of extreme dogmatism so noticeable in Zophar's utterance, no doubt prompted Job to begin his reply on a very sarcastic note. His words, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you," have almost passed into a proverb, to be used against the dogmatism of self-conceit. He claimed to have understanding equal to his friends, and in verse 5 he reminded them that he, who was in this slippery place, shone like a warning lamp, only to be despised by those *who* were in

easy and comfortable circumstances, as his friends were.

In verse 6 Job challenged the main position that his friends had taken. They asserted that God always rewards the pious with earthly prosperity and visits disaster upon the head of the wicked. He maintained that it was not so, but that there were cases when robbers prospered and those who provoked God were secure. In proof of this he referred to what could be seen in the lower creation - beasts, birds and fishes. He alluded, we suppose, to the disorder that the sin of man has introduced even there, so that the weaker meet with disaster and destruction from the stronger, and all this by the permission of God. Just as the mouth tastes meat so had his ear tried their words, and found them worthless.

From verse 13 to the end of this chapter Job reviewed the ways of God in His dealings with men. He acknowledged that "wisdom and strength" are His as well as "counsel and understanding." Yet he felt that God's exercise of these wonderful qualities were full of mystery. Again and again those who are great and wise — counsellors, judges, kings, princes — are spoiled and overthrown. He lived in days when, after the flood, nations had come into being. He had seen such increased and then destroyed. Men, who had been so wise as to become chief among the people, suddenly lose their understanding and grope in the dark without a light, or stagger like a drunken man. Now why was this?

Eliphaz had based his condemnation of Job on what he himself had observed. Well, Job too had powers of observation, and he had seen all these things of which he had just spoken, as he affirmed in the opening verses of Job 13. He did not claim to be superior to his friends, but at any rate he was not their inferior, yet he acknowledged that God's dealings mystified him, being far above and out of his sight. So, as verse 3 indicates, what he desired was to speak to the Almighty and reason with God, rather than spend his time in reasoning with his friends.

Still, there his friends were, and we can see that by this time Job had been goaded into retorts of a more biting kind. What he wanted was truth for his mind and healing for his body. They were only "forgers of lies," and "physicians of no value." He counselled them to hold their peace and listen to what he had to say; and up to verse 13 he continued in this strain. He felt they had talked as though speaking on God's behalf, and in so doing had misrepresented Him. In this, no doubt, Job judged rightly.

In verses 14-19, God, rather than his friends, is before the mind of Job. We can discern two conflicting elements. On the one hand, there was a remarkable spirit of faith, which led him to take all that had transpired from His hand and not concern himself with the agents of the disasters, which had stopped short of his death. He had desired to die, and if God should answer this request and slay him, he would not lose confidence but still trust in Him. This indeed was excellent, but at the same time Job revealed his very weak spot in his determination to "maintain," or "defend" his own ways before Him. So we see that in a true saint very real faith in God may exist, and yet be marred by a very determined measure of self-esteem. This it is, which gives such great value to this remarkable book, since the flesh in us, who are saints today, is just the same as it was in Job some four thousand years ago.

Thus it is, that Job proclaimed that God would be his salvation and that ultimately he would be justified. But in verse 20 he more definitely addressed himself to God. He accepted his sorrows as being from the hand of God and asked that His hand might be removed from him, so that he might stand before Him on easier terms. Verse 23 shows that directly Job felt himself to be before God he acknowledged iniquity and sins. He wished to know how many they were, since he felt, as the succeeding verses reveal, that the retribution he was suffering went beyond his real deserts. He was like a man with his feet in the stocks, and thus an easy target for those who wished to throw things at him.

As we read his words, we cannot but feel the pathos of them, and are not surprised at his cry of lamentation, which opens Job 14. In the far-off days of Job human life was perhaps three times longer than it is today; yet it was after all "of few days," and then it was "full of trouble," just as it is today, so that viewed in the light of the eternal God, he is but like a fading flower or a fleeting shadow. Job was conscious of this as regards himself and so he knew he could not stand the Divine inspection, nor stand before Him in judgment. Moreover he knew that he was not clean in the sight of God, and he was sure no one could produce the clean out of the unclean.

The Authorised Translation in verse 4, puts the word **thing**, in italics. Darby's New Translation inserts rather the word, **man**. This is another of the tremendous questions that Job asks, and this time he answers it — quite rightly too. No man can accomplish it in himself, and much less achieve it for others. Moreover, when we turn to the New Testament, we find that **God does not propose to do it**. The error that troubled the Galatians was the idea that the law had been given to clean men up, and hence even Christians had to put themselves under it and accept circumcision as the sign of it, in order to lead clean lives. The emphatic word correcting this is, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but **a new creation**" (Gal. 6: 15). The believer is not the "old man" cleaned up. He is newly created in Christ, with a nature which in its essential character "cannot sin," as affirmed in 1 John 3: 9.

Man being of few days, his life in this world must terminate in death, and the time when he goes is determined by God, as verse 5 states. But, what then? Job felt he was just like an hireling filling out his day, and he wished that God would give him rest until the end came. But again, what then?

We have to pass on to verse 14 before we find him actually stating the third tremendous question that **filled** his mind, but evidently it was **in** his mind as he commenced his argument in verse 7. He did not know how a man could be "just," or "right" with God. He knew that no man could produce that which is clean out of that which is unclean. And now comes the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" As yet, on this point, no clear and decisive light was shining before him, and in his heart.

This being so, he started to reason the matter out. He took the analogy of a tree, which had been felled, when for long its root had been in the earth. He had seen the years pass so that the stump that was left had begun to decay. Yet a change had come. Something had happened, an earth-tremor had perhaps cracked the rocks and opened up a fresh channel for water to reach its roots. Then, as a consequence, the dead tree had come to life and sprouted again. The hope of Job was that something like that lay before mankind.

Evidently too it was more than a hope, for in verse 12 he infers that men will "awake," and "be raised out of their sleep," but that this would not come to pass, "till the heavens be no more." How true this is, as to the masses of mankind who die in their sins, we see when we read Revelation 20: 11-15. We must remember that the fact of there being a resurrection of the **just** a full thousand years before the resurrection of the **unjust**, had not come to light in the days of Job. Verse 13 makes it manifest that Job in his mind connected the fact of resurrection with the manifestation of God's wrath, from which he desired to be hid, and the rather to be remembered in mercy.

The words of Job in verses 14 and 15 are very remarkable. We may often have wondered how the faith of an Abraham embraced such things as are recorded in Hebrews 11: 10 and 16, seeing that in his day there was no public revelation of these heavenly things, as far as the Scripture record goes. So with Job here. He recognized that he had an "appointed time," when his "change" would come; that there would be a Divine "call," to which he would "answer," inasmuch as he was a "work" of God's hands. In thus speaking he was taught of God, as we can see in the light of the New Testament.

We pause to ask if we have ever thanked God in any adequate way that we walk in the light of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead? Have we ever given sufficient weight in our souls to the statement of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 1: 10, which in the New Translation reads, "Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and brought to light life and **incorruptibility** by the glad tidings." Immortality is not the word here. That the soul of man survived death, and resurrection lay ahead, was believed in Old Testament times, as Job's words here show, and as the Lord made plain in controversy with the Sadducees of His day. What was not made known was that for the saint resurrection will mean entrance upon a new and incorruptible order of things. This was demonstrated when our Lord rose from the dead. Hence we have no need to discuss the matter and reason it out, as Job does here. The whole truth of it has been plainly revealed.

Thus Job had a certain measure of hope and expectation but, as the closing verses of the chapter show, all was for the moment swallowed up in the miseries of his present situation. Once more the speech of Job ends upon a note of gloom. His last word is "mourn."

There can be no doubt that the excellent men who lived before Christ did view death in that light. A striking exhibition of it is seen in the case of Hezekiah — read what he committed to writing, recorded in Isaiah 38: 9-14. The day had not yet dawned when a saint could look death full in the face and write of "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Again we say, how great the privilege of living in this Gospel day!

Job 15 - 21.

The second speech of Eliphaz is recorded in Job 15, and in it we can detect an increased tone of severity. The friends had come intending to comfort, but their efforts in that direction soon got diverted into argument; their tempers rose and bitterness spoiled their spirits, as each argued to establish his own point of view. How often through the centuries has this tragedy, ending in dissension and division, marred the **testimony of** God-fearing folk, even down to our own day.

This discourse of Eliphaz is short for he felt that he was a wise man reasoning with unprofitable talk, and listening to speeches that were of no worth. Job, he considered was casting off fear; or as another version has it, making "piety of none effect," and thus restraining prayer. In his view piety had the profitable effect of bringing upon one the favour of God, expressed in earthly prosperity. If it did not, where then was the practical gain of piety? Therefore the terrible afflictions of Job could only have one explanation, so he thought, though Job so insisted on maintaining his integrity.

This idea of Eliphaz and his friends is a very common one. It was to be found when Paul wrote his First Epistle to Timothy in very much worse form than in the days of Job, for he speaks of "men of corrupt minds" who indulge in "perverse disputings," because they suppose that "gain is godliness" (1 Tim. 6: 6). The New Translation slightly paraphrases it as, "holding gain to be the end of piety." Now this was pretty much the opinion of Eliphaz, and there are not a few people today who would agree with him. They would say, What is the use of being pious if it does not guarantee things of profit in this life? Ideas of that sort were less to be blamed in the days of Job, since things of eternity and heaven were then but dimly known.

Eliphaz now denounced Job in vigorous terms and rather unjustly, as we see in verse 6. To him Job's arguments were crafty and self-condemnatory. He met them by a series of six questions, recorded in verses 7-9, all of them having the sting of sarcasm in them. In verse 10, he claimed that the position, advanced by himself and his friends, had the sanction and support of very aged and venerable men. No

doubt it was so. The three friends of Job were advancing the idea generally held, based perhaps on God's deliverance of Noah and his family when the flood came. Then the godly were favoured and the wicked destroyed, and thus, they felt, it must always be.

Further questions follow in verses 11-16. His assertions as to the holiness of God are quite right. The lower heavens, defiled by the presence of Satan, are indeed "not clean in His sight." His assertions as to the filthiness of man are equally true; but the inference that Job must be guilty of secret evils, which he "winked at" instead of acknowledging, were wide of the mark.

From verse 17 to the end of the chapter we find a vivid description of the governmental judgment of God against the wicked. He assured Job that he had actually **seen** God acting in this way. It was the fruit of his own **observation** that he declared; and as he closed he did not fail to make further indirect charges against Job, speaking of men who were "deceived," of "hypocrites," of "tabernacles of bribery," and of "deceit."

This moved Job to the reply recorded in Job 16 and 17. We can all sympathize with his opening words. His friends had been simply repeating the same basic idea in a variety of ways; namely, that the disasters that had overwhelmed him could have but one explanation. He **must** have been a hypocrite with evils lying beneath his pious exterior. If this was the comfort they had to offer him, it was of a very miserable kind. He told them at once that if the position were reversed and he visited them in their disasters, he could speak as they had spoken but he would not, but rather aim at assuaging their grief.

But it is noticeable that, after his opening reply to Eliphaz, Job's words passed into prayer and complaint, poured into the ear of God. It looks as if verses 9, 10 and 11 are a reference to what he had suffered by the speeches of his friends, and if so, even this he took as chastisement from the hands of God as well as all the losses and disaster that had come upon him. That he did take it all from the hands of God was indeed good, but we still perceive that note of self-righteousness and self-vindication marring his prayer, especially in verse 17. This being so, his prayer did pass into a complaint that he was being hardly dealt with by God, and this especially because he felt he could speak of God as being on high the Witness to his integrity, even though his friends scorned him.

The opening words of verse 21 have been translated, "Oh that there were arbitration for a man with God!" Thus his mind reverted to his desire for the "Daysman," recorded at the end of Job 9. A man might plead for his neighbour or friend but he felt there was no one to step in between God and himself, and he could only anticipate a short time before his end. His breath was corrupt and the grave ready for him, as he stated in the first verse of Job 17. We have probably but little conception of the state of extreme and prolonged bodily corruption and misery that he had been enduring.

Yet some further insight as to it is granted to us in Job 17. So extreme was it that the statements of his friends seemed to him but mockery. Among the people generally he had become a "byword," or a "proverb," and the second clause of that 6th verse is elsewhere translated, "I am become one to be spit on in the face." This however would astonish upright men, and Job seems to turn the tables on *his* critics by inferring that they might prove to be the hypocrites, whilst the righteous would hold on his way, and the one who had the clean hands would increase in strength. As for these "friends," there was not one wise man among them.

The closing words of this speech of Job are a very mournful complaint as to the hopelessness of his outlook. As to his poor body, only corruption and the worm were before him, when his soul would be in the unseen world. The word translated "grave" in verse 13, and that translated "pit" in verse 16, is the Hebrew, **sheol**, the equivalent of the Greek, **hades**, used in the New Testament. This pathetic lament might well have touched the hearts of his friends.

Yet Bildad begins his second speech, recorded in Job 18, on a very harsh note. Job certainly had not yet come to the end of himself, and in his friends' arguments there was nothing to cause him to "make an end of words." The second part of verse 2 has been translated, "Be intelligent, and then we will speak." He evidently regarded Job's repudiation of their position and the assertions they advanced, as degrading to themselves as though they had been beasts, and so he indulged in an insulting repartee. All four men who feared God, Job especially so, but see how the spirit animating their words had deteriorated!

And let us learn a serious lesson from this. There have been innumerable discussions among Christians, developing into controversies, and ending in recrimination. Such is the flesh in every one of us. Even Paul and Barnabas were not exempt, as Acts 15: 39 shows. So, let us be warned.

The rest of Bildad's speech follows the pattern that the friends had established. In a variety of ways, displaying a mind very fertile in its observation and in its use of figures, he reiterated the main theme; that God always judges and destroys the wicked. The inference being, of course, that Job must be after all a wicked man.

Job 19. Job's reply to these rather cruel words was on an altogether higher level. They were indeed vexing him with words, and breaking him in pieces, but he did not claim to be perfect — far from it, as we saw in Job 9. Here, in verse 4, he admits to erring, but he claimed that his errors had only affected himself and not other people. What had befallen him he took from the hand of God, as verse 6 shows, yet he felt that His dealings were unnecessarily severe.

So, in verses 7-20, we have a graphic description of the miseries he was enduring. He complained that God had stripped him, fenced up his way, destroyed him on every side, kindled His wrath against him as though he was one of His enemies. As a result of this, he was an object of contempt and forsaken by all. Even his servants and his wife would have nothing to do with him. The words with which he closed this description of his sorrows in verse 20, alluding to his physical state, have passed into a proverbial saying amongst us.

Having thus spoken, he appealed to his friends for pity rather than argument and reproach, which almost amounted to persecution. It was the hand of God that had touched him — God, who was more merciful than they. Hence he longed that his words might be preserved in a book, or even permanently be engraved upon the rock, as was a custom in those days on the part of kings and great men. Such rock records have been discovered and deciphered, yet his desire was granted in a more wonderful way than he imagined; for they have been recorded in the inspired Scriptures, which out-live and out-distance all else.

But why did he desire this? It was because he knew that his Redeemer was the living One, and that as "the Last," He would stand upon the earth. The New Translation renders it thus, as being really a name of God, referring us to Isaiah 48: 12. Thus again, and quite clearly, did Job reveal that he knew that death was not the end of everything for man, and that he expected a resurrection which would touch his body. What was not then revealed was that state of **incorruption** into which resurrection introduces us, for life and **incorruptibility** came to light by the Gospel, as 2 Timothy 1: 10, rightly translated, reads.

Though truth has been progressively revealed, certain great facts of a prophetic sort came to light in very early days. There was, for instance, the prophecy of Enoch, uttered before the flood, though not put on record in Scripture until the last epistle of the New Testament. Without a doubt Job would have known this prediction of Enoch, and it is remarkable that nothing he says here is out of harmony with what is revealed in later ages. When the glorious Christ raises the saints, Job amongst them, he will

indeed "see God," and see Him, as he said, "in my flesh," though he did not know he would be raised with a **spiritual body** like unto the resurrection body of our Lord.

Job's discourse in this chapter ends with a warning to his friends. He claimed that "the root of the matter" was found in himself, and that the judgment of God is impartial, so that they themselves should be afraid of it.

This moved Zophar to speak once more, and this time he revealed quite clearly the base on which his argument rested. He said, "Therefore do **my thoughts** cause me to answer;" and again, "**the spirit of my understanding** causeth me to answer." Eliphaz had based his remarks mainly upon what he had seen, and Bildad mainly upon what he had heard, handed down from times of old. Zophar based his words upon what he had arrived at in his own inward cogitations, and he was not in the least behind the others in self-confident dogmatism, indeed, he seems to have excelled them.

In 1 Corinthians 2: 9, the Apostle Paul refers to Isaiah 64: 4, and he shows that the things of God are only known by us as the fruit of **revelation**. In this connection he mentions the three faculties by which mankind obtains its knowledge of things and affairs in this world. The eye sees them; the ear hears them; they enter into the heart by an intuitive process. But for the things of God we need another faculty — that which springs from the Spirit of God.

Now it is very striking that, as we have seen, Eliphaz relied upon his powers of **observation**, and Bildad upon **tradition** from ancient days. Zophar now came in, very sure that his powers of **intuition** in this matter must be correct and beyond contradiction. All three were wrong, and it was not until there was a **revelation** of the power and wisdom of God, in the later chapters of the book, that the truth of the situation came out with clearness. We are provided with an interesting illustration of what Paul lays down in 1 Corinthians 2.

As in the other cases so here, a number of true things are stated. It is certainly a fact that, "the triumphing of the wicked is short," and "the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment." What was not true was the application made of the fact, as supplying the explanation of all Job's sorrows. The "pleasures of sin" are only "for a season," as we read in Hebrews 11, but it is also a fact that saints may be "for a season" involved in "heaviness through manifold temptations," as we read in 1 Peter 1. Now the thought of a godly man being under severe trial and sorrow for a season never seems to have entered the minds of the three friends. They assumed that Job was getting what all along he had deserved.

Zophar claimed that what he intuitively knew was supported by what had taken place from "of old, since man was placed upon earth." Reading Job 20 we can see how underlying his statements, as to various acts of wickedness, was the insinuation that Job had been guilty of them. He it was who had laboured to swallow down the substance of others, to oppress the poor; who had violently taken away a house which he had not built, and so on. The fact is that the man who bases his argument on his own **intuition** is always **very dogmatic and cocksure**. He has to be, to make up for the lack of outward evidence, which would corroborate his assertions.

His final conclusion was that heaven was revealing Job's iniquity, and the earth was rising up against him, and all this was appointed to him from God.

Job's reply is chronicled in Job 21, and a trenchant one it proved to be. Naturally he was provoked to retaliate with equal dogmatism, and to begin on a note of sarcasm. Verse 2 has been translated, "Hear attentively my speech, and let this replace your consolations." Summing up the speeches of the three friends as "consolations," was of course a piece of sarcasm. How he really viewed their words is plain at the end of the next verse, when he told them that after he had spoken they might "mock on!"

He fully realized the force of their words, implying that he must have been guilty of grievous unrighteousness and sin, while all the time outwardly appearing to be a man of great piety.

His first point is this: his complaint was not to man but to God. Had it been to man, well might his spirit have been troubled, or "impatient." He reminded them that it was with God both he and they had to do. In view of this fact, and marking God's dealings with him, they might well lay their hands upon their mouths and cease to condemn him. For himself he was afraid and trembled in the remembrance of it.

Commencing with verse 5, we find the counter-assertions to which he committed himself. It was not the case, he affirmed, that the wicked were always overwhelmed with disaster. On the contrary, they often lived, became old, mighty in power and prosperous, with their seed established in their sight. They had times of merriment and pleasure and at the end had no long drawn out misery such as he was enduring, but "in a moment go down to the grave [or, Sheol]." And all the time their attitude to God was, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways."

Let us note two things. First, Job here correctly diagnosed the attitude of the natural man to God, about two thousand years before Paul was inspired to write his Epistle to the Romans. There, in the first chapter, we read that men, "when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful;" and again that, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." This is the tremendous fact that we have to face. Sin has so completely alienated man from God that he has not the least desire for Him. "There is none that seeketh after God," as Romans 3 states.

Job's statements in verses 14 and 15, agree with this, and they explain the state of heathenism and barbarism into which men sank at an early stage of the world's history — a state that has persisted to our own days. In earliest ages men had some knowledge of God, from which they wilfully departed.

And it is obvious that if men have to do with God, they will have to **serve** Him. So, in the second place, they view the whole matter from the standpoint of earthly profit. This is just what multitudes do today, when they ask, What is the good of being religious; what do we get out of it? They are but echoing the words we have here, "What profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?" We know that, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4: 8). But that kind of profit the world has no eyes to see.

In the rest of the chapter Job speaks of the end of those who aim at shutting God out of their thoughts and lives. Ultimately disaster comes upon them and their "candle" is put out. Some may die in apparent ease and prosperity and others in bitterness; but into the dust and among the worms all of them go. In saying these things Job seems to be agreeing with what Psalm 73 tells us, as a matter of the writer's experience. The wicked may depart from God and appear to prosper, for their judgment from God lies beyond this life.

So once more Job counters the arguments of his friends, declaring that he found falsehood in them. Consequently, though they had come to comfort him, he found that the "comfort" that they had offered was empty and vain.

Job 22 - 31

The outspoken way in which Job had told his friends, that the comfort they had offered was untrue and valueless, rather naturally moved Eliphaz to begin his third speech on a still more bitter note. Job certainly had been defending his own character, but did he confer any profit or benefit on the Almighty by the righteousness and perfection that he claimed? And would God enter into judgment

with him as though he were His equal? There could be but one answer to these questions, and it would be salutary for Job to realize what it was. As our Lord told His disciples, the confession of us all has to be, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

But, having uttered these wise words, Eliphaz plunged into a series of accusations against Job, which in the light of the testimony God bore to him at the outset of the story, must have been utterly unfounded. These accusations fill verses 5-9 and reading them we can see what provoked Job to sing his own praises, as he does in Job 29. Eliphaz did not deal in vague insinuations but affirmed Job's wrong-doing in regard to the needy, the naked, the weary, the hungry, the widow and the fatherless. In Job 29, Job rebuts these things and is equally explicit in declaring how well he had acted to these very people.

In verse 13 Eliphaz supposes the evil had been mainly in secret and that Job assumed that God did not know of his wickedness — another false assumption. In verses 15-18 we have a reference to the flood. Job had just spoken of wicked men, who said unto God, "Depart from us," and here Eliphaz asks if he had really taken to heart this very thing, as displayed in the antediluvian world. What men did **after** the flood, as they lapsed into idolatry, was just what had been done **before** the flood. Eliphaz is quite right in saying that the root of all their appalling wickedness was departure from God, and shutting Him out of their lives and even out of their thoughts.

At this point we may well pause and consider our own age. Job's assertion in the previous chapter was that when, as often, God prospered wicked men, they desired God to depart from them for they had no desire for His ways. Now Eliphaz has stated that of old wicked men dismissed God from their thoughts and lives and were cut down by the flood. Job's point was that God often prospered the wicked and their judgment only came at the end, whereas Eliphaz insisted that God did intervene in judgment, as the flood had borne witness. Both it seems were right, and in our own day we can see the direful results of men dismissing God from their thoughts and lives. If God be thus turned out, every kind of evil comes in.

How true therefore is the exhortation of Eliphaz in verse 21. The knowledge of God does indeed lead to both peace and good as the ultimate result, but at first it leads to deep unrest and trouble, as Job had to find. Before he reached the good, recorded at the end of the book, he had to experience the anguish of self-judgment — see, Job 40: 4; Job 42: 6.

Underlying this verse however, and the succeeding verses too, is the old assumption that Job did not know God, that he was astray from Him and needed to come back and put away his iniquity, which was bringing all this chastisement upon him, and he closed with a glowing description of all the advantage that would come to Job if he did so. A clearer translation of the last verse is, "He shall deliver him that is not guiltless," and in his closing words Eliphaz seems to state that if only Job had clean hands he would deliver other people as well as himself.

Job's next speech occupies chapters 23 and 24, and is remarkable in that he makes no direct reference to what Eliphaz had just been advancing.

Job 23 has the nature of a lament with a great deal of pathos in it. Here he was full of bitter complaint, yet feeling that the weight of the stroke laid on him was beyond any groan that he uttered. The stroke came from God, yet he did not know where He was nor how he might find Him. If only he could find Him and order his cause before Him, he felt sure relief would come, and he would be delivered — verse 7 has been translated, "There would an upright man reason with Him; and I should be delivered for ever from my Judge." Thus once more did Job assume his own uprightness, and his complaint was that he was troubled by the Almighty, whom he could not reach and into whose

presence he could not come.

Nevertheless he still had confidence, as verse 10 shows, that all the path of sorrow he was treading was known to God, that in it he was being tested, and that as the result he would come forth as gold at the end. That indeed was the end finally reached but, we suspect, not in the way Job expected. As yet, filled with confidence in his own righteousness, he expected to be approved of God. He did come forth as gold, but as the fruit of his abasement in self-judgment before God, and then he was lifted up and abundantly blessed.

Verse 12 is striking and frequently quoted. But the words translated, "my necessary food," are literally, "my appointed portion," as the margin shows. The New Translation renders them, "the purpose of my own heart." Reading it thus, we may well challenge our own hearts as to whether we are prepared to set aside our own purposes in subjection to the words of God.

The first verse of Job 24 propounds a question, the exact force of which is not easily discerned. But it does appear that in the rest of the chapter Job is recounting the evils that were filling the earth in his day, which were going on unjudged until the grave closed the history of the wicked, as giving point and force to the question he asked. This being so, the latter part of verse 1 would mean, "Why do the God-fearing not see days of judgment falling from God on the heads of the godless?" A very pertinent question, approximating to that raised in Psalm 73. At the end of the chapter Job, as well as the Psalmist, sees judgment ultimately coming upon them. But seeing it does not so come now, Job challenged all comers to confute him and prove him a liar.

For the third time Bildad now spoke, as recorded in Job 25. As with Eliphaz so with him, each speech was shorter than the preceding one, showing that their powers of compassion, as also of argument, were running short. Moreover there appears to be little of reference to Job's statements in what he said. His description of the greatness and glory of God is fine and almost poetical, and what he says of the sin and uncleanness and insignificance of man, who is like a worm before his Creator, is equally true. But he could only reiterate the question Job asked in Job 9, "How then can man be just with God," without making any attempt to answer it, or express a desire for a mediator, as Job had done. To Bildad it was an unanswerable question, and perhaps he thought it gave some kind of excuse for the sin, with which he and his friends had been accusing unhappy Job.

This moved Job to open his mouth for the ninth time, in a speech longer than all the rest. As their arguments for the prosecution were failing, his for the defence increased. Bildad's brief words had been of a gentler kind, but before Job showed that he too can speak in glowing terms of the greatness of God, he indulged in the sarcasms that fill verses 2 and 3 of Job 26. To us it seems quite obvious that the speeches of the friends had not been helpful nor saving nor wise, but Job being human, he did not miss the opportunity to hurl these taunts at them. Other translations render the opening words of verse 3, "To whom," rather than, "For whom." That would mean that Job wished them to remember that though their words had been addressed to him, they had really been speaking in the presence of God, and speaking moreover not in the right spirit.

His description of God's creatorial power is striking. Verse 7 in particular shows how these early saints, living in the fear of God, as far as He was then revealed, had a true and simple knowledge of created things, far removed from the fantastic ideas entertained, even by the learned, when their minds had been darkened by lapsing into idolatry.

He knew that God had wrought by His Spirit in garnishing the heavens, which is what learned unbelievers would hardly admit today; and at the same time he was conscious that what was known in his day was only a part of His ways, and his comment was, "What a whisper of a word do we hear of

Him!" (New Trans.). Let this pathetic cry of Job sink into all our hearts. He had but a "whisper of a word" as to God. Israel knew something of "the thunder of His power," when at Sinai through Moses the law was given. We have the high privilege of knowing and enjoying the "grace and truth" that came by Jesus Christ, and further of walking in "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4: 6). We may well bless God, who has brought us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

What a striking witness we have in this book — one of the oldest in the world — to facts which stand out plainly in the New Testament. Here are patriarchal saints, living only a few centuries after the flood, with a knowledge of God according to the primeval revelation of Himself. Men did not develop out of heathenism into the knowledge of God, but the reverse. As Romans 1 says "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God;" and again, "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over . . ." However stubborn Job was in his self-righteousness, and his friends were in their thoughts, they did not exclude God from their knowledge. He was very present in their thoughts.

The opening words of Job 27 indicate that at this point Job paused, expecting Zophar to speak; and apparently he paused again at the end of Job 28. But no reply was forthcoming. This was not surprising, for the man who bases his position on **intuition** has a very restricted field of argument. The man who argues from his own **observation** may have had a wide field of vision and therefore a lot to put forward. So too, the man who delves into past history and argues from **tradition**. But the man who only urges what he thinks, the ideas that he has intuitively formed, may urge them with great force in his opinionated self-conceit; but if his thoughts be rebutted, there is not much else he can say.

So Job resumed his discourse, striking a very solemn note, as taking an oath before God. In affirming his own integrity and truth he charged his friends with being the ones who spoke falsehood and deceit, while he held fast his righteousness with the utmost resolution. This "righteousness," as Job 29 will show us, was concerned with his outward conduct, for as yet the searching light of God had not entered his soul. He had been charged with being a deceiver and a hypocrite. He knew he was not this, and he was not going to plead guilty to it for a moment. We too know that he was not, but outward correctness does not in itself count for righteousness in the presence of God. Job's own words here prove it, for the way he complains of God in verse 2 shows that his heart was not right in His sight.

In the rest of the chapter we find Job enlarging upon the way God deals in judgment with the hypocrite. He had just been virtually charging his friends with being hypocrites in their accusations against him, so it would appear that his words were a warning to them that such might be their fate, something akin to what had happened to him.

He followed this — Job 28 — with the remarkable words about man's search after wisdom. In his days mining was practised: it may have been then a new pursuit, whether for iron or copper, for gold or silver or gems. They dig down, they divert the subterranean stream, they make paths untrodden by the strongest of beasts or the most keen-sighted of birds. But in all this searching they never find wisdom. This is the question he raised in verse 12, and he affirmed very rightly that it could not be found in these human activities. Men may discover **much**, and since Job's day they have discovered an immense deal **more**, but wisdom eludes them. If Job could have been given a glimpse of man's activities and discoveries in our atomic age, he would say the same, only with emphasis a hundred-fold greater.

So, "Where shall wisdom be found?" (verse 12). Job begins to answer this in verse 23. God, who understands it, knows its way, and has declared it to man, as verse 28 declares. "**The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom**; and to depart from evil is understanding. "In all the statements made during this prolonged discussion no truer nor wiser thing had been said. In Proverbs 9: 10, we find Solomon

making a similar statement, and it is corroborated in the history of the early church, as we see in Acts 9: 31.

As the fear of God departs from the heart of man, so his own selfwill increases, which produces endless folly. In the present age the knowledge and cleverness of man has **risen** to heights undreamed of a century ago, and his destructive folly threatens to **descend** to undreamed of depths. Psalm 36: 1, quoted in Romans 3: 18, exposes the root of it all.

As Job continued his parable, in Job 29, he sighed for a return to the days of his prosperity and, remembering the accusations of Eliphaz, which we had in Job 22, he began to utter his own praise. What light and luxury were his! What deference and even reverence was paid to him! And then he declared his acts of benevolence and righteousness and judgment, which he felt had entitled him to very preferential treatment in blessing from the hand of God.

Job 29 has thus become one of the great "I" chapters of the Bible. Ecclesiastes 2 is Solomon's "I" chapter: that personal pronoun occurs 16 times in the first 9 verses: true chapter of the **self-gratified** "I." Job 29 is the chapter of the **self-satisfied** "I" Romans 7 is of course the chapter of the **self-condemned** "I" And to be self-condemned is far better than to be self-gratified or self-satisfied. Best of all is to be **self-eclipsed**, as we find Paul to be in Philippians 3, where he mentions "I" a good many times.

But our chapter records how Job was permitted to let himself go, and sing his own praise, and thus reveal to us the self-righteousness and self-conceit, which had lain deep down within him, hidden from all eyes but God's. To bring this to light, and to bring Job himself to judge it, and to judge himself in the presence of God, was the object God had in permitting Satan to bring these extreme testings upon him.

For the moment however Job was full of the great and excellent things he had done, and of the commanding position amongst his fellows which had been his as the result. This did but make more vivid the contrast of his present condition, and to this he returned in the sorrowful lament recorded in Job 30. He had now become the derision of the basest of men, and even of the youngest among them. They could make up songs about his misery. and even spit in his face — a cruel insult indeed. In verse 20 however he turned to God and made bitter complaint to Him, and even against Him. He felt that He had opposed him and cast him down and disregarded his prayers and entreaties, and so had "become cruel" to him. Poor Job! Without any question men had become cruel to him, and he now felt that God had become cruel also. In the closing verses of this chapter he described the extreme state of bodily weakness and misery and corruption into which he had been brought. God had given Satan permission to do his worst, short of taking his life. With malign skill Satan reduced his body to such a state of loathsome disease as, we suppose, no man has suffered before or since; for in every other case the victim would have died before such a mass of bodily trouble could develop. Let us not judge Job harshly. In such a fearful plight as his we should probably have said far worse things than he.

Having uttered these sorrowful complaints, Job closed his lengthy speech, as we see in Job 31, by a series of asseverations almost amounting to oaths. His friends had accused him of definite sins and wrong-doing. As to these things his conscience was clear, though, as we have seen, he admitted he was not pure in the sight of God. So he strongly affirmed that he had not committed the kinds of evil that were alleged or insinuated.

This chapter bears witness to the fact that before the law was given a high standard of morality was still found among God-fearing men. A standard moreover which had regard not only to the outward act but also to the inward motive that prompts the act: see, as instances of this, he spoke of

what he **thought**, or **did not think**, in verse 1; of his **heart** walking after his eyes, in verse 7; and again, his **heart** being secretly enticed, in verse 27; and of **hiding** his iniquity, and **covering** his sins, like Adam, in verse 33. This may remind us of the Sermon on the Mount; particularly if we compare his words in verse 30, realizing that merely wishing a curse to his enemy would be a sin, with our Lord's words in Matthew 5: 24

Again, he knew that deceit and false witness was wrong; see, verse 5: that adultery was wrong; see, verse 9: that idolatry was wrong; see, verses 26-28; since the worship of sun and moon was the most primitive form that idolatry took. So also he knew that he was not to covet what his neighbour possessed, for in contrast he should be a giver to his necessities, as we see in verses 13-22.

So most evidently the standard of conduct that Job had before him was a very high one, and he felt he had rigidly observed it. He knew too that there would be a day when God would rise up and visit and he asked, "What shall I answer Him?" (verse 14). Reviewing all these things, Job felt he could call down a curse upon himself, if he had not observed them: that on his land thistles might "grow instead of wheat, and cockle [tares] instead of barley." With this Job also lapsed into silence.

The end that the Lord reached with Job is made all the more striking by the fact that in me main these assertions of his were correct. At the outset Jehovah bore witness that he was perfect and upright, and when finally He intervened He did not utter words of contradiction. It is just this which imparts such tremendous force to the utter abasement and self-condemnation that sprang from Job's lips, before he was blessed at the end of the story.

Job 32 - 37

Silence having fallen upon all four disputants, a fresh speaker appeared, and he too is introduced to us in a way that shows we are considering a history and not a romance. He was descended from Buz, who was a nephew of Abraham, as Genesis 22: 21 shows. In those early days after the flood, when population was small, the duplication of names would not be common.

Now Elihu is a name with a meaning, which is given to us as, "God Himself." If we bear this in mind, and then read verse 6 of Job 33, we shall see that he intervened to play the part of a mediator, and so become a type — though a faint one — of the true Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, **who is God Himself**. Elihu was truly a man, formed out of the clay and he stood before Job on God's behalf, according to the desire that Job expressed in Job 9: 33.

In Job 32 we have, what we may call, Elihu's apology for speaking at all. As a much younger man he had been content to listen to all these controversial speeches and in result was moved to wrath against all four. Job had justified himself without justifying God, while the others had condemned Job without being able to answer his arguments. He acknowledged that normally men should increase in wisdom and understanding as they increased in years, but neither greatness of reputation nor age guaranteed this, since wisdom really comes to man through his spirit and as the fruit of the "inspiration," or "breath" of the Almighty. If the three friends had succeeded in convicting Job, they would have prided themselves on their own wisdom; only God could do it. The closing words of verse 13 have been translated, " God will make him yield, not man."

Elihu also had the advantage which he mentioned in verse 14. He had not been involved in the wordy warfare, hence he could view it all impartially, and speak in a way that would not be flattering to any of the contestants. Moreover, having listened to all that had been said, he was so full of matter that it had to find an outlet and burst forth from him.

So in the opening verses of Job 33, we find him making two claims. First, he asserts that his words will be marked by uprightness and purity, as becomes one who has his being and life from God. Second, that though he would speak on God's behalf, he himself was a man, "formed of the clay," just as Job was, and hence, though Job had said of God, "Let not His fear terrify me" (Job 9: 34), what he had to say, as interpreting God's ways, would bring no terror to Job's spirit. Even as our Lord Jesus became a Man, thus bringing God to us without any sense of terror.

In verse 8, Elihu began to challenge Job in a direct way. He had heard what Job had contended, and he summed it all up as being a repudiation of any accusation brought against him as to transgression and iniquity, which of necessity involved, either directly or indirectly, an accusation against God of hard dealing, if not injustice. In thus summing up the whole position we can see, we think, that Elihu was not far wrong. The world being as it is and what it is, if perfection be claimed for man, then obviously all the wrong that exists must be blamed upon God.

In answer to Job, Elihu's first point is the supreme greatness of God. Hence striving against Him is futile. It is man who is accountable to God, not God accountable to man. Let us in our day never forget this.

But then in the second place, though God gives no account of His matters, He does speak to man, though so often man does not perceive it. And, having stated this, he proceeded to indicate ways in which God does thus speak. He may speak in a dream or a vision. He has often done so, as Scripture records, and evidently He does so still, particularly with simple saints, who know but little of the Bible, and possibly have but little of the Bible in their native tongue. Where saints are instructed in and by the Bible — a superior form of guidance - dreams, in which God speaks, are comparatively rare. And, if God does thus speak to a man in a dream: to what end is it? To alter his course and to humble his pride into the dust. A salutary word for Job; **and for all of us.**

God may also speak to a man by granting him some merciful deliverance when he is threatened by disaster or war. This is mentioned in verse 18, and many of us can look back to occasions when we received mercy of this sort, and we were conscious at once that God had something to say to us in it.

And yet again, God may speak through pain and sickness, which is so vividly described in verses 19-22, until the sufferer is brought face to face with death itself. We can see how Elihu's description of this exactly fitted the case of Job, and indeed not a few of us, though our cases have not been nearly as extreme as Job's. How often has a careless sinner, when smitten thus, been led to turn to God and awakened for his eternal salvation. How often too has a saint had to look back to a time of severe sickness as an occasion of much spiritual blessing.

These times of emergency are the opportunity for the one whom Elihu called a "messenger," an "interpreter," who can show what it is that God has to say in these things. Though such are not common, as indeed we know, they are of great value, and Elihu called them, "one among a thousand," which indicates rarity. There may be many who can commiserate and sometimes condemn the afflicted one, as did Job's three friends. To give the mind of God is another and a greater thing.

When the interpreter has arrived what has he to say? He shows to a man his uprightness; which is of course, to judge himself and hence honestly to take his place before God as a self-confessed sinner. This Job had not as yet done, but it is that to which he was led when the end of the story is reached. It is the end we must all of us reach if we have to do with God at all. Have we, all of us, reached it?

When that point is reached, what is the result? An exhibition of grace on God's part, resulting in deliverance from going into the pit, and that, because God Himself had found a ransom. The word

translated "ransom" here simply means a "covering," akin to the word translated, "atonement" in the Old Testament. Before Christ came God covered before His holy eye the sin of the repentant sinner, waiting for the time when full propitiation should be made in the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ. Hence that word about "the remission [**passing over** — see, margin] of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3: 25). These past sins were those of pre-Christian saints; Job's among them.

Verse 25 had special reference to Job's case; but verses 26 - 30 have a wide application. The ransomed sinner stands before God in righteousness and with joy and, as the next verses show, he can happily confess both his sin and his deliverance before men, as the marginal reading of verse 28 shows. Elihu's words here were instruction to Job and designed to lead him to honest confession before God. They are equally true for us, and that in a far more ample and perfect way, as we look back to the accomplished work of Christ.

In these remarkable words Elihu was certainly acting the part of the interpreter with Job, by showing what is the good design of God in His dealings, so adverse apparently, with men. He aims at delivering them from the "pit" of self-esteem and complacency in this life, and the "pit" of judgment and condemnation in the life to come. Having interpreted God's ways thus far Elihu evidently paused to see if at this point there was anything Job wished to say.

There being no response on Job's part, Elihu resumed his discourse and, as Job 34: 2 indicates, had a larger audience in view. He addressed himself also to the three friends and any other bystanders, challenging them as to whether they had the wisdom and knowledge that would enable them to try words: and choose what is good and right. He knew well that the effect of sin is to pervert man's judgment and blind him to what is right.

In keeping with the larger audience he began to speak **about** Job rather than to Job as previously he had done. Job does not appear to have said, "I am righteous," in so many words; he had rather inferred it by singing his own praises in the way recorded in Job 29. But, turning back to Job 27: 2, we note he did definitely say, "God hath taken away my judgment." Hence his attitude clearly was, "Should I lie against my right?"

His "right" was, he maintained to be free of these calamities and he did not intend to say otherwise. His wound did indeed seem to be incurable but he maintained it was not provoked by any transgression on his part. Verses 5 and 6 sum up Job's position, as Elihu saw it. He had not claimed to be sinless, but he did claim that he was guilty of no transgression that justified God in inflicting upon him such woes. In effect it came to this, that he was right, and God was wrong.

Elihu now shows that in all this Job had really allied himself with the wicked. The scorning of men he might drink up like water, but he could not so treat the judgment of God. The absolute perfection and rightness of all God's ways is what Elihu asserts; a matter of the greatest importance, seeing He is supreme in all the earth. He has "charge over the earth," so that He has "disposed the whole world." Verse 14 has been translated, "If He only thought of Himself, and gathered unto Him His spirit and His breath;" then the result would be that all flesh would expire together and man return to the dust. Such is the **greatness** as well as the **rightness** of God.

Hence the argument of the succeeding verses. Should government be in the hands of the unjust? And if in the hands of the ALL-Just, is what He orders to be challenged? Men would not speak thus to kings or princes. Much less then to God. What He orders must be **right**.

Elihu proceeds to speak of the searching judgment of God, which is quite impartial, the rich being

amenable to it equally with the poor Moreover there is "no darkness, nor shadow of death," where those who work evil may hide themselves. He went on to assert that God's judgments are always right and that He acts as seems good in His sight, breaking in pieces and overthrowing mighty men, yet on the other hand hearing the cry of the afflicted. He may give quietness to the afflicted and who then can disturb it? He may hide His face from the wicked and who then can behold Him? And this is true whether a nation be in question or only an individual.

The rest of this chapter is more directly a word to Job. It would have been more becoming if he had humbly accepted the chastisement, admitting that there was iniquity with him, of which he was ignorant, and as to which he needed God should teach him, so that he should put right what was wrong. Instead of that he had challenged God's judgment in favour of his own mind, and in so doing he had added to his sin rebellion against God.

Job 35. It would seem that at this point Elihu paused again, and no answer being forthcoming, he proceeded further to expose the drift of Job's arguments. In claiming that he had committed no sin that called for the enduring of such extreme sufferings as had come upon him, he had elevated his own righteousness above God's, and inferred that there was no profit in a life of piety. The answer to this would be of profit to Job's companions as well as himself.

The answer Elihu gave was based upon the supreme greatness of God **as the Creator**. Further than this he could not go, but **that** knowledge he had in common with all men after the flood. From that primeval knowledge the mass of mankind soon departed, as Romans 1: 20, 21, declares. Yet the men we listen to in this book were exceptions to this sad rule, and they retained this knowledge, and argued from it.

God was far above His heavens, and so great that nothing wrong, perpetrated by puny man could hurt Him, and nothing that was right could be any addition to Him. Our wrongs may be of damage to our fellow-men, and our right actions be of profit to them. And if we wrong our fellows, they cry out in complaint, yet God is forgotten. No one thought of God who is Creator, and who can lift up the spirit and give songs even in the night of sorrow.

The God, who gives the songs in the night, teaches man whom He made; beings of a far higher order than the beasts and birds, able to have intercourse with Him, whether in songs of joy or cries of need. Verse 10 mentions the songs and verse 12 the cries. And why do men cry and yet receive no answer? The answer is, because of **pride**: and in verse 13, Elihu diagnoses the root cause of it all as **vanity**, which is abhorrent to God, a thing which He completely disregards. Is not this instruction for us? Do we not see here an explanation of many an unanswered cry and prayer?

These things Elihu said in order to drive the point home to the heart of Job, as he did in the last verse of the chapter. Job had opened his mouth "in vain," or "in vanity," and hence though his words had been abundant they had been without knowledge. The excellence of Job's outward life had betrayed him into an inward spirit of vanity, which lay at the root of his lack of a true knowledge of himself. This we shall find Job himself confessed, when we reach Job 42: 3.

Again it looks as if Elihu paused for a moment to see if Job had any reply to make, but none being forthcoming, he resumed his discourse the finish of which occupies Job 36 and Job 37. He commenced by saying that he had yet words to say on God's behalf; and as we read these two chapters we shall notice that he had little more to say to Job about his utterances, but he rather dwelt on the greatness and power of God, and on His righteous dealings with the sons of men. He would "ascribe righteousness" to his Creator.

He proceeded to extol the way in which God, who is perfect in knowledge, deals both with the wicked and the righteous. From the latter He does not withdraw His eyes; that is, He keeps them ever under observation, and ultimately He exalts them as kings. Yet, before that happy end is reached, He may permit them to be "bound in fetters" and "holden in cords of affliction," just as poor Job was at that moment. And, if He does permit this, it is for a purpose, as is shown in verses 9-11. Notice, it is **the righteous** who are thus dealt with, for even an Abraham and a Job, though righteous, were not sinless, and God's disciplinary dealings are exerted towards such, rather than those who shut God out of their lives.

The arguments of the three friends had led to the conclusion that Job **was not** a righteous man. Elihu seems rather to admit that he **was** righteous, and that, because he was, God had permitted this severe discipline to come upon him; and in verse 16 he does apply what he is saying to Job, for after all the deep-seated pride and vanity of the human heart is the greatest offence of all.

Verse 18 was addressed to Job. We must remember that in that far distant day, nearly two millenniums before Christ appeared, life and incorruptibility had not been brought to light, as 2 Timothy 1: 10 shows; and hence an eternal salvation was not known as we now know it. If we today were to quote this verse we should do so to an unbeliever.

Elihu's warning to Job, however, was timely, particularly verse 21. In shrinking from the "affliction," he had turned to the "iniquity" of maintaining his own righteousness. But affliction is to be preferred to iniquity, as we are reminded in Peter's first Epistle — "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (Job 4: 1). The early Christians might escape suffering by sinning and so may we, if it is only a question of what may come upon us from the world or the flesh or the devil.

Having thus warned Job, Elihu turned afresh to dwell upon the greatness of God as evidenced in creation, and upon this theme the rest of his discourse dwells. Particularly did he consider the control exercised by the Creator on that which lies wholly out of man's control — the clouds, the winds, the thunder, the lightning, the rain, the snow, the frost. As these things came before his mind, he had to confess that his heart trembled and was deeply moved.

In our day men have made many discoveries and gained control of a sort over a few of the subtle powers that lie in God's wonderful creation, but the things Elihu mentioned they cannot master. When, as he put it in verse 9, "Out of the south cometh the whirlwind; and cold out of the north," the cleverest of men can only accept the situation and seek shelter or warmth, as the case may be.

Elihu recognized that God ordered the weather with wise purpose, and what He sends may be, "for correction," i.e., discipline for wrongdoing; or, "for His land," i.e., to maintain the ordinary productivity of the earth; or, "for mercy," i.e., to effect some merciful deliverance. This too had a bearing on Job's case.

Job did not know, and none of us know, how God exerts His supreme power. The Lord Jesus displayed His Godhead power when He stilled the wind and waves on the Lake of Galilee. He did so in mercy. Elihu ended his words with the assertion that with God, the Almighty, is "terrible **majesty**," and yet all His doings are in **justice**. Hence, however wise of heart any of us — Job included — may consider ourselves to be, our attitude before Him should not be that of criticism and questionings but of **fear**.

Job 38 - 42

Taking the place of the "interpreter" of God's ways, that Job might recognize what "uprightness"

demanded, Elihu closed his discourse on the lofty theme of the majesty and the justice of God, so the moment had come for Divine intervention. He is God, and Almighty, as the closing verses of Job 37 declared: He is also Jehovah, and He spoke out of the whirlwind, to which Elihu had also alluded.

It is remarkable too that Elihu had spoken of the "noise," or "roar" of "His voice." Wind is not visible; yet in violent motion, men feel its pressure and hear its roar. As the whirlwind approached and its pressure was felt, its roar was the voice of Jehovah Himself. His words were addressed specially and only to Job. Whether what He said was intelligible to others, we are not told. Brought face to face with Jehovah, Job had to recognize that all his many words had darkened and not shed light upon the matter in dispute.

If we refer back to the beginning of Job 23, we may remind ourselves that Job in a self-confident way had expressed his wish to get into contact with God, feeling sure that he could order his cause before Him, and fill his mouth with arguments, and know the words in which God would answer him. The moment had come now for his wish to be fulfilled, and Jehovah bids him gird up his loins like a man, and be prepared to answer the voice of God. The questionings now should come from God. They begin with verse 4.

The words of Jehovah fill four chapters, with a brief interlude at the opening of Job 40. Question after question is propounded for Job to consider and answer, if he could; and all are concerned with the mighty power that had acted in creation. Once more we see that only the primeval revelation of God is assumed. If, as some think, Moses wrote this book, he wrote of things that happened before the law was given, or, at least, of circles where the law was not known. We are reminded of what we read in Romans 2: 12-15, as we notice that "the work of the law" was written in the heart of Job. Jehovah judged him in the light of what he knew, and as He did so, we shall discover how Job's conscience bore witness and his thoughts which had been excusing him began to accuse him. The law did not make men responsible, it only heightened their responsibility.

In verses 4-38 of Job 38, the Lord asserts His own greatness and Job's insignificance in the light of His mighty creatural acts. He started with His founding of the earth, which occasioned jubilation among angelic beings, who witnessed it; and then He proceeded to speak of the seas breaking forth, though in darkness, and then light appearing so that there was a dayspring as well as darkness. After that came mention of the wonders of snow and hail and rain, as well as the wonders displayed in the stars, the constellations and the ordinances of heaven. We cannot but be reminded of the early part of Genesis 1, down to the point where we read, "He made the stars also." What did Job know of these things? Had he entered into the springs of the sea? Or had the gates of death opened to him?

From verse 38 and through Job 39 the questions refer to animals and birds, the creation of which is related in the latter part of Genesis 1. Here again, if carefully considered, wonders innumerable confront us, and questions were raised that Job could not answer.

So, in the opening verses of Job 40, Jehovah challenged Job about it and Job at once capitulated. He acknowledged that he had spoken too much and that now silence became him. Before his Creator, he realized he was vile.

But the conviction that now had seized Job had to be driven into him yet more deeply. Hence again he was challenged. He had been guilty of disannulling the judgment of God, and condemning Him in order to maintain his own righteousness. This was really a very great sin, and in verses 9-14 he is condemned in a most searching way. Ironic language is used. Let him not contend with God but rather turn his attention to the proud and powerful among men, and abase such; then it might be admitted that he could save himself.

From verse 15 to the end of Job 41, the Lord makes further reference to the wonders of His creation. He called Job's attention to behemoth and to leviathan — probably the hippopotamus and the crocodile. They had brute strength but no human intelligence. It would be more easy to subdue them than to bring down proud man. In Job's day human inventions had hardly begun, so this was probably not so apparent as it is in our day, when these mighty creatures are easily subdued — but not so, proud man!

Job however could not tackle leviathan or behemoth, nor could he subdue proud man. How then could he contend with God? This was powerfully driven home into his heart.

Job 42. Jehovah's voice out of the whirlwind ceased, and Job humbled himself in full measure. He confessed the wrongness of his former utterances. He had to abhor himself and repent in the place of death — dust and ashes. These moments in the presence of God had produced a result which all the talk of the three friends, and even of Elihu, had not achieved. The man, who was so excellent among men, and had a testimonial from even God Himself, had discovered his own utter sinfulness in the deepest springs of his being. A discovery we all in our turn have to make!

The whole of this story has a great lesson for us, as we realize, if we read James 5: 11. We are now going to see "the end of the Lord" in all this, which reveals that He is indeed "very pitiful and of tender mercy." What then was the end that the Lord had in view, when He permitted all these testing disasters to come upon Job?

First, he obtained what we may call a first-hand knowledge of God. Previously he had known of Him by "the hearing of the ear;" that is, by tradition. But now, said he, "mine eye seeth Thee;" that is, God was apprehended in a new and vital way. He did not "see" in a literal sense, as we are assured by 1 Timothy 6: 16, yet the eye is but the organ of sight and it is the mind that sees. Again and again we say, "I see," when something that made no appeal to our eyes has sunk into our minds. Job now knew God in His power, holiness, righteousness, as far as He could be known in those days.

It is our privilege to know God as He has been revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ, and through that knowledge we receive "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," and, "exceeding great and precious promises," as well as gaining day by day, "grace and peace." So we are told in the opening verses of Peter's second Epistle. Indeed we may say that with us, as well as with Job, a first-hand and experimental knowledge of God lies at the base of everything.

But second, as the fruit of this knowledge of God, Job saw himself in a totally new light. Formerly he had sung his own praises. Now the correctness of his outward behaviour faded out of his mind, and he saw the self-conceited depths of his fallen nature. Hence in true repentance he abhorred himself.

This spirit of self-judgment is wrought in all who really have to do with God. Examples of it abound in Scripture. For instance: when Abraham found himself in the presence of God, he said, I "am but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18: 27). Similarly, Isaiah said, "I am undone" (Isa. 6: 5); and Daniel, "my comeliness was turned in me into corruption" (Dan. 10: 8). So, Peter, "I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5: 8), and Paul, "sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim 1: 15). And all these were saints eminent in their day. They would not have been eminent, if they had not had such an experience. Have we had it?

And now there comes into view another feature comprised in the end which the Lord had in view. The three friends of Job were condemned, for they had not spoken rightly, nor humbled themselves as Job had, vindicating God and condemning themselves. They were instructed to go to Job, offer up

sacrifices, and seek his intercession on their behalf: without a doubt a most humiliating process for them. Though they had visited Job in order to commiserate and console they had been led in the progress of the arguments into hurling accusations and reproaches at him, and as they did so developing a self-righteous spirit themselves. Thus, not having humbled themselves as Job had done, they were publicly humbled by God.

But what about Job? The Lord knew right well what a complete revolution had been wrought in his spirit, while as yet his poor body was unaltered. He said, "My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept." Not long before with heat and sarcasm he had argued against them. Now, with kindness and grace in his heart he prays for them! The man who had gained a true knowledge of God, and consequently had learned to abhor himself, is **quite transformed** in his relations with his former opponents. Resentment has given place to reconciliation. The spiritual gain of this was immense.

It must have been an extraordinary scene. Verse 10 shows that the turn in Job's bodily condition and in his fortunes came when he had prayed for his friends, **and not before**. Here were the three friends, well-favoured gentlemen of the east with their sacrifices; Job, an emaciated figure, covered with boils. Yet this poor physical wreck is in touch with God, and able to hold up his hands in gracious and priestly intercession. When had anything like this been seen in the east? No wonder the story had to be written to find a place amongst the oracles of God.

Let us not miss the application of all this to ourselves. Matters of dispute arise among those who are brethren in Christ, and if out of the presence of God, debate may be fierce and division ensue. Let the presence of God be realized, let self be judged and abhorred, and a totally different spirit prevails and a right solution is reached.

Job's prayer was effectual since he was now right with God, and not only right with his friends. We have the definite statement, "The Lord also accepted Job." The man who condemned and repudiated himself stands in acceptance before God. This has ever been God's way. We find testimonies to it in other Old Testament scriptures; for instance, Isaiah 57: 15; Isaiah 66: 2. But we have to pass on to the New Testament to find the **basis** on which the acceptance rests. The **character** of the acceptance which is ours today is found in the words, "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1: 6). In Job's day this had not come to light.

Thus far we have been noting what God wrought **in** Job, as the result of all he had passed through; now we see God acting **for** him. Up to this point he has been held in the grip of the awful disease produced by Satan. Now, "the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." Deliverance for his body took place, evidently with dramatic suddenness, once the end of the Lord as to his spiritual state was reached for with God the spiritual takes precedence over what is physical or material. Satan himself was eliminated from the story by the end of chapter 2. Now his cruel infliction was removed, having been overruled to achieve God's purpose.

In this again we see illustrated a great principle of God's ways. He makes the malevolence of the devil, as well as the wrath of man, to work cut to His own praise as well as our good. The great example of this, unapproached by all else, is of course the Cross. To accomplish that, Satan entered into Judas Iscariot. Of such extreme importance was it in his eyes that he allowed no lesser demon to deputize for him. Yet he was helping on his own overthrow for referring to His Cross, the Lord Jesus said, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12: 31). A further example we see in 2 Corinthians 12, where the "messenger of Satan" sent to buffet Paul, was overruled for Paul's spiritual preservation. When afflictions come upon us, let us remember these things, and profit by them.

As we observe "the end of the Lord," we can indeed say with the Apostle James that, "the Lord is

very pitiful, and of tender mercy." We have noted at least five things: (1) that Job gained a first-hand knowledge of God, such as he had never had before: (2) he knew and abhorred himself, as he had never done before; (3) that in spirit and character he was transformed, from anger and harshness to grace: (4) that he was given the knowledge of his acceptance before God: and (5) that he was delivered in his body from the grip that Satan had been permitted to have upon him.

But now a sixth thing appears for, "the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." Previously he had been a man of very large wealth, as wealth was counted in those days, but now his possessions grew to such proportions as would have befitted a king. God gave a mighty increase to the animals he had, but there was also that which came to him by the gifts of his brethren and acquaintance. He was restored to the confidence and esteem of all who previously had known him: a great point this, when we remember his sad complaint as to the treatment he had received, recorded in Job 30.

In keeping with the day in which he lived, the blessings recorded are of a material sort, which ensured earthly prosperity to the end of his days. These were the positive blessings granted, just as the fifth item, noted above, was blessing of a negative order — the removal of bodily trouble. The first four items we noted were blessings of a spiritual order, and of the very first importance, since once received they abide for ever. Let us remember that as Christians all our blessings are of a spiritual and heavenly order, as stated in Ephesians 1: 3.

Having passed through this unprecedented storm, Job lived to old age under the smile of God, enriched spiritually and materially. He saw his possessions, sheep, camels, oxen, asses, multiply until their number was doubled. His seven sons and three very beautiful daughters grew up around him, and so God gave him twice as much as he had before.

But what about the sons and daughters? They were not doubled. Should they not have numbered fourteen and six? As the new family grew up around him and then stopped at the number recorded, we wonder if it raised an enquiry in his mind, as it certainly does in ours. Yes, after all God did give Job twice as much as he had before, without exception. The animals were visibly doubled for the earlier lot were irrevocably lost, and he would never see them again. The earlier sons and three daughters **were not lost FOR EVER.**

About these earlier sons and daughters Job had been continually concerned as the first chapter of the book bears witness. Acting as priest of his family he had continually offered sacrifices on their behalf. They were outwardly God-fearing for Job did not fear that they cursed God **with their lips**, but he thought they might have done so **in their hearts**. Yet in spite of this all of them, and all together, they had been swept out of life in a moment. So in this striking way it was intimated that another world does exist into which their spirits had entered, that the resurrection, as to which Job had reasoned and debated in Job 14, would be reached in due season, and that Job would meet them again.

We are not told in so many words that all this was plain to Job, but we assume that God, who so kindly gave this intimation, gave him the ability to perceive it. It must have confirmed his faith in resurrection on the one hand and comforted his heart on the other. It has, we trust brought comfort to many a heart beside Job's. When full of days Job ended his long life, he must have looked back upon this time of unparalleled testing, through which he had to pass, as being but a dark tunnel leading into bright sunshine a time of outward disaster but of inward enrichment. That it was so, such a scripture as Ezekiel 14: 14 bears witness. He is held up as a shining example, together with Noah and Daniel.

As we close our Bibles on the Book of Job, we may well do so with a song of praise and thanksgiving in our hearts, and also having, we trust, learned some needed lessons. We may not suffer

in anything like the degree that Job did, but none of us escapes the chastening hand of our God and Father. When chastened ourselves let us be exercised thereby; and when we observe chastening coming on others, let us be careful how we interpret it.

In the light of the New Testament, chastening may be sent **for retribution**, as we see in 1 Corinthians 11: 30. But on the other hand it may not be, as we see in Paul's case — 2 Corinthians 12: 7, - where the thorn in the flesh was **preventive; lest he** should be puffed up and fall. Yet again, it may be neither retributive nor preventive but **educational**, as Hebrews 12 shows. The Father trains and disciplines His children, and even scourges them; but all is in pursuance of His objective - "that we might be partakers of His holiness."

In that direction Job was led, as we have seen. In that direction we too are being led in all the Father's dealings with us. Let us ever remember this, and praise God that it is so.