

Three lectures on the book of Job

W. Kelly.

Table of Contents

LECTURE 1.....	1
Job 1 - 14.....	1
LECTURE 2.....	13
Job 15 - 31.....	13
LECTURE 3.....	26
Job 32 - 42.....	26

LECTURE 1.

Job 1 - 14.

My object in taking up Job now is a general one. It is to help souls towards a better understanding of a book full of interest and of great practical profit, but not so easy for most to seize, either in its design and scope as a whole, or in the way in which the different parts of it conspire to effect that design. There is nothing which can make up for the constant, habitual study of the word of God for our souls. And indeed ministry would be a positive curse, instead of a blessing, if it did not make the word of God itself to be more precious because more entered into, and God Himself more enjoyed. And this is exactly the measure of the value of that kind of ministry, at any rate of what has to do with the interpretation of Scripture; for every truth must ultimately rest on that word. Indeed not merely is the word the source and supply of truth, but God alone is capable of presenting thereby the truth perfectly and livingly. When therefore truth is taken out of its connections in Scripture, there is always danger. Hence it is of the greatest moment that our souls should have the habit of reading the word of God. And I do not now mean merely as a matter of intelligence, but for the soul's healthy condition, that we might be refreshed day by day in the reading of it. In order to this, however, it is a very great help where we are enabled, by the grace of God, to take in the word as a whole, and not merely to have the blessing, of certain parts which we all feel to be precious as isolated communications from God. But my object now, whatever it might be in speaking from time to time in an ordinary way, is to help to a general apprehension of what it is that the Holy Ghost intended for the people of God in the book of Job.

The first thing which it is well to bear in mind is that the book was written in the earliest days of revelation. It would be hazardous to say that any book of Scripture preceded it. That the writer of the book of Job (writer I say advisedly; for God of course is the real author of all Scripture), that the one used to give us the book was a contemporary of Moses, if not Moses himself, would seem to be not far from the mark. Of course one can only give a conjecture on such a point. Scripture has not defined the author; and, in my opinion, it would not become any man to do more than express a judgment as far as the Lord gives him a moral estimate of its character, without now discussing certain other marks of a more external kind. But it is very plain that, whether Moses was the writer or a contemporary of the writer, the groundwork of the book lies in a day previous to Moses. Nor should we doubt that it is the

authentic account of all, a real history of Job and his friends, which is presented in the book. We see from the book itself, for instance, that the age of Job was extended after his trial, and he was by no means a young man when the trial came; so that, unless there were some singular exception in his age of which Scripture never speaks, Job himself must have been previous to the days of Moses. Now Moses was an exception, and Scripture itself speaks of Moses living so long in his day as a remarkable feature; and indeed it follows from his own words, from his own prayer, in Psalm 90, that the age of man, as a general rule at that time, had been reduced practically to very much what it is at the present. Moses was one that stood out from his fellows in more ways than one, even of an outward nature, not to speak now of his faith; for it is plain that both he and his brother were remarkable exceptions. Job, however, must have lived somewhat before them from the way the facts are stated.

There is another thing still more important to consider before we enter into the book: Job lived outside the chosen people. Surely this is a surprising fact in the midst of a revelation which, as a whole, has its root in Israel. The Old Testament, for that very reason, is called the law. Not merely the Pentateuch, or the Psalms, or the Prophets but the whole book, as we know, is comprehensively and repeatedly called "the law." The reason is, because what was said afterwards to the people who had the law of God affirmed that character of revelation. Every part of the Old Testament derived its name from the central characteristic fact of the law that was given by Moses; and yet there, in the midst of it, from its earliest days, stands one book at least, where the person who most of all is brought before us is the object of the deepest concern to God, drawing out such terms as God never applied even to the fathers.

Abraham might be and is called the friend of God; but not even Abraham similarly arrested the attention of God, not even he was pointed out to Satan as a worthy object to be put to the proof. There is nothing, in my opinion, therefore more striking than that God should guard against the narrowing effect of ritual. He was about to give the law by Moses. He was about to make one people — a small population in a little land — the peculiar object of His dealings. And these dealings too were for a long while to come; it was no merely passing season. He was taking them up to be His people for ever; and at that very time, not later than His call of Moses, not later than the law given to Israel, God gave a book entirely devoted to a single person, an individual. The nation must not blot out the grand truth that God interests Himself most deeply about a soul. And this is exactly the snare into which Israel came, spite of the book of Job.

But God took care that there should be not more surely the Pentateuch than the book of Job. In Genesis everything prepares for the chosen nation. When the law was given, God treats the Gentiles as entirely outside. So they were. Alas! we see Israel narrowing more and more in their feeling, and denying that a Gentile was anything but a dog in the sight of God. We find them shutting up their bowels of compassion from others, and in every way denying, after all, what God took care, even in the law itself, to correct and condemn. But even before the law was given we see God, in this most remarkable book, guarding against the snare into which they were subsequently drawn. Is it not an anticipative and blessed vindication of God? Job was a Gentile; and one who, as far as the locality is concerned, seems to have been in anything but a favourable quarter. The land of Uz is connected by the prophet Jeremiah with the land of Edom. Nothing could be more suspicious to an Israelite. If there were any people that had a hatred toward the Jews, it was the Edomites; and this was not at all a new feature. It is not meant that Job was an Edomite; but to a Jew, ready to take fire at anything which did not allow the peculiar place of the chosen nation, I say that his locality was suspiciously near. For it was at the borders of Edom; and the reader of Genesis knows that hatred had shown itself from the earliest days, even in the forefathers; and hatred that had never been extinguished in the children up to

the latest days, from Genesis to Malachi; Edom's undying enmity to Israel, if not on the part of Israel against Edom. The hatred is apt to be in that which has neither God nor His blessing; nay, which resents those that have it. So it was therefore with Edom, and there it abode, and the Jew would the more feel the testimony to one who lived near their borders.

The grace of God then was pleased to work in this individual man; and there was the great fact of one solitary soul being an object of the deepest interest to God Himself, and this revealed in His word, not merely before His heart silently. It was far more than this. There was a wise and worthy purpose in causing it to be written. It was expressly to be the revealed interest of God in Job, interest that He made known to heaven at once, interest that He has revealed to all time in the Holy Scriptures; so that when the day came for Israel to lose their place, and when the mighty grace of God could be pent up no more, when it refused to flow only in the narrow channels which He had been pleased to employ before in His government, when it was now a question of His grace undertaking to work for the glory of His own name, as well as by Him who came down Himself in His own person to make it known, and by His own work to cause it to flow out according to all the large thoughts and purposes of God, here was the book that could prove it was no afterthought. Here was the book that could at once be appealed to as the witness of His condescending mercy outside Israel. Could the Jew say it was a strange thing? Could he venture, with the book of Job before him, to say that God thought nothing of a Gentile? Where of old was the man that God ever spoke so highly or so much about? They might search through all the books of the Old Testament: where was there one who has an entire and a long book devoted to his experiences?

And this is felt so distinctly that in modern Judaism — always the leader of infidelity — what does its spokesman say? That Job cannot have been a real person at all, seeing that it is impossible God should have spoken in such terms about a Gentile! But there is the pith and beauty of the book. It was about a living man, if we are to believe the prophet Ezekiel and the apostle James, and a man outside that elect people, but none the less a man in whom God had graciously wrought for the admiration of heaven and the provoking of Satan, which gave occasion to unheard of trial, so as to set forth the best reality till Christ came; not a single act of faith in the giving of what was most dear (and given of God for blessed and glorious purposes) at His word, as in Abraham's trial, but where Satan was allowed to wreak his malignant and destructive power in vain on property, family, person, followed by the deepest trouble and exercise of soul before God. What could there be deeper until He came who above all suffered perfectly for righteousness, and alone for sin as it deserved from God? What there could be there is. The book is the witness and revelation of God's dealing with souls, and turning all things for their good, even where Satan, and men, and the saints fail. Hence experience of all these things come before us. But in the end God shows what He is; and He is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy.

As the first thing, however, we have Job himself introduced. We see a man sincere, true, and blameless; in the enjoyment of every element of happiness on earth, blessed in his circumstances as well as his family, and God-fearing habitually. If he was the greatest of the sons of the east, this was what gave the more point to the trial. But was he not blest? Exceedingly so. He had seven sons and three daughters. He had the most ample possessions of that in which wealth lay in those early days, and in that quarter; for it was not a pilgrim and a stranger that we find in Job. To that God called out the fathers. But Job was not of the fathers; he was outside the covenant of Abraham, yet evidently blest, and expressly by God. God doubtless blessed the fathers; but in keeping His promises He never bound Himself not to step beyond them. This is what we see in Job, and it is exactly what grace loves to do. Grace is never limited to promise; while it does faithfully accomplish the promise, as it most surely will, in the fullest manner and before all the world, by-and-by; but grace maintains its own sovereign

title to bless beyond that measure. Covenant is in no way the measure of grace, which can go forth in its own boundless strength where promise cannot follow. Nor is there any excuse for us at least not to know this well, because, as individual Christians and as the church of God, we are in Christ brought into a fulness of blessing, to the glory of His grace, incomparably beyond the promises. And indeed it is one of the saddest causes of the ruined state of Christendom, and the low character of that which is taught, that men seldom rise beyond the promises, even those who hold what is called evangelical doctrine. For the very essence of evangelicalism as a system is to deny the special favour and glory displayed in the mystery of Christ and the church, and make the law the rule of Christian life, thus reducing the New Testament to the standard of the Old, instead of learning that each of the so-called Testaments has its own proper character and distinct aim; and that it is no mere question, therefore, of promises for the earth, nor even of a deeper and higher promise than they, but that there had been always a secret in God, which in other ages and generations was undivulged, and, consequently, that our richest blessing in Christ was no question of promises revealed to man at all. If it is at all to be called a promise, it was a promise between the Father and the Son; but this is not what men commonly mean by promises. It was entirely outside Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. What did they know of the purpose for heavenly glory revealed by the Spirit, as between the Father and the Son? But now it is made known; and therein is seen to be exactly where the New Testament claims for itself a totally new character, impossible to exist while God was dealing with Israel, till the rejected Christ had accomplished redemption, and the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven in consequence to baptize Jew and Gentile that believe into one body. It is Christ exalted on high and the church united to Him, a mystery hid in God till the time came to reveal it all, and now to us of the Gentiles, who least of all could have expected it; for God would thus show out the full character of grace on every side — on the heavenly, in its being entirely above the fathers, however honoured; on the earthly, in its going far beyond the children of Israel in indiscriminate mercy, and consequently finding objects, not only for salvation, but for union with the heavenly head among the most despised and abject of this world.

Here, then, we find Job in the most marked place of a man blest of God in everything that heart could desire. It is needless to tell you that without one divine element there could have been no stable blessing according to God, but only a deception and a snare. And what was that? He was a man of God, "perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil." He was not an angular or one-sided man, not defective in some and remarkable for other qualities. He had whole-heartedness and integrity; and this based on the fear of God and marked by the refusal of evil. The inner and the outer life were right all round. The word "perfect" gives no countenance in any degree to the foolish dream of the extinction of sin in the flesh. This is not the force of "perfect" in Scripture, but completeness of character spiritually with integrity. He "feared God and eschewed evil." There we come to the roots of things. He was one who gave God His place, and abhorred the evil surrounding him here below which was contrary to God. He was clearly a man born of God, one who walked in simplicity and trueness of purpose before God. Nor was this said of him in a merely general way. His position is brought before us, his family life, with remarkable beauty; his zealous, nay jealous, piety; for even if sons and daughters met together on a special occasion, of what was Job thinking? He had his fear. How often is such a gathering a moment of danger for the soul! How it affords an opening for Satan! And so Job dreaded lest anything might have crept in and be a virtual renunciation of God, lest, as it is said, they should have cursed [literally, blessed] God in their heart. We need not suppose anything formally uttered or done, but the heart thus failing at such a season in an unguarded moment. And this too was not merely on some particular occasion, or at a peculiar crisis when his sons stood exposed to the enemy. There is a still higher feature that characterises him: "Thus did Job continually." It was the tenor of his life. Such was the man whom God could single out in love; that He did so the book shows

us.

But there was something more. It is not only that evil abounds in the world. There is an unseen enemy, and if we do not take account of him adequately according to God, we are in no small danger. We shall be perplexed and fail gravely in knowing how to estimate that against which we have to watch and with which we have to contend.

There is another thing here made apparent, that events on earth turn on the springs of heaven. Now doubtless the Christian is admitted to look into the opened heavens; but before this could be, through Christ's ascension and the descent of the Spirit as now, God could and did give glimpses of heaven. Not merely was there no great movement of the powers here below which did not turn on the mind of heaven, but the opening chapters let us know that it is as true of a single saint. Satan might pervert the truth into his lie of astrology for curious but unbelieving man: still the truth abides. The world might be in confusion, the eyes of the judges be blinded, oppression in the place of righteousness, groaning and misery everywhere; but, spite of misrule and rebellion, in heaven is the spring and centre of power. It is not yet the day to put down evil, and enforce the government of God; still even Satan himself cannot act without God. What an immense comfort! But there is another and a greater comfort for the child of God, that it is never Satan who begins the movement, but God Himself. It may be the direct calamity, the extremest suffering. Even so; God is at the helm, and God alone gives the word. The consequence is, that there is another feature attaching to it. Not only is God at the beginning, but He will surely be at the end; and meanwhile God puts limits on it. The way may seem dark and hard; and surely this book shows that Job at last proved utterly unequal to the strain; for he was not Christ. But Job learned at the end, if not at the beginning, that it was the gracious God who opened his heart at length and gave his lips to justify Him frankly and absolutely.

Here then is communicated to us what could not else be known, that it was God, and not Satan, who began the whole transaction. It was God who took notice of His servant Job, and it was His delight in His servant (for He does delight in His saints) which roused the malice of Satan.

Another thing may be here added by the way. It may seem very peculiar to some minds, but this is simply a consequence of not knowing the Scriptures; namely, that Satan should come in among the sons of God. At first sight it may strike one as out of place, Satan coming in among the sons of God! meaning clearly the angels of God in His presence. But it appears to me that one better acquainted with Scripture would see it as part of that mystery of God (Rev. 10) which forbears as yet for the highest ends to put down evil. He that is imbued with the mind of God in the word would feel rather that it is just what we might expect. Do you know who and what Satan was? Had he not been among them? Yes, *of* them. This helps us to understand quite simply how such a being, though fallen, should be allowed access till judgment come. For it is not man only that has sustained a fall. There was another and an anterior fall, and from a higher estate; though men are not wanting who, as they are now giving reins to their unbelief about man's fall, are bold enough to deny Satan altogether. And no wonder. Men easily disbelieve what they dislike, and the truth of the fall is offensive to their pride, so still more is their slavery through sin to Satan.

But why is the fall of both angels and men so repulsive to man's mind? Because it is the confession of creature guilt and ruin. It supposes the reality of creature weakness; and it enforces the need of dependence on God. The state of the creature before either fell testifies manifestly to God's goodness at a time when there was no evil above, no evil below; yet the creature left his first estate. Here we are let into a sight of Satan, the restless leader of sin. He is powerless to deceive the holy and elect angels; he can accuse the saints with a show of truth. Here the earliest and the latest revelation

meet. One ceases then to see any unintelligible peculiarity in his coming, among the sons of God, into His presence. Alas! we are reminded that he well knew what it was to be there under very different circumstances. Among those sons of God he had once shone. What was he now? A rebellious and miserable being, who had made self his object and not God; and now, self failing to satisfy itself, he goes forth in malice against every other, especially against the objects of God's love, occupied in thwarting God and in hating man, in hating most of all such as God delights in.

But is there not a measure of comfort to the heart in the fact that the enmity of Satan, so bitter in its effects in our experience, bears witness to the love of God, which provokes him against us? If we know in sorrow the reality of Satan's efforts and assaults, let us not forget for our joy whence they spring. Is it not because of what we are to God? Is it not because of what He says and Satan hears of any? If we have the same spirit of faith and are walking faithfully, Satan dislikes us no less than Job, and we are entitled to the comfort of this as of other Scriptures. The same principle is true of every believer now. Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren; and the Father, one may say, does not withhold His love to them as children: each one is an object of the deepest interest to God Himself. Satan knows it well, and for that reason he cannot endure them. It may be very trying to experience what the malice of the devil is; but what a comfort to know of God's love, and gracious care, and personal delight. Yet just this it is which excites the enemy to do us all possible damage.

Accordingly then, on the day when the sons of God, the angels, came to present themselves before Jehovah, Satan came also among them. "And Jehovah said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?" He would bring it out. It could not be, of course, that God did not know; but, as in Genesis so here, we are in the atmosphere of those early days when God dealt as with children, and brought out things plainly for those who needed the plainest truth. Hence therefore we see Him elsewhere coming down to look after man. He knew perfectly well without calling after him in the garden of Eden; but it is for us that He reveals it thus. And so it grieved Him at His heart when He saw man's wickedness great in the earth. Further, if it is a city and a tower that they unite to build in the land of Shinar; if the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, He comes down to see whether things are really so bad as they seem. All things are naked and open to His eyes; but God would give us the grave lesson of never being precipitate in the judgment of evil; He knows right well how hasty we often are. Even God Himself will go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto Him; and if not, He will know. Appearances deceive men at least, and God would teach us how to guard against mistake. He loves patience in judgment. His word implies the utmost possible care. It is the same God who afterwards ordained that the priest should judge in a suspected case of leprosy; but what waiting, and what shutting up again and again, unless there could be no mistake! What cherishings of the least hope of good! of any diminution in the evil! But what solemn sentence of judgment when the evil was all out! It is the same God everywhere; but what varied lessons on lessons for us!

So here: God speaks graciously in presence of all, and brings out the restless hate of the evil one, in contrast with Him who would come down in love to seek the lost. "Come unto me," said He in the hour of His rejection — not unchafed only, but in overflowing love — "and I will give you rest." Satan knows nothing of it, nor do the wicked. They are like the troubled sea; but Christ gives rest to all that labour and are heavy laden. I do not say it is all rest. There is such a thing as the work of faith and the labour of love in an evil world; but there never can be true labour unless there be a foundation of true rest — rest in Him. There must be Christ giving us rest first, if we are to acceptably labour in this scene which so loudly calls for it, and so deeply needs it. But here is the enemy of God and man, who knows no rest and displays his unrest in malicious activity, as we find afterwards, till wholly baffled

he disappears. He is not only a murderer but a liar; still he is obliged to tell out, as God is pleased to draw from him, his thoughts and wishes.

First of all he tells himself the tale of his restless going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it. God is then pleased to single out and speak of His servant: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" What does Satan? He turns the divine blessing into an insinuation. Job does not fear God for naught; he has a selfish motive; it is all for what he can gain by it. An evil mind cannot conceive motives other than its own. Have not You hedged him in on every side, blessing him in every thing that he has? "But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and — if he curse [bless] thee not!" "And Jehovah said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power [hand]; only upon himself put not forth thine hand." This was to be the first trial.

Soon are seen on earth the results of the permission. The rest of the chapter shows us disaster following quickly on disaster. Not a finger of Satan appears; yet his hand was in everything. They are earthly events accomplished by ordinary instruments, falling doubtless with extraordinary rapidity, and this was no small part of the trial. It would not have sufficed to allow any very long interval to elapse between the blows. It was most skilfully arranged by the enemy that these calamities should wear the appearance of divinely-sent judgments — unsparing judgments; and yet by outward and earthly means. So, first of all, when the day came, and his sons and daughters were eating and drinking in their elder brother's house, there came a messenger who announced a raid by the Sabeans on the cattle. "The oxen were blowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword" (Satan's hand most manifestly — the destroyer); "and I only am escaped;" just so far as to tell the dismal news, and thus as the solitary survivor to give the more poignancy to all. Had in each case not one escaped, the news could never have come after such a sort. The mischief was consummate yet Job felt, as we too should, that all was under the eye of God. Never let us forget Him. If Satan's hand was hidden under these afflicting strokes, God's hand was above Satan. How sure and great the comfort!

So accordingly, unseen again, comes the rest of these troubles. "While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep" (of course, referring to lightning), "and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans" — an enemy from a totally different quarter — "The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness." Thus we find it from all quarters, and then too the weightiest of all, the destruction not merely of property but of all that he had, taken to the very letter. Had he not sons? Had he not daughters? All was swept away, and swept away too in a manner peculiarly distressing to the heart. Was not God above? Does not God take an interest in everything? Had not this been the history of Job's life — the interest and the blessing of God, not merely upon himself, but upon all that he had? And now in one day all that divine blessing had given is gone, and gone most painfully. Had God forgotten? Did God take no heed? "Nay," says Job, "naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." So said this righteous man, as he arose and rent his mantle and shaved his head — for he felt it, and was right to feel it — and fell down upon the ground; but then he worshipped, and said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not,

nor charged God foolishly;" nothing unsavoury or abnormal. The first assault totally failed. Stripped of all, Job sinned not.

Another day came when the sons of God presented themselves once more in heaven, and Satan not only came in their midst, but, here it is added, to present himself before Jehovah (Job 2). One might have thought that surely he will now be ashamed. He had had all his way, and God was only the more magnified. But no; the unjust — and one need not say that Satan is the leader and spring of such — knoweth no shame; at any rate, there he is. And Jehovah again questions, and brings out too that His servant Job, although Satan had tried to set him against Him, "holdeth fast his integrity." He could add, "although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." Satan asks for one more trial, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." "Skin for skin," like for like, as many take it; or it may be that he lowers all that had passed to a superficial trial, that it had merely touched the surface of things — "Skin for skin." But he says, let there be something deeper now, and we shall see. Let it not be "skin for skin," or a skin-deep trial; "but put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thy hand; but save [literally abstain from] his life." The reserve of his life was not with the view of mitigating the trial, but in order to the triumph of God for the good of the afflicted, the moral of the book. The trial, in fact, would have been less in every way, and its purport lost, if God had been pleased to let His servant Job be removed like his children; and, when Job broke down, death was exactly what he impatiently desired. It would have been the readiest relief to have died. He had no fear whatever as to God's loving, him, if he were only with Him; and the most calamitous plight into which he was reduced by the enemy after this would have found an instantaneous close in quitting the scene of such suffering. But God reserved his life when allowing Satan to do his worst, not, in my judgment, to spare Job anything, which was far indeed from the point, but because it would have interfered with His own gracious purpose of blessing in the face of evil and the enemy. And this is what we find in the book, that God had such a purpose, and that, even great as He is and infinite in His resources, each saint is an object of care to Him, and His purpose alone prevails. Whatever of sorrow may come in, they are but the circumstances of the way, and this not merely now, but then, even in the days before redemption. The great principle is always true, because God is always God, if there be not the manifestation of Christ as yet.

So Satan goes forth, "and smote Job with sore boils [the collective singular, a grievous sore] from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him" — it was a great aggravation of his suffering that she should fall, yet not Job; but she who ought to have been a helpmeet to him was wearied of the strain, and says in her bitterness — "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse [lit. bless] God, and die." It was a frightful speech, but through Satan's instigation wrung out of her, and as undoubtedly through her lack of looking up to God. Indeed we do not know what or who Job's wife was; it forms no particular part of that which God brings before us; it is her one appearance in the history of the book. "But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one" — for even here we find a wonderful measure of patience in his words. He does not say, "Thou speakest as a foolish woman;" he goes no further than, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish ones." It is well known that the word "foolish" has a morally bad sense in Scripture. It is no question of feeble intellect, but of that worst moral depravity, which blots out God, and so makes nothing of His word. Ill as she had spoken, he does not charge her with this; but simply that she spoke like such. "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Satan had no resource more. Job owned God's title to take all he had, and smite himself from head to foot. It was evident that Job served God at all cost.

But at this point a change ensues, and a new trial. It is the more to be observed, because not merely does the wife disappear from view, but, what is still more striking, Satan also is spoken of no more. We never hear a word of him again. Satan is completely defeated. And it is an immense comfort for all assailed by him to know that Satan is never the conqueror, though he may gain temporary success. It does not matter what it is you look at, Satan never triumphs but for a little moment. He may win a battle, but is beaten in the war. He who always has his way is God Himself; and when we know who and what He is, what a comfort! Of course I am speaking now of the children of God, and of God's dealings with them; and I affirm that Satan only comes in by the way, does his worst, fails, and vanishes. Such has been and is his history, and it will be so to the end. So it was found here. Not a word more is said about him. The great problem remains, which God still pursues. God would bring out the true lesson of trial, and the supremacy of Himself over evil.

Three friends then, pious men too, heard of all this evil that was come upon him, and "they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him." The trouble must have evidently gone on for a considerable time. We are not to suppose that Job's trial was measured by a few days. It was limited by God, but this was not necessarily of a brief time. The terrible disease which had followed after the destruction of his property, family, everything here below, was known to friends who lived at comparatively distant points; and so they had to make an appointment to come together. This alone supposes the lapse of some time, and what we find in Job's complaints afterwards entirely falls in with and corroborates it. "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not" — so extreme the change in what, after all, could have been no long while, so distressing the change, whatever the time might be — "they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven." Those wrong them who deny their true affection for Job: the failure lies altogether elsewhere. It is an entire mistake of the point and instruction of the book to conceive that their feelings were shallow, or that they had but little love for their friend. Not so: God is showing us the insufficiency of every one and every thing but Christ. This the book of Job proves; and consequently, the more you lower Job or his friends, you gather the less of its profit. Let us give them each and all their value, still they are immeasurably below Him in and by whom we know the Father. We are told then that they came and; "sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights" — one does not often find such friends with such reality, or at any rate such depth and display of sympathy — "and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great."

Here begins the great action of the book. Job, who stands such a model of patience up to this point; Job, who had bowed to God under such a weight, and such a breadth, and such a rapid succession of calamities as never met a single individual from the beginning of the world till then; Job, who had honoured God even more in his trouble than in his prosperity — who could find fault with him? Had the trial stopped at this point the lesson of the book would have been lost. We should have missed the ways and the end of the Lord. We should have heard of the patience of Job and seen him honour God as unflinchingly in abject misery as when blessed on every side. We should have seen what Satan is in his unwearied and audacious and causeless malice, and seen him defeated utterly; but we should have lost that which it was the great object of this book to communicate in what follows.

But now God brings forward three men of weight, old, real, and worthy friends that felt deeply for him. Who can reasonably doubt it? The description of their grief proves it. For all that, here begins the saint's failure, which we shall find running its course through. It was their theory which misled them on the one hand, while Job on the other adhered to his conscious integrity, till he was driven from

all thought of self to stand on what God is to him, not what he had been and was. For God loves His saints too well to allow anything derogatory to Himself unknown to themselves which would hinder the fullest blessing, and He graciously employs trial in order to accomplish that blessing. He gives us the inexpressible consolation of knowing that it is not Satan who purposes and effects aught, but Himself, and that it is Himself in perfect wisdom and righteousness, but withal the God of grace, spite of even these tremendous calamities which sin has introduced, and which Satan is allowed to wield against His servants.

This is unravelled gradually in what follows. Job must know himself, as he never could have conceived otherwise. To know one's self is a very different thing from being converted to God, and necessary if we are to be fully blessed. Further, the friends had to learn as well as Job, being objects of similar grace, though far below Job. They were pious men; but a man might be so and have never been practically in the presence of God for himself: I mean now for thorough judgment of self measured by God Himself. This is what the book opens out to us, as far as: it could be before Christ came.

We hear the outburst of passionate grief at last from Job. (Job 3) He could not stand the presence of his friends. Many sorrows and bitter suffering he had borne; but these friends came and looked on his misery without a word. It was too much for Job. Did they suspect him? He could not endure doubts Godward, especially from them. Were they not friends? If they loved him, why that silence — that ominous silence for seven days and seven nights? It might begin with deep feeling for him; but why not a word? Why not one drop of comfort for his parched lips? They began to think; and thinking is a dangerous thing. In God's presence we judge self and hear Him. These thoughts of ours, how often they mislead! What we want is to pray and hear, that we may from God receive His word. Ah, this is another thing, and exactly what is wanted! Their ear was not open. There was One who was wakened morning by morning, and whose ear was opened, who never knew our dulness of hearing God. But the three friends! — they first preserved this dead and distressing silence toward Job, who soon and bitterly had to learn what came out of that silence. Though he began, they followed; but it was their own thoughts and not the mind of God.

Job then bemoans and curses his day — not God, nothing of that kind; but still he unbecomingly expresses his horror of the day in which his birth was announced. His whole birth-scene was before him, wrapped in gloom, Everything connected with his coming into the world was horrible in his eyes; and so he bitterly launches forth: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness." And afterwards, "Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein." He asks why he had ever been born, one who was destined to such wretchedness? why he was not rather left, as he says so scathingly, "with kings and counsellors of the earth, which build desolate places?" Is this what the greatness of this world comes to, kings building ruins for themselves? "or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver?" But gold and silver cannot redeem from sorrow or death Was this life? or the work in which the kings of Egypt sought renown, the building of their own tombs? But his seemed more dismal still. Why had not he a lot to be laid in a desolate place like theirs? or why was he ever born at all?

Then opens the first debate of his friends, founded on this outburst of Job. We may notice these friends speaking with a certain difference of character and always in a similar order, throughout the three great discussions in the book. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar follow in regular succession, Job replying to each of them. In the third discussion it may be observed that one of the three — Zophar — drops off, while Job continues his discourse so long that we might almost think it an answer to that unspoken speech; that is, what Zophar would have had to say if he had spoken, Job completely refutes. In short, the main central portion of the book is occupied with what I have just described: three lines of

arguments, sustained by the friends of Job on the one hand, and answered, each separately and fully, by Job on the other. Then follows a new personage, Elihu, who silences Job as decidedly as Job had silenced the three; and finally Jehovah closes all, solving the problem of the book at the last. We shall look a little into the first discussion, if it please God; but I must be brief on what I draw your attention to at this time.

Eliphaz the Temanite, who appears to be the oldest and the more dignified of the three friends, rebukes Job first of all for want of firmness in meeting the deep distress which had befallen his family and himself. Not content, however, with this, he reproaches Job that he who had so well known how to meet others in their sorrows, failed when the trouble came on himself. He stands to the sure righteousness of God's way, who could never forsake the innocent any more than spare the guilty. He goes farther, and gives an account of that which appeared to him by a spirit, as he says, what was secretly brought to him, and his ear received a little thereof in thoughts from the visions of the nights. He describes graphically the apparition in these visions, which uttered a deeply solemn word in his hearing; the gist of which was the presumptuousness of mortal man daring to arraign God in any way. He insists on the folly of turning to creature help. All things are in the hand of Him who suddenly deals with the foolish who thought himself secure. Lastly, he calls on Job to repent; that if he would only humble himself before God, this trial would not only be turned away, but leave him more blest than ever. This, I think, gives very briefly the general purport of the first discourse of Eliphaz, in Job 4, Job 5.

Yet it is too remarkable to be passed by, that we have the Spirit of God employing as Scripture the very words subsequently treated by Jehovah as a false estimate not merely of Job but of Himself. It is not what Jehovah said at last, not what Elihu says as interpreter by the way, not even what Job pleads. The words of Eliphaz are quoted by the apostle Paul in the New Testament. This is very striking. God Himself pronounces what they had said to be not right words; but for all that the Holy Spirit gives all by inspiration, and employs the words of one as Scripture. Assuredly these two things can be reconciled, and very simply. One has only to examine the words of Eliphaz in order to see that in themselves they contain nothing but truth; but if we weigh them as applied to Job, they are inexcusably wrong. How wise is the way of the Lord! how admirable the depth of what is given us in the Scripture! The New Testament, both in the first epistle to the Corinthians and in the epistle to the Hebrews, quotes the words of Eliphaz; but then the application is perfectly good. In the history given in the Old Testament the application was wrong, and the speakers were reprov'd for it. In the New Testament the application is as right as the words themselves; all is in place. It is a marked instance, therefore, of the wonderful way in which God meets all in His own wisdom. But this merely by-the-bye.

Job then answers him in Job 6, Job 7, but with considerable pain: "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." Thus Job's piety made him own that God not only must be, but was, concerned in all these calamities; and he was right so far. Job did not lay the blame on the Sheba or the Chaldeans, the lightning, the hurricane, or the elephantiasis, but looked far beyond the secondary instruments. He was right in bringing God into the trouble; only he was wrong, as we shall find at the end, in either supposing that there was nothing to correct in his soul, or that God could be anything else to him than gracious while faithful, and long-suffering while righteous. He did not take into account the power of evil and of Satan which is permitted but measured by God. He did not hold fast as he ought that it is in

love to His own God allows them to be peculiarly sufferers in this world. All this practically he had to learn, so that at first sight his very piety made the difficulty greater in attributing everything to God, apart from His way and end; if so, how objectless seemed the crushing blows which had fallen thick and fast upon him! how could he reconcile it all? He was sure that God is righteous and holy, that He must be good and true and faithful; and yet it was from God that all these miseries came on him, a saint! It was a difficulty, and so much the more terrible for the man who lay under the anguish of these troubles at the moment, and not a person calmly reflecting afterwards. How different for one who reads in the book of God the solution of all! We must remember this when we look into these matters. This then is what I would suggest in weighing that which follows in the reply of Job, who in his despondency desires to be cut off by God; especially as he had only disappointment from his brethren, as a thirsty caravan before the dried-up bed of waters they had longed for. He does not deprecate reproof; but theirs were but words cavilling at his words, They had in no way reached the case. He could only again wish for death, and even expostulates with God, but soon owns his wrong, and implores forgiveness, but death too.

Next comes Bildad the Shuhite (Job 8), who succeeds Eliphaz, but with a great deal more of asperity, and consequently bringing out from Job a greater tartness in his rejoinder. He does not scruple in reproving Job to suppose that his children had brought on themselves the due reward of their deeds, and throws out hints that he himself could not be what he seemed. He speaks and thinks only of justice, yet urges repentance on Job, which would assuredly be followed by more blessing than ever. The juiciest and greenest herb is the first to wither, and the hope of the hypocrite or polluted is no more than a spider's web, whose place will deny the sight of him, whilst the upright is filled with joy.

In Job 9 and Job 10, Job repels the insinuation of Bildad, and maintains still that the very majesty of God made it impossible for him, a poor weak man, to stand up against the blows of such a God. This is the great point. It shows therefore, that, even if he wished, he could not, however righteous, plead his righteousness before God — that God's all-holy eye must see sheer failure and imperfection in him; so that his only wish was that there might be a daysman between them both — some one who would be able to adjust the balance between God and man. He could only wish for death in his incompetence to resist the overwhelming might which had crushed him. This seems the chief peculiarity of Job's reply to Bildad.

Then follows Zophar, in Job 11, who is the keenest of the three, and the least considerate. He taxes him with moral blindness as well as mere bluster. He takes up the harsh thoughts of those who attacked, and gives no value at all to the pleadings of Job in his wretchedness. On the contrary, he begins to harbour that sad thought, which gets expression from them all, of some grave and secret evil which must lie at the bottom, the cause of the manifold and unparalleled calamities of Job. He is as decided as an evil surmise makes one. We shall find, however, considerably more of this when we come to look into the second argument between Job and his friends. Upon this we may not enter now.

But I close with stating that Job replies to Zophar, setting forth very completely the weakness and wretchedness of man doomed to die on the earth. None then could speak of the power of life. Christ, who has alone gained the victory over evil, was as yet in the future; but Job looks at man on the earth, and owns, in a most pathetic way, man's utter weakness, as born to trouble, before the incomparable majesty of God Himself. In this reply Job opens with some sarcasm. But he meets the hypothesis of present retribution with the most distinct negative and disproof, "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure." Nor was this confined to man. Every form of animate nature proclaims the same fact: the beasts of the earth, the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, declare plainly that the violent carry it over the weak. God is sovereign; but for that very reason

their law of government is a sophism, and to apply it to him unjust. God does as He pleases, and among men above all reverses all calculation.

Such had been the fruit of Job's observation (Job 13), and he was conscious of being more right than his friends. It was with God he wished to speak, not with such quacks as they, whose wisdom would be to hold their peace. What they had said he counted to be said wickedly and deceitfully for God, who had given them no such authority, and would surely reprove them, as in fact He did. His integrity he would hold fast before Him, say what they liked, and he knew he should be justified. He asked but a reprieve from suffering, and that His dread should not overwhelm him; he wished to find out all that was wrong in himself, and begged to know why he was driven to and fro like a leaf or dry stubble. He did not yet know the grace that was giving him self-judgment. He sees only a record kept of bitter things, and himself made to inherit his youthful iniquities, his feet put in the stocks, his ways watched, the very soles of his feet marked, whilst he was but consuming as a rotten thing, or a moth-eaten garment.

He closes his answer (Job 14) with more general reflections on man's miserable lot in this world, frail and faulty in nature, and hopeless of revival in this life, unlike a tree, which may sprout again if cut down ever so low. But man cannot till the heavens be no more: then he too will wake from sleep. Again Job prays that he may be hidden in the grave till his change or renovation come, when God will call and he answer. Meanwhile he sees no ground of hope; for as even the strongest things fall to ruin, man passes so completely that, whether his sons come to honour or are brought low, he knows nothing.

But I hope to pursue a little more, on this day week, the chapters that follow, so as to present the scope of the great argument carried on between Job and his friends, and in its course to give a few hints — for I do not pretend to more — towards helping, the children of God to the more profitable study of the book for themselves.

LECTURE 2.

Job 15 - 31.

In following up the further discussion between the friends of Job and the sufferer himself, I shall endeavour to give a sketch which by the Lord's grace may help souls. It cannot pretend to be more than suggestive; for it is needless to say that no more could be attempted in the few lectures now proposed. But this is what a considerable part of those conversant with Scripture most need. There is a time and a place for the most minute search into every word of God; but many a Christian craves something of a distinct outline, brief perhaps but comprehensive, so as to seize what it is that the Spirit of God is here setting before us; what is the main truth that God is now teaching us, as well as Job in that day. And this seems the first requisite if we would read the book intelligently and to profit, that we should have an adequate sense of the grand object of God in giving it to us. Of this then, as far as the central part of the book is concerned, I hope to speak so far as time permits.

The first thing to which your attention may be well called, is the mistaken principle underlying the thoughts of not Eliphaz only but also Job himself. It falsified the application of every word of his friends; it was rebuked finally by Jehovah Himself at the close of the book. In due-time we may the better for this show where it was that, with all his faults, Job was right, while his friends were wrong; for this is the clear issue at the end, although there was that which needed correction and called for

self-judgment, as it surely came and was carried on deeply in his soul at last. This is not at all a question of anyone's opinion; it is the sentence of God for every believer's instruction.

Where was it then that there was so wrong a start? Wherein consisted a view that offended God so deeply? The three were friends of Job, and unquestionably pious men; yet did they err grievously, and needed God's pardon as we know. What was it then which vitiated the wisdom, experience, and friendly purpose of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar? What irritated Job, and made all their appeals powerless to deal with his conscience? What, in short, made them not only without ability to help his soul in the tremendous extremity to which he was reduced, but, further, exposed themselves to the unsparing rebuke of God Himself?

Their error was by no means a singular one, more particularly among the righteous, who, knowing God, have nevertheless never been thoroughly broken down as to themselves. Such persons one finds still among His own people on the earth. It was common to them all, yet there must have been some ground of righteousness in their thoughts, as every believer would allow. But here was where they went astray; they assumed that the present aspect of the world is an adequate expression of His judgment of men's ways. This assumption we find running through the speeches of the three friends, at first expressed with comparative calmness, but ripening at length into severity, as Job's passionate outburst resented what they increasingly imputed as the hidden explanation of the facts. Here was a soul suffering a succession of troubles beyond all example. Who could point out the man subjected to such dealings since the world began?

The difficulty increases at first sight, when we remember how precious he was to God, and the tender mercy of God to His children; when you think of such trial on earth, after hearing what God said about him in heaven. But then a main part of the profit which the book discloses depends on the fact that both God's estimate and Satan's trial were only made known in heaven; that the reason of the trial was a secret for the present — a secret not there. but here. Neither Job nor his friends knew anything of what God had said about him. Satan well knew; but could not conceive disinterested suffering integrity.

Consequently here we have the other side, not what was on high, but what was seen here below. No contrast could appear more complete. The whole reasoning of the friends of Job assumed, on the contrary, that what was permitted on earth must be the adequate reflex of God's mind in heaven. Hence, therefore, the more that Job had seemed pious and prayerful, and that his life had been one of the most even character — that he had been singularly blest, as indeed he had walked with habitual dependence on God, the more was all now turned to his disparagement as mere subtlety. We must remember that it was only a process of conviction going on. They did not arrive at this conclusion at first. There was anxiety first, then suspicion; and I have already passed with you over the chapters where the suspicion is seen growing up in the minds of his friends. Then was shown Job not only yielding to complaint under the unexplained trial, but stung and touched to the quick by the imputation of his friends.

Henceforth there was no more disguise. He treated them as those who had no knowledge whatever of his case, no sound understanding of God's ways. Nor had they really. Consequently there comes out on the one hand the impatience of Job, weakening their confidence in the reality of his goodness; on the other their yielding to the spirit of evil surmise and suspicion; so that all power, either of consolation or of godly reproof, was entirely destroyed on both sides.

This then seems exactly where we find ourselves at the end of Job 14. So Eliphaz takes up the word in Job 15 with no small degree of disgust at the state of Job's soul. He had judged from the

surface. "Should a wise man," he says, "utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk?" This he considered to be the character of Job's defence. "Yea, thou castest off fear." Now it is no longer insinuation; he ventures to pronounce on Job. "Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God." How did he know this? He had come too hastily to the inference; and it was false. Job had in no way restrained prayer before God, as we may find not only from his character but from his answers soon.

There cannot be a more instructive lesson to us of the danger of judging by appearances. It is beyond question a main point in this marvellous book. A superficial survey is never the way to form a righteous judgment; as the Lord Himself warned in His day. If it was wrong then in them, much more censurable is it in us. Here we find an entire book devoted to the purpose of guarding us from such a snare. "Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer from God. For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou choosest the tongue of the crafty." Therefore they found no more in their judgment than a gloss in all his expression of desire to draw near to God, and of confidence in God's acquitting him of the suspicion they had formed. Passing all the bounds of loving solicitude, they feared not to utter direct judgment. But their failure is exactly the way that God takes to warn us of like danger in our own ways. Appearances were against Job. "Thine own mouth condemneth thee," says Eliphaz, referring to his undoubtedly improper expressions. "Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee. Art thou the first man?" Then he lets out a little of the evident feeling that Job had shown them disrespect. No doubt they were more aged than he, and from a distance had come to him as those best suited to console and comfort. But if disappointed, had they not themselves abandoned the ground of dependence on God? They had indeed done so, although they had preserved their silence for a considerable time. It was not merely a question of Job's breaking out; but what about them? It was not merely that God was holding up before all that tried sufferer, and how He would carry to a good end the bitter lesson that Job was passing through; but God was also showing the danger of misjudgment even for holy men of God. The profit of the book is entirely lost if we regard them as mere self-righteous men in the bad sense of the word. Not that there was not self-righteousness in them, or even in Job; for God convicts them all of it. There is no denying therefore, that flaws and faults were found in the friends and in Job; but we may rightly seek to gather wherein they wholly and he in part missed the truth, and what it is that God would use the book to guard our own souls from.

Eliphaz then deals such a severe rebuke, that it is anything but in keeping with the calm with which the debate had begun; for he passes into a comparatively bitter setting down of Job as one who should feel his inexperience as compared with them, and the impropriety of such freedom of speech addressed to his elders. But all this shows us how solemn it is, and what a danger, even for a saint, to have self rather than God in one's thoughts, and this not meaning God in general, but above all the God of grace. The friends spoke much of God, but the manner in which they looked on Him was purely as a judge. This was surely a great defect, and the correction is just the moral of the whole book. Those who make the one question that is before God now to be His marking our deserts in the present life, must fail entirely to understand that God has taken advantage of the evil that is here to show the grace that is in Himself above the evil. It is true that the time was not yet come to show evil completely baffled and set aside, because this could not be till Christ and the cross. For all this, God is God and loves to be known as the God of grace, and it came out in the midst of all the evil that was in this world. Could it be said to be a new thing? The pledge of grace in Genesis 3 had testified, even when sin had just entered man's heart, that God is the God of grace. The woman's Seed to bruise the serpent's head was the very first intimation after the fall of man. I do not deny that there was judgment too; but while there was an expression of present judgment in the earth becoming a scene of curse and trial with thorns and thistles externally, with death and sorrow for the future life of man and especially of woman, there was

the resource of grace above all, the suffering but victorious destroyer of the evil one, the Seed of the woman.

Is it not remarkable that not a thought of the woman's Seed is breathed through the friends of Job? On the contrary, in the portion that comes before us at this time, the Seed of the woman had a most central place in the heart of Job. It is not in the least denied that the others were believers; but "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Why is it that they never once touch on that blessed One that was to make good and manifest the superiority of grace over all evil? Why was it that they could not rise above the fear of evil underneath? that they thought it useless, along with bright promises of present good in repentance, to do more than censure and warn and threaten, turning even to bitter account now the testimony of Job's former life? Their conclusion was that his evil was finding him out, that judgment was pursuing the hypocrite. Alas! not one man among them knew what it is to overcome evil with good. Doubtless there was present and open failure in Job, though not the hidden evil of their suspicious minds. But grace overcomes evil with good. Why did they not? There was deplorable failure in all but God; and this too the book clearly shows.

But there is another lesson which we find the more that they advance in their injurious insinuations. It is hard to conceive anything that is more crushing to the spirit of a godly man; for, as there is no plain distinct charge, so they allege no facts to be laid on the conscience. The judicial spirit that governed them withdrew their hearts from waiting till God manifested the truth of things, and disposed them hastily to take advantage unconsciously of the sufferer's intemperate speech, to found on it the suspicion of worse deeds behind it all. They could say here, "Thine own mouth condemneth thee; thine own lips testify against thee." And what could poor Job say? Was it quite false? It was too true; but what did they gather from it? Some dark deep iniquity that God was judging. Nay, but they were judging, and judging wrongly. There was faith underneath, and a believing in God incomparably stronger and truer in Job than in any one of those that blamed him, as God failed not to bring out in the end.

Let us pursue the book a little. Eliphaz then, after reproving Job for his disrespect to his elders, comes to what God is in His perfect holiness, and on the other hand to man in his sinfulness. Perfectly true; but how did this meet the difficulty? Is that the whole case as it stands? Is there nothing but man suffering for his abominations in the world? Is there no room for a righteous man to suffer in this world? Is there no enemy to afflict, no God to chasten? To them there was but the one thought of judging sins. Their heart had never yet faced the solemnity of the righteous tried deeply, of God allowing His own to be put to the proof peculiarly and to suffer. They had narrowed their minds to the one thought that, whenever severe blows fell on a man, they were the unerring indication of something uncommonly bad. If therefore unparalleled troubles had befallen Job (and who could deny it?), it must be that Job was the worst of men.

Such was the theory, and their application of it. They were thoroughly wrong. It was not sin, nor was it illwill; yet equally uncharitable in result was the working of their ignorance of God's ways. And surely there is in this history grave matter for our reflection if we would Not thus fail. There was no intentional flagrant mischief; nor indeed is this the usual way in which a child of God injures or is injured. As a rule, it is partial truth that damages his spirit. An unconverted man is swept away by his own will and Satan's lies; but he that fears God may be misled grievously by a partial view of God or man. Hence the immense moment of our seeking not merely a truth but *the* truth. For us too there is the less absence of excuse now, because of the unspeakable privilege that we have the truth fully revealed in Christ, who is not merely a truth, but *the* truth objectively, as the Spirit is in power.

How then are we using the grace thus shown us? Is it Christ or our own thoughts that we bring in as a standard to judge whatever comes before us? Now had the friends turned, I will not say to such a revelation of God as we possess, but to what is given in the very first communication of God, that third chapter of Genesis to which we have referred, what would have been the result? How does God speak of Him there, and how would it have applied to the case in hand? Would it not have kept them from unrighteous judgment in this way? There surely, if anywhere, is the pattern of all perfection in this world. Was He to pass through without suffering? Would the serpent spare Him? Before his own head should be bruised he was to bruise His heel. The first revelation of God then about the Seed of the woman, the coming Deliverer, ought to have guarded them, like others, from the sad mistake which the book of Job is designed to correct. It is a bruised One that is to bruise Satan finally. He must suffer many things, whatever the glories that should follow. And what believer could think of evil in His case? Does suffering, if unequalled, suppose evil in Him? In no wise. The theory therefore, that the sole cause of suffering for a man in this world is the evil of which God sees him guilty, is false, and not the less but the more mischievous a falsehood, because of a certain measure of truth in it. A narrow view may be most pernicious.

For it is untrue, on the other hand, that evil has nothing to do with man's suffering in this world. If there were no evil, there had been no suffering. Sin then, no doubt, has an immense deal to do with it as the general rule. Take man here below; take any one indulging in any evil: does he not suffer? Of course he does. Thus it is a positive principle of God's righteous government that evil never can be indulged in without entailing the solemn dealing of His hand, though room be left for the distinct working and even suffering of grace. It is true, not only in the future, but also in the present, that one reaps as one sows. But is it the sole or the whole truth? Is God limited to His government? In no way. There was where Eliphaz and his companions were wrong; and Satan knows well how to bend to his own purposes that particular side of truth which we either choose or overlook.

There comes in the immense importance of seeing the early lesson of the book, which is that we have to do with not only God but Satan. We have to resist one who is not only an accuser before God, but, as the last book of the Bible teaches like the first, a deceiver among men. It is inexcusable that we should be deceived, because we have now that scene, and a vast deal more, made known to us plainly. That which could not have been then rightly laid before Job and his friends, as it would have been altogether premature, is as a whole laid bare to us, who are now by redemption, and in a new life, responsible to walk according to the light of God fully revealed in Christ.

The Christian is now not in the dark, as they comparatively were. We walk in the light. And carefully remember, my brethren, that to "walk in the light" does not mean merely according to the light, important as this is, and our clear duty. That we walk in the light is universally true of the Christian. Thereby is not meant, as many assume, the special attainment or high measure of spirituality reached by some Christians. That we walk in the light flows from our being brought to God, who is light, and is the revealed place of nearness where grace has put all that are brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of God, that is, every Christian person now. We are light, and in the light; we are walking there, and not in darkness. And because by grace we walk in the light, we are bound to walk according to the light.

But our responsibility to walk according to the light is wholly different from, though founded on, our walking in the light. If we are Christians really, we follow Christ, and have the light of life; and so we walk in the light, as men do literally while it is day. It is precisely where the knowledge of Christ as the light places us all. For now no man can follow Christ, or, in other words, can be a Christian, without walking in that light. It is not the spiritual only, but every Christian who enjoys this as his

settled constant privilege. But although we walk there, it does not follow that we walk faithfully according to the light. This is where we see practical differences abound among Christians; but there is no difference at all in the great truth, that now we all walk in the light as God is in the light. As yet, however, it was not the time for that light to shine, and therefore we are far less excusable than they if we forget it; for all this is made known to us to preserve us from the mistakes into which even good men then fell.

Next, in the answer of Job (Job 16, Job 17), we may observe that he expresses his deep sense of their complete failure in meeting his case. "I have heard many such things," said he: "miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead," he adds very affectingly, "I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you." Just let them change places, had this been possible; let those three friends be in the position of Job; let them have, not only their possessions, but their families, completely swept away by the besom of destruction, and in a manner that looked like the effect of divine displeasure; let their persons too suffer in a way as marked and excruciating as Job's, so as to afford to the most careless eye the most unmistakable sign of some peculiarly tremendous dealing with them; let them be only in such circumstances, and Job be the friend that comes to speak with them: could he not have indulged in words and looks quite as severe? I cannot but think the answer here a most touching appeal, especially when he goes on, "But I would strengthen you with my mouth." There he has the unquestionable advantage in grace over them. "I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief." Not a word had come from them with such a character or purpose.

"Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased?" Certainly he did not disown what they interpreted to his disadvantage, the depth of his desolation. Had they pressed against him the fact that God had permitted it all? It was this very thing he felt so keenly. Thus far Job was, beyond contradiction, pious. He acknowledged the truth. He does not lay his ruin on the Chaldeans, or other secondary causes. He does not explain it away by instrumental circumstances. He saw God's hand without in the least entering into His mind about the trial, still less His love; and that was just the reason why all was at present so inexplicable to his soul. He holds fast his integrity, perfectly sure that there was nothing of that which they imagined against him, no dreadful secret, no burdening sin, which God was therein avenging. His conscience was good. Job could not tell how or why it was, while he mournfully felt that God was in it all; but he was no less certain that his friends foully wronged him; and that, if they stood in his shoes, far different would his words have been to them. "But now," says he, "he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company. And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me." There was no hiding, no hard pretension in any way that he was suffering less than the reality. Nay, he goes to the opposite extreme, and uses language exceedingly to be regretted: "He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me." This is strong language when we remember whence Job felt his troubles came, whoever might be the means or instrument of them. Still he admits, and holds to it firmly, that the enemy could not have discharged his vials of wrath upon him unless God had given the word. He saw then the twofold truth, on the one hand, of God holy, just, good; on the other hand, of God visiting him with trials unexampled and utterly overwhelming. But he could not solve the problem, still less his friends, who misread both to growing doubt of Job's faith and probity.

But Job clung still to God, though he complained bitterly and unbecomingly. How and why such trial of himself could be, wherefore God should reverse His ways with him, he could not understand;

but he does not deny the truth for a moment. He does use language painfully descriptive of the distress his soul was passing through: "They have gaped upon me with their mouth." It is not at all the only time that we may have to take notice of language that remarkably connects itself with that of the Psalms. Anyone that will take the trouble to compare the two books, may readily see a number of expressions pointedly similar. The instance before us may illustrate. Who in the Psalms speaks of their gaping like a ravening lion? It is the Lord on the cross. But what a difference! "But thou continuest holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Not a word of this is heard on Job's part. In consequence of the fiery trial that Job was passing through, he speaks as if God were dealing hardly with him, as if He were become mysteriously his enemy; consequently he breaks out into bitterness, the natural effect of such a thought. The state of the soul must always depend on how one looks, or fails to look, at God. How all-important, therefore, that one should have and enjoy the knowledge of God as He is, that the soul should be at ease and at home with Him, self-judging and resting in His love.

The effect of real enjoyment of God's love of course is that love flows from us. It was not so with anyone there. Job was right enough in feeling that God had to do with his sore trial. Little did he know what had taken place on high, which afforded the key at least to part of it. Still he could leave God out of no part, which, as it wrought in his friends to judge unduly of Job, and falsely of God — for they were wholly wrong — so it tended for the moment to give Job hard feelings about God. He murmured as if he were dealt with hardly. "God hath delivered me," says he, "to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked." He avows with the utmost frankness that without Him none of these trials could "happen." There was real faith, although he was imperfectly instructed as yet. "I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark. His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground. He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust."

But was it true that he restrained prayer before God? Listen to his own words: "My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death; not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure." Eliphaz had thoroughly wronged him. "O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place. Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high;" that is, he as to this can turn to God. Whether prayer had been restrained could be judged absolutely by none but God Himself. Job acts upon it here, it would seem; and, if I be not mistaken, this is just his appeal: "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God." It was utterly false that he did not cry to God. "O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour! When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return."

And so through the next chapter (Job 17), where he pours out his lament, we find this. Had the suspicion — one might call it the charge — of his friends been true, there is one thing that, above all others, would have been terrible in his apprehension. Need I say that it would be death? So far from this, however, that there was nothing that Job so much desired as death. It was in vain to talk to him about any change for him on earth; it was vain to talk to him about his family, or any retrieving the disasters that had swallowed all up. None of these things would have afforded the smallest comfort to the heart of Job; but if he could only die, if he could only approach near enough to God to plead before Him, not even now did he doubt what he would find there. How plain that, if it was only a partial revelation which had formed the heart of Job, still the substance of the truth was his.

Assuredly there is nothing that could more thoroughly test a man than that. A bad conscience would have shrunk from death, as the stripping it of all disguise, and destruction to the soul. Job, on the contrary, proved not his reality alone, but the state of his conscience, by the fact of his earnest desire to depart and be with God. We see his confidence in God then, even while he spreads out his sorrows, with no other thought than death before him. "If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister. And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it? They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust."

Then (Job 18) the second of Job's friends takes up the word. As we noticed in the former debate, Bildad has much less gentleness of spirit, and less self-restraint, than his older friend Eliphaz, who takes the lead in all these discussions. He therefore is much more unscrupulous in bringing out his doubt of Job, his implication of hypocrisy; for this is really what soon comes out. "How long will it be," he says, "ere ye make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak. Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight? He teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place? Yea, the light of the wicked" (was this what he insinuates to be in Job, "the light of the wicked"?) "shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him. The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down. For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. The gin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him." "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

Such is the spirit of Bildad. He was satisfied that, whatever might have been the appearances, they were all hollow, and that now the truth could no longer be hid: God's judgments and Job's language were making it manifest that he had been simply a prosperous fool, with its just and usual end in this life. We all understand of course what is meant in Scripture by the "fool" — a man without God. No folly is like it. So he believes it to have been with Job. Is it not humbling and solemn that we may be ever so sincere in what we believe, but completely wrong? We are just as responsible for what our convictions are as for what we do or say. The only one that is competent to give us the right thought or feeling is He who alone gives the wisdom and strength to carry it out. It is God Himself. We are entirely dependent on Him to form our thoughts and feelings according to His mind just as much as for our ways.

But to proceed. Bildad adds, "He shall have neither son nor nephew among his people." It is painful to see how his hard spirit takes advantage of the pitiful calamity that had blotted out the children of Job. "Nor any remaining in his dwellings. They that come after him shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted. Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God." Was Job such in the estimation of Bildad?

As this was the worst of the speeches hitherto, Job under the hand of God is led far out of and beyond himself. It may be slowly, and but for a little; still following this comes a bright glimpse at Him that is coming, the Seed of the woman, for whom saints waited from the first. "How long" answered Job, "will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?" for he felt that in their reproaches there was no weight, nothing but words.

I turn now to what Job says in reply to Bildad: "Be it indeed," says he, "that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself." He felt that they had in no wise corrected it. "If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach" — too hasty to take occasion by his deep and accumulated afflictions — "know now that God hath overthrown me." How boldly he speaks out.

And this, as far as it goes, could not have been without real faith, though it was far below the meek submission of our blessed Lord. Did they say that God was against Job? "God *hath* overthrown me," he acknowledges. If it was any comfort for them to know, he confesses that his trouble came from His hand, that He "hath compassed me with His net. Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths. He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree." He himself points, not they, to his universal desertion, to the desertion of his wife, of his brethren, of his servants, of his household: in short, even youngsters acting contemptuously towards him. Those who once revered had all now deserted him. "I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body. Yea, young children despised me." So complete, as well as sudden, was the descent of Job. "All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me." It was the painful truth; and he allows it all.

"Have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." This, so far as it went, seems to be excellent on Job's part. It was not the whole truth; but it was true, and not at all enfeebled because he holds fast the certainty that it was not for any wickedness that was in his hands. No evil had he been consciously cherishing; yet there was the undisguised fact — God was smiting him. He did not lay the blame on others; he would not attempt to account for it by human reasoning; just because he felt it to be from God, he felt it to be so painful. Whatever might be the means employed, it was God, the same God who had hedged him in and blessed him uniformly hitherto; and how to conciliate the present with the past he knew not. For that he had to wait. The answer came at last, when patience had its perfect work.

But he does not spare remonstrances or rebuke. "Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" It was distress enough that he was suffering in this way. Were they justified in destroying his confidence in God? The drift of what they were doing was to make him doubt the sincerity of his own faith, which is clearly the devil's work. The Spirit of God never leads to a doubt. "Oh that my words were but written, that they were but inscribed in the book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth." Here we come to the very distinct confession of his faith. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." Beautiful too it was at such a time, in the deepest desolation and distress, where there was not one solitary friend among men, and God Himself was smiting him. How like Christ up to a certain point in his circumstances! How little like Him in the unwavering acknowledgment of God's holiness, as free from hardness as from repining! Still here we have a blessed confession, the more so because of the gloom, pain, and desertion in which it was uttered. "I know . . . that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Some will probably have heard that people question, for one reason or another, the meaning of these words, or perhaps affirm that they mean "out of my flesh." But then it ought to be remembered that "out of my flesh" can mean from within it, as you might look out from a window. It does not mean the separate spirit divested of the flesh. We must not confound "*out of my flesh*" with "*without my flesh*," which it does not at all necessarily imply. It is the expression of his holding fast what every person, more particularly in the Old Testament, would maintain; that is, the true having to do personally with God, and in Old Testament thought personality meant the person fully, not merely therefore the soul and the spirit separate, but in the body too. So it is with Job; and this is what gives

emphasis to his words. He can see the dissolution of his body at hand; he beholds everything crumbling into dust, and his flesh becoming the food of worms; but none the less does he cleave to the confidence that not only shall he see God, but this from out of his flesh. The resurrection therefore is clearly supposed in these words, and all the efforts of men to destroy the force of the passage are utterly vain.

But it is surely striking that we should hear such thoughts and language from these early days outside Israel. How comes it to pass? It is very evident that, after all, if there was but little made known by God, if there was but a comparatively small volume of truth revealed at that time, the Spirit of God gave that small revelation great force in the souls of those who believed it; and so we may be constantly surprised in the book of Genesis to find the advanced sentiments of one or another. I am far from saying that they speak in the knowledge of the full light by which a Christian ought to judge now; but they display no mean acquaintance with the mind of God from time to time. Hear what Abraham and Isaac say, what even Jacob may utter, although it is granted that he has not at all the same moral elevation as Abraham; but still one learns from all that is recorded how much more they knew and could use in testimony than we might infer from their circumstances. It reminds me of a word in Proverbs, "There is much food in the tillage of the poor." Thus, if there were but little, God knows how to make the little go far. This seems to be what He did with the patriarchs. Our danger now is in exactly the opposite direction. Grace has now revealed in Christ the fulness of truth; but, beloved brethren, how far do we turn it to His account? How does our "much" appear as compared with what we find these saints doing with their "little"? If theirs indeed was but a little, certainly God made it mighty, as we cannot deny, in its moral power and effects.

To resume then, Job says, "In my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself." It is not merely the hope of blessing for himself, but real personal enjoyment of God; and this without fear or shrinking in the least. "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." He might come to nothing meanwhile; but in that day God will be everything, and prove it by maintaining His own in their full personality before Him. "But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me? Be ye afraid of the sword." He sees too that in that day divine judgment was coming. It was not merely that there was a Kinsman-redeemer in prospect to vindicate His own people, but in that day, as all Scripture shows, would be a time of judgment. "Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword' that ye may know there is a judgment."

Did Job's confession touch the hearts of his friends? On the contrary, there follows an uncommonly bitter speech from Zophar. (Job 20) He seems to have been the lowest, morally, of the three, and, as one generally finds, the most presumptuous in word and least broken in spirit. "Therefore do my thoughts," he says, "cause me to answer." And truly it was so. He gives us his "thoughts." It was in no way that the fear of God moved his lips, or jealousy for His grace and truth. We have his own thoughts. "Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste;" which a believer does not. "I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer. Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short?" That is the one thought of Zophar. "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment." Job was the wicked; Job was the hypocrite. "Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he? He shall fly away as a dream" And so he pursues to the end of the chapter this reckless onslaught — for I can call it no less — on a man incomparably better than himself. What is it all but persevering, laborious, and extravagant effort to wound him whom they failed to convict or convince, if it were possible, by the words of their

mouth? The words of their mouth were drawn swords.

"But Job answered and said, Hear diligently my speech." From this point there appears to be a certain improvement in Job. It is not that his soul as yet was brought into the presence of God; for this we must wait for another dealing of God, which we may hope to have before us on the next occasion. But every view of grace is strengthening to the soul; and I think that Job never gives way, either to the same measure of hardness in speaking of God, or of despondency; nor does he yield to such desire after death as a release from suffering. It was not unnatural for a believer who saw nothing before him but the most dismal condition here, and this from God. It would be great relief to go into the presence of God; and he knew what he would find there from Him. What marks the change not a little is, that he allows henceforth whatever there was of truth in what his friends had urged on him. Scarce anything shows a man gaining the advantage morally over his adversaries so much as this. What can be less happy than to see two debating, where they take up each a side of truth? There is never a satisfactory close to the question until you acknowledge whatever is true in him that opposes you. It is a plain enough proof that God is giving you a victory over self; and this is great gain. So we find that Job from this time acknowledges the measure of truth there was in what his friends — sad to say his adversaries, as really they were, — had said. But he does also demonstrate the folly of shutting one's eyes to God's actual long-suffering in respect of evil-doers. "As for me, is my complaint to man? and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? Mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth. Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?" Thus, before he concedes their point, he draws attention to the undeniable fact that, so far is the present life from being an adequate expression of God's moral government, there is nothing more startling than to find wickedness so often allowed to triumph, and the righteous as often utterly cast down and tried peculiarly. This was a flat contradiction, no doubt, of their thesis; and he draws it out before making the concession already referred to. "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?"

What have his friends to say in answer? The ground was cut completely from under them. They had assumed that, according to God's government, no wicked man prospered, no righteous man but must prosper. A falser view of the world that now is there cannot possibly be. When the Lord takes the reins, it will be so. Then indeed the righteous are to be established, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth; then there will be no such thing as evil tolerated. But who can look upon the world as it is, and seriously allow such a thought? But how came these pious men to make such a strange mistake? There are none who make stranger mistakes than the pious when not walking in dependence on God. Their very piety gives them a stronger abhorrence of evil; and if there be not the power of grace, and the sense of their need of grace in God Himself guarding them, none will be more severe, none less just. This is a solemn warning. And how comes it to pass? Is it merely that no flesh shall glory in the presence of the Lord? There is more still; there is an adversary, the devil, as well as God, who will have us learn that only His grace is sufficient for us.

To this point tends the whole action of the book; not only the intervention of Elihu and the decision of Jehovah, but the reasonings of the interlocutors. But each part has its own moment; and it is well for us to take all into account.

Job describes then the wicked in prosperity in strong terms. "Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes." It is not merely that you have one here and there, but the wicked really take root in the world; they are at home there. "Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them." They come under no special chastening. "Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones

like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ." It is they that enjoy the world, if you leave out God, and take man's appreciation of present life. There is no disputing that such is the fact, account for it or not, if one looks at the world as it is. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?" In their case it would have been true to say that prayer is restrained.

Impiety has ever characterised the world. But is this all the truth? "Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out!" Here, it will be seen, he acknowledges the other side; and it is no less true that God does not leave Himself without witness. He presses the fact that the present world is no expression of God's moral government; but he acknowledges that in the midst of men's seeming prosperity a divine blow falls on them; in a moment their candle is put out. Exceptional dealings, therefore, are admitted. There was another sort of dealing that he did not yet see, and this was what he had to learn, that God acts among His own in the way of chastening, trial, or discipline, just as surely as He may lay His hand on the wicked in the way of a solemn judgment.

But beyond a doubt the time is not yet come for all things to be manifested in power according to His mind and will. It is in vain for Israel or the church to hurry it, as both have done; for the due time cannot be till Christ comes. "Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out! and how oft cometh their destruction upon them! God distributeth sorrows in his anger. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away, God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know it. His eyes shall see his destruction." That is, it is not merely the man himself, but sometimes his family; and this accordingly is pursued fully to the end of the chapter.

Eliphaz, exceedingly taken aback by so complete an answer to his argument, tries to reply, for the last time, in the chapter before us. One cannot wonder that he fails. "Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?" The ground taken now is, that God is above all questions of whether a man's conduct is useful to him or not. "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? Will He reprove thee for fear of thee? will He enter with thee into judgment?" Job's maintenance of his integrity against their imputations he does not scruple to brand as wickedness. "Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?" Provoked by such a clenching answer to his argument, he now distinctly charges Job with hidden evil. He that suspects upon appearances will soon dispense even with appearances. "Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite? For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing." It was the very reverse of Job's real character! "Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink" — Job gave more than ever Eliphaz did — "and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry." What could be less true? "But as for the mighty man, he had the earth; and the honourable man dwelt in it. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken. Therefore snares are round about thee." "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: and the light shall shine upon thy ways." (Job 22) Totally wrong in all his charges, this grave old man waxes bold enough to call Job to cease from his impiety, and to humble himself before God. "And thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee." He means that there was only one door open — humiliation of himself before God because of his hypocrisy.

Job answers, "Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that

I knew where I might find him." Is this the language or the feeling of one conscious of wickedness before God? We never hear such language even from Eliphaz or any other of the friends. I am not denying their faith, but only saying that their state was not comparable with that of Job, in spite of all his bitter complaints. "I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto me. Will He plead against me with His great power?" Job knew God better. "No; but He would put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with Him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge." (Job 23)

Their spirit was judicial from beginning to end, and such a spirit is always wrong. There may be a measure of truth, but a judicial spirit, as it never saves a soul from death, so it profits least those who indulge in it: it does not suit a saint in such a world as this. But there was exactly where they were. They did not know God as Job did. "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there." This was his trouble. He could not enjoy God; for he had not yet the key to his distress at His hand. He desired Him, and was miserable to be practically at a distance from Him, with all these troubles intervening to cloud His goodness from his soul. "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." He knew not how it could be for His glory or his own blessing he should be so tried; but he was thoroughly satisfied that hypocrisy was the last thing that could be justly ascribed to him.

In the next chapter (Job 24) he describes, in a touching and solemn way, the nature of the of Len successful wickedness in this world. On that I need not dwell now.

Next comes Bildad, who is reduced to what might be almost called a few platitudes about the glorious power of God. Who doubted what is said? It is all true; but how did it apply to the case? How was Job's soul met? Or their suspicions justified? (Job 25)

And what does Job 26 let us hear Job saying in answer? That, after an ironical compliment to the speech just delivered for its power and wisdom, as the settlement of the question in debate, he can set forth the power of God, in spite of all his misery, far more comprehensively as well as more glowingly than they. He adds the solemnities of the unseen world.

In Job 27 he handles another topic, not the glory of God, but the wretchedness of the hypocrite, and his awful doom, in stronger colours than they themselves had done, but still with the firmest maintenance of his integrity, though God had not yet vindicated him, and they had been unjust.

This is followed by a chapter yet more remarkable, in which he sets forth man in his eager pursuit of what is rare in this world — his restless search after gold, silver, and precious stones of every kind. But where is wisdom to be found? Man can, no doubt, steer his course across the waters; man can cut a road through the rocks; man can not only level mountains and fill valleys, in his eagerness for his own objects, but he can go where the vulture flies not and sees not; he can pierce where no wild beast ever penetrates; he can sink a shaft into the earth; he can make his way in quest of that which he values where no creature burrows, where the wildest would fear to follow. But where is wisdom to be found? The finest gold cannot buy it; the most precious gems and the finest works of art can be no meet exchange; the treasures of the deep, even pearls, fail in comparison. Man knows nothing of wisdom; but it is not here. Death and destruction have heard the report of it; they have heard that it is somewhere. It is not in this world; it is not in man as he is: avidity after present objects only excludes it. There is no wisdom here. In death and destruction there is at least a sad reality. "But where is wisdom to be found?" The answer comes at last from God Himself, and it is this: "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding." To this Job brings all. Is it not solemn, yet the foundation of all, and verified in the conversion of every soul? Such is the wonderful end of a wonderful chapter. (Job 28).

In what follows we have the final defence of Job. Had he been able, Zophar might here have brought in his little word; but he was shut up to total silence. If Bildad had little to say, Zophar has absolutely nothing. Thus the friends were completely refuted, even by the sick and suffering Job. For the moment, and really as far as they were concerned, Job has it all to himself, and proceeds to speak at great length. He sets forth in an affecting manner his former brightness (Job 29), and the painful blight that had come over him and his. (Job 30) In Job 31 he protests his innocence in the most solemn way, his personal purity, his equity and consideration of his servants, his remembrance of the poor, his horror of idolatry, his freedom from vindictiveness, his cultivation of hospitality, his non-concealment of any iniquity, and this without fear before the Almighty; and if his fields could testify of fraud or force, he prays for thorns instead of wheat, and weeds instead of barley. I do not know a finer piece in this way, unless indeed when it is not merely the experience of a man under such a tremendous reverse from God, but the same man bowing down afterwards in his perfect submission to God. But on this I will not treat now, reserving the great final lesson of the book for the next lecture.

LECTURE 3.

Job 32 - 42.

The first of these chapters introduces a new speaker into the great debate. Elihu, it is well known, has been the occasion of a great deal of speculation. It seems to be rather discreditable to the judgment of those who have conjured up or yielded to such difficulties. There is scarcely more reason to doubt of Elihu than of Eliphaz, of Job himself, or any other. The historic reality of all stands or falls together. Nor is there better reason for imagining a superhuman personage in Elihu than in Melchizedek. Doubtless as Melchizedek was the type, and in a very striking way too, of the Lord Jesus as the royal priest, Scripture recording neither birth nor death, neither predecessor nor successor, and this in order to suit the more impressively His glory who was shadowed, so here comes forward one who remarkably exemplifies — for I should call him not a type, but one who exemplifies — the Spirit of Christ which we know did work in the saints of old. In some it took a prophetic character. Here it is more in the way of dealing with conscience and vindicating the character of God.

This is indeed what Job needed and had longed for, as we gather from earlier words. The very things he desired were in due time vouchsafed by grace. He had asked for one of like passions when crushed in spirit under the hand of God. He pined after a man who should intervene between God and him. And God now gives him his desire (not yet the man Christ Jesus), a man of God indeed, but with infirmities like his own. Elihu takes particular pains to insist that he presumed on no higher ground than this. Impossible, if it were any anticipative intervention of the Lord Jesus, that he should speak of his "opinion" and the like. We see how constantly he talks about giving his opinion. The Lord Jesus, let Him take the lowest place, never spoke as the scribes, but always as One giving out the word of God and the words of the Father. His mission indeed was to manifest the Father. The only beloved Son who was in His bosom, He declared him.

Elihu takes no such attitude. He was a man, but one in whom the Spirit of God was working then, and who gives us the reason why he had not appeared on the scene before. He was comparatively young, and in those days different feelings governed from those of the present day. There was a strong sense of propriety in the deference due to elders from those younger. Saintship strengthened instead of weakening this. Elihu might, as compared with Eliphaz and the rest, enter much more into the mind of God; and it seems evident that he did so, more than Job himself, not to speak of the three friends —

these "very old" men of whom he speaks. But until they were fairly silenced, until they had not a word more to say against Job or for themselves, Elihu abides in the shade. But, though he introduces himself with a good deal of preface, and apologises for one comparatively young giving his opinion, when he does speak, wisdom from God is in it. Does not all this show us how men were given to understand, even in these earliest days, what was becoming; and that the power of the Spirit, far from destroying relative decorum, does, on the contrary, set it off with a greater force than natural reverence because it judges self in the presence of God? At the same time, as there was a free opening for the light of God to enter, so it does not fail to shine.

Elihu lets us know the deep feeling that filled his soul as, on the one hand, he looked at these three men who were more vexed at their failure than humbled, because they had not really weighed the question in the light of God's presence; and, on the other hand, at Job, who up to the present had failed to learn the lesson of subjection of heart to God, although a terrible process was going on; and I am very far from meaning that God does not give wholesome lessons before the full blessing comes out. There is no time or form of God's dealing, beloved brethren, be assured, that is lost to the soul. Nor is it by any means what most appears that is the most important part of the blessing. One might venture to say, that in all the good that abides and bears fruit there is a groundwork that is unseen — or what goes on within — which, although it be by no means the fulness of the blessing that God intends for us, is its all-important and necessary condition.

Just so, consequently, there was a work now going on within. Job was learning himself. Neither his complaints of God, nor his collision with respected friends, could he have believed possible; he never had known such thoughts or feelings in all his previous experience. It is evident, too, that his friends were wholly unprepared for the exhibition that had taken place, quick as they were to see the faults of Job. But had they seen their own? There was a beam in their eye as truly as there was a mote in Job's. What wonder then that they should see badly? In part, therefore, this closing portion of the book is meant to bring before us the manner in which God brings the whole question to a solution, as far as this could be till Christ came. So, after Elihu has thus made his excuses for speaking, he takes the last place, really the weightiest of all, though he was so little to be thought of that we had not even heard his name before. And this is one of the things that men habitually fail to understand, that the last should be first, and the first last. To my own mind it is one of the moral congruities, not of this book only, but of Scripture, and of God's ways generally, who brings people forward at the right moment. It is an important lesson, therefore, that God is teaching in that very fact. Man would not have done so. If he had essayed to write such a book as this, he would have prepared us for such an one as Elihu at the very outset. God acts with supreme wisdom; and the force with which Elihu comes into the scene when needed is so much the greater because of the retired and lowly place that he had maintained up to that moment.

Here let me take the opportunity of stating that we must not be misled by the word "inspiration" here. Elihu does not claim it in the same sense in which the apostle Paul applies it to all Scripture. He uses it simply as the source of that understanding which God gives to man, and in no way pretends to the unfailing, absolute, perfectly communicated word of God. When we talk about "inspiration," we mean the mind of God conveyed so that error is absolutely excluded. Does Elihu herein pretend to any such thing? Would he talk about his opinion if it were so? This is the more necessary, because often one sees danger through a tendency, on the one hand, to let slip the force of Scripture as inspired of God, and, on the other, to weaken it by giving other men or writings such a name as "inspired," which can only be in a lower poetic or figurative sense. The context must always direct us in deciding such questions. In the present instance of Elihu the context seems to me conclusive that inspiration, as

applied to him here, does not mean what Paul predicates of every Scripture in 2 Tim. 3. Of the Scriptures, of course, the book of Job is part, and so inspired. The Holy Ghost, from whom it came, whoever might be the instrument, gave us a book as truly inspired of God as 2 Tim., which vouches for all. But the inspiration of the Almighty of which Elihu speaks does not go beyond the source of human understanding.

But in Job 33 we find the first grand principle introduced for meeting the question of Job. He begins to open the moral reason for God's dealings, and for those trials under which Job had been groaning. "Wherefore, Job," he says, "I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words. Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."

Then he puts forward the very point referred to already. "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay." This is exactly what Job had desired, and now beyond his expectation, when he was entirely disappointed in his friends, God furnishes the help that was needed — a patient consideration of the awfully trying circumstances, with jealousy for God's glory at the right moment, and doubtless from the last quarter to which Job should have looked for it. "Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid." He had complained that God acted thus on his soul and body. Was he a land or sea-monster that God should treat him as He did? for Job indeed had used most uncomely words. But should no account be taken of his friends' provocation and of his extreme agony in soul and body? "Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee." It was God's hand that Job had so strongly deprecated. "Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me." Beyond a doubt Job had gone too far. It was quite true that there was no such unseen wickedness as his friends insinuated, but it was utterly false that God had not the wisest reasons for withering self in Job's eyes.

Job had, by the very contemplation of the grace that had wrought so much in and by him, lost sight of the source of grace. He had been occupied with its effects; and the doubts of his friends, in addition to the dealings of God, had well-nigh maddened him. Instead of directing him to the grace that is in God, Eliphaz had thrown him more and more on himself and his ways, which was precisely the error into which Job had fallen. That is, Eliphaz thought that if he made righteousness his confidence, if he had a true ground of practical godliness in his life, it was impossible that he should be afflicted of God as he had been; whereas it was really because Job had slipped into the error of thinking too much of his own righteousness, necessarily breeding not a little self-complacency in his soul, that it was a needful discipline for God to bring him down. If to be blessed fully, he must have a sound judgment of himself, as well as a truer estimate of God; and this grace did give.

Now we do need practical righteousness and a good conscience as well as faith to resist the enemy, as we see in Eph. 6. But we want something far brighter than this armour as a robe before God; we want divine righteousness here; and this Job had to learn. He had confounded the two things, as many a saint does today, to his own loss and the dishonour of God.

Elihu then puts clearly before him that he had spoken wrongfully of God, as well as too highly of himself. "Behold, he findeth occasions against me." Was it comely so to speak of God? "He counteth me for his enemy." Elihu justly complained of such language. A saint should be reverent. "He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths. Behold, in this thou art not just." Is it possible that a godly man should allow his lips to accuse God of injustice? "I will answer thee, that God is greater

than man. Why dost thou strive against him?" The three friends had failed to convict Job rightly while suspecting him wrongfully. Not only was Job judging God, but also he was not subject to Him. There was insubmission of heart. If God was dealing with him, why did he not enquire of Him, instead of murmuring? "Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters. For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction."

In this very chapter then Elihu points out to Job a rather ordinary way of God's dealings, though not by any means an invariable one. God is not at all limited in His methods of reaching men, but can in divers ways act on the soul. Here Elihu begins at the beginning with the greatest propriety. He begins with the first work of God in the man who does not know Him. It is grace working to awaken an unconverted soul. The reason for the remark will appear presently. Such is the first instalment to the solution of the difficulty which all had felt; but as yet it remained entirely unsolved. "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." It is exactly what characterizes divine mercy in appealing to the unconverted man. He is carried away by his own will. But God knows how to bend or break it. "He keepeth back his soul from the pit" (such is the merciful object of God's intervention), "and his life from perishing by the sword." Here is more than a dream of the night or passing vision; here are corrective ways, as well as glimpses of God's light, or of His judgment that he was despising. "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: then he is gracious unto him."

It was of old then as now. God, who uses these outward means of dealing with a man, works by His word, and as an ordinary rule too by a messenger that He employs — an interpreter, as we are told, one among a thousand. "Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom" — a singularly vivid mode of presenting that which God was about to accomplish in due time, and not merely here in a typical form of promise. Here we have plain enough language — perhaps, indeed, as distinct words as any in the Old Testament, in anticipation of that infinite work which we now know to be finished in the cross of Christ.

What is the consequence then to the soul that thus bows to God while he listens to an interpreter, such as Elihu was himself? "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: he shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right."

Accordingly we find that there is not only grace on God's part, but there is wrought repentance on man's — a repentance which is given him just as truly as faith. This answers to grace; and the sinner confides in God, when He can have no confidence in the sinner. Grace puts God and man in their true place. The question in conversion is, whether man is brought down to distrust himself, and thankfully to receive the testimony of God. For the sinner awakened it is the only true confidence in God. And faith does thus confide, and shows it wherever the testimony truly enters by repentance. The language of his heart is, "I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not." And what does God in such a case? "He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the

light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man."

It is not a doctrine how grace arouses sinners from the sleep of death; but there is a sketch to the life of His detailed ways; the use of sickness and sorrow, as of dreams or visions; His employment, especially, of those who come with the light of God to deal with the conscience of man. All this is brought out graphically, and the effect produced — "To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." Indeed it speaks to the point so forcibly, that we know how often it is a favourite theme for those who preach the gospel to the unconverted even to this day. It is not meant, by any means, that Elihu's words furnish the fullest material or the deepest ground to preach from; but still it is a striking instance of living power that attaches to the earliest detail of God's way with a sinner in his awakening, that so many hundred, and indeed we may say two thousand, years before the gospel of God's grace was sent out, we should have so ample an anticipation by Elihu the interpreter that intervenes for the help of Job himself, converted as he was.

Elihu then takes his stand first on God's using dreams and visions, trouble and sickness, as well as more directly spiritual means for blessing to the soul. But it is for one that knows nothing of God, that he may be brought into the enjoyment of His favour. Surely it is His favour that was pleased thus to work in the man, but now he is made conscious of His favour as far as the revelation went.

Thus, although the world be a ruin before God, and although it is too evident that Satan is the restless worker of all evil here below, which is brought before us in the plainest manner in this book, God who is above it all, and who seems to take no part in it, carries on His gracious ways, and this to convert and deliver those who have been wretched, vile, and rebellious. It is not that retributive government to which man's heart would constantly limit God, but a government of souls while the world goes on in pride. Man likes to see people punished when they deserve it. It is natural to the heart. There is something in our nature which, when one is not actually suffering or dreading it, likes to find some (shall I say good or bad?) reason why another should be punished if he does suffer. This was at work in the three friends. But the book of Job is intended to show that they were all wrong in their application of this truth. Not that there will not be perfect retribution when the time comes for it, by the only One capable of carrying it out; but that it is only partial now. Christ alone will act perfectly in it by-and-by; but the time awaits His coming. There will be no adequate retributive government till the Lord Jesus takes the reins. He Himself was in this world the greatest of sufferers, as we know; and so the saints were sufferers before Christ, and still more since Christ. At any rate, the grace now displayed is such that God counts it a privilege given us to suffer for His sake; so that we surely ought to be able to bless God for it in a way that Job and no other could, because we have Christ fully revealed. Job did not know why his gracious Master gave him up to such tremendous and reiterated trouble. He had to learn why, and to learn it slowly and painfully, but blessedly at the end. We begin where he ended. Having in Christ the true light of God, we have not only His perfect love, but that there goes on a kind of divine government quite different from retribution; that there is a gracious dealing of God for the good of souls, and connected with it a moral government, unheeded by the world, which, spite of all appearances to the contrary, never fails. It is not a government consisting in what is public, or what natural men can judge of. It is none the less God dealing with souls, and to all that bow to His word and to Himself ineffable blessing, The discipline may be painful, not to say that it must be. What blessing can there be without it in our nature and in this world? The cross tells what it cost the Lord Himself to make our blessing a righteous thing; the manifestation of the same truth in the highest and deepest way. Where is there a single joy for us, once dead in sins but now saved by grace, that had not its root in the sorrows and sufferings of Him who bore our judgment? And so it is for those that learn what sin is in the presence of God.

But this is only the first part of God's government, what is taught by God's dealing with a sinner to bring him into the apprehension of his own guilt and need, as well as of God's goodness. He is thus delivered from going down into the pit.

But Elihu does not stop short with this. In chapter 34, he unfolds the truth farther. We may well suppose a pause. Was there anything to be answered now? Had they gleaned a better knowledge of the truth? We must wait for this. Not that Job may not have profited a little, but I fear that we cannot hope it of his friends. Till conscience judges self before God, the mind labours in vain in the field of God. Be assured that there never can be real stable blessing apart from the breaking down of ourselves.

"Furthermore Elihu answered and said" (he begins again), "Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat." He blames Job in very faithfulness, sprinkling reproof now and then with all these gracious words. Is not this too a needed and happy lesson for our souls? This is exactly what the apostle pressed on the Colossians so pithily. The speech of Elihu was always, we may say, "with grace, seasoned with salt." The seasoning is not wanting in this chapter. "Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment. Should I lie against my right?"

Indeed Job had been exceedingly unbroken. "My wound is incurable without transgression. What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water?" He does not say "iniquity," as Eliphaz did; but he does impute to Job that he "Drinketh up scorning like water." His words were unbecoming and irreverent. He did not attribute some secret crime to him which God must avenge unsparingly. But Job, sure of his integrity, was resting unduly on what he was by grace for God, of which He must make nothing in his own eyes. "Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity." He does not mean in his practice, but in his expressions; for Job had ventured to speak too unguardedly, provoked by Eliphaz and the others, who insisted that bad men were invariably punished, the good always prosperous in the world, to the overthrow of the afflicted Job's faith, if it had been possible. Job had met that, but much too intemperately, in honest hatred of their false principle; for Job gave the impression not only that he was just, but that God set it aside unjustly, and that there was no need whatever for his trial — language eminently calculated to encourage evil-doers. And what did he mean by saying that to delight oneself in companionship with God does no service? It is quite evident that neither one nor other had hit the mark. The Judge of all the earth could not be unjust; and was Job justified in such thoughts or words?

Elihu then condemns Job's words severely; but there he stops. It was not yet the time when God would call His people Israel as a whole to that special trial through which He had put Job. The Christian now is called to be always bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus; and I cannot but think that this goes more deeply than any trials then. But then Christ had not opened the door for it.

Meanwhile Job was singled out, not because there was something evil hidden beneath apparent blamelessness, but because he was the most upright man then living on earth. The Lord plainly indicates this as the true groundwork of his unexampled trial. Before angels, holy and evil, before God and man, it was proved that instead of serving God for gain or ease, he clung to God when all was lost, and no gain save the intensest suffering for soul and body, because he took it all from God, without in the least knowing why the blessed and blessing God should so give up to torture the one He loved. In the full conclave of heaven Satan sneered at the notion of such absolutely disinterested God-service. But Satan, as we saw, was utterly baffled; and God was proved dearer to him incomparably when he was suddenly thrown down to nothingness and suffering from all the prosperity which God had hitherto poured on him. God then drew out of Job's heart what neither he nor other men nor Satan had

suspected; and this by the presence and sympathy of three friends. Who could have looked for it? The patient man broke down in impatience, and, provoked by the misjudgment of his friends, gave way to the bitterness of his soul as if God were become his enemy, for he could not draw near to Him. There was just his sorrow — that thick cloud between his soul and God. And there was the reason why he was from time to time all but despairing. It was not as to death, which he knew would close his grievous calamities; but why was it that such a God should so deal with His servant Job?

Thus he had spoken so improperly of God on the one hand, and on the other so slightly of the way in which wicked people flourish in the world, that Elihu could not but say, "He goes in company with scorners," with the workers of iniquity, "and walketh with wicked men." It was just such language as would please them; it was language that would tend to weaken conscience, and to encourage sinners as much as it would grieve saints. "For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God. Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him." Quite true; but then God has His own time for doing all, and His own way, even short of that final retribution which awaits the workers of iniquity: "Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." Elihu holds to that firmly, as we have seen — the greatness of God that comes down in condescending mercy to bless man even in the sorrows of this world. He gives God His honour, and stands assured of His inflexible righteousness. "If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his Spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust. If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words." Then he shows how far Job was from the truth; for God not only deals with man, but as and when He pleases in His sovereign wisdom executes judgment on wickedness, even in this world. It is neither an invariable rule or facts, as the friends argued; nor, on the other hand, could Job rightly affirm that God is indifferent about it, as his words seemed to imply. That is, he corrects both to the end of the chapter.

Then again, in Job 35, he takes up his pretensions to superior right. "Elihu spake moreover, and said, Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?" Job really had ventured to speak crudely and arrogantly on this head. "For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin? I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee. Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him?" Thus he shows that it is not a question of man's profiting God, but of God's profiting man; for, besides what is due to Him — will, and love, and glory — impossible is it for man to walk in His ways without the richest recompense of blessing. In every possible sense it is God that giveth the increase. And this is independent of dispensation. It was neither the kingdom, when all will be ordered in righteousness, nor yet in the light, which could not be till the True Light shone. Still there was a witness of enjoyed favour and blessing from God for the soul, though not manifest to all. So the wickedness of man does not lower the majesty of God, but is ruin to him that walks in it; as we have seen that the obedience of man brings no profit to God, but ensures exceeding real and rich blessedness to him that is so led.

But now, in Job 36, comes in another weighty lesson. "Elihu also proceeded, and said, Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker." He always takes his stand upon that — the impossibility of God either saying or doing what was beneath Himself. "For truly my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee. Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any." There we have a beautiful intimation of the grace of God. "He is mighty in strength and wisdom. He

preserveth not the life of the wicked." He bears it. It is not, therefore, to be called preserving. "He giveth right to the poor. He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne." It does not matter whether it is the poor on the one hand, or the kings on the throne. They all come under the eye of God. "Yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted. And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity."

Here, I apprehend, it is not a question of the unconverted brought into God's favour; rather is it the discipline of the converted under His good hand. It is the ways of God, and the righteous government that He maintains with His own. But even such might slip aside. Alas! who does not know it? And here we see that from the very beginning the ways of God were substantially what they are now. I am speaking of His moral dealings with the individual soul; not of standing, or counsels, or power, or privileges. Of course, not the smallest comparison is intended as to the depth of the grace manifested) or with the glory now seen in Christ. Nothing of the kind is meant. But the great moral principles are most instructive; and as God from the beginning did deal with souls to convert them, so He did deal with His own to lead on and correct them. The discipline of His saints then is the chief subject that we find in this chapter. "If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge. But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them." It is not, of course, that every word of the chapter applies only to His saints; but just as in the New Testament we find that in the midst of a record of privileges that belong to those that are His there may be warning words about those that deceive, so it is found in the Old. "They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean. He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression. Even so would he have removed thee."

Now he applies the principles he had laid down to Job himself. "Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness. But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee. Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee. Will he esteem thy riches? no, not gold, nor all the forces of strength. Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place." For he had done so. "Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction. Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?" It is the teaching of God then that is the point pressed here; not merely God's saving a soul from going down into the pit, but the teaching of God. "Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?" It means, Who can say it to God? "Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold. Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off. Behold, God is great, and we know him not." And thus he continues through the chapter.

Job 37, after turning our ears in the chapter before to the ways of God in providence, which are manifestly righteous and good, mighty as He is, and especially in corrective blessing, where men rebel not to their own shame and ruin, finally turns our eyes to the wondrous works of God in the outward world, following up the close of Job 36, which singled out the rain and the thundercloud. These, I admit, are very far indeed from presenting the depth of the truth that the doctrine of Christ or His grace affords. It is not the unseen, but the visible. Here we can understand that we are in the infant days of even God's saints, when they spelled the vast letters of heaven and earth seen before the Scriptures were read. We are in these early seasons, when God was pleased to illustrate things by the speech which day unto day uttereth, not by the gospel preached to every creature, not by the Son that had

come down from heaven to show us the Father in Himself. For that very reason, because Christ was not here, the outward world is taken up to show God's majesty, faithfulness, and gracious power in all that surrounded man.

To what then have we come in the course of this book? What have we been taught by the help of Elihu? Much every way, I believe. Job had failed in understanding the purpose of God in that most pitiless storm to which he had been subjected. The friends of Job had failed far more seriously; for Job was rather negative at worst, while his friends were positively wrong at best, quite out of the mind and current of God. Elihu brings in, as far as man could in that day, the light of God. He shows that, instead of there being mere judicial dealing, there is a righteous and gracious discipline on God's part, which, as it deals with the unconverted to break him down, and save his soul, so also addresses itself to the converted for his correction where he has slipped aside, and encourages him where he needs to be quickened in his pace while following the Lord. And so he spreads out before him and vindicates the worthy ways of God, reproving Job's self-righteousness and impatience and irreverence, but eschewing any such imputations on Job as his friends had allowed; for we have seen Job in the agony of grief, again and again giving way to the sense of desertion by God, and then uttering words rash and violent, but soon again asking pardon after each fresh outbreak, when stung to the quick by the deeply cutting words of his friends — the more cutting because they seemed quiet, but not the less severely wounding to his open and generous spirit. In Elihu we have had quite another tone and judgment — a man who does not spare impropriety, or conceal its heinous consequences; but who can see in the darkest troubles the gracious end of God in His ways, even with the unconverted, and particularly so with His saints.

What remains then? There was only one that could possibly add weight to the interpreter. There was but one thing more that fitly concludes and crowns the intervention of Elihu. And what was that? The incomparable favour that Job had also in a frantic way implored. He asked that a man rather than He might meet him; but he asked that he might find God too. And so he does. God appears. Jehovah Himself gives His answer from the whirlwind. It is not for us to say what the manifestation may have been; but, as there should be nothing more certain than that the Lord did answer Job, and this in the hearing of them all, so His words should be conclusive on this great question. How it was done would be mere speculation, and presumptuous too. That it really was, it is for us to believe; and this is indeed the special value in the close of the book of Job, that God does not wait till the day of judgment to decide where there is faith to look for Him. Only now it is His word, and in no way a theophany. Had Job a desire to meet God? Jehovah meets him here when Elihu's word had done its work.

And you will observe therefore that it is not merely God or Eloah that is employed now. Throughout the book in general there is God or the Almighty or the like, with only one exception. (Job 12: 9) In all the discussions of the book Jehovah with that exception appears not; but now, as at the beginning, it is Jehovah. This surely has great moment. The historian or writer was familiar with that revelation of Himself to the children of Israel. Not that the word Jehovah was absolutely a secret before Moses, but that it thenceforward was the name of special relationship. Job and his friends habitually spoke of God, of the Creator, and even as the fathers knew Him (Shaddai); but here there is more made known. It is the God of Israel who shows His tender mercy to the Gentile that sought Him and the revelation of His mind.

Observe also, it is not an abstract revelation. It is a distinct dealing with the case before him. The godly man had been utterly crushed, and the presence of his misjudging friends had aggravated his anguish to the core. If he had indulged in wistful longing that he could find God, Jehovah does answer him: "Then Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by

words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins." He had asked God, challenging Him to such a meeting; and God replies: "Gird up now thy loins like a man." It is not now, "What is mortal man?" as Job had said, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" He used the word "man" in the sense of mortality or weakness. But God employs a very different word: "Gird up now thy loins like a hero;" for this is pretty much the force of the word. It means a strong man. He had challenged God to this judicial trial, and he was now heard: "For I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding." Nowhere. "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?" He is silent again. Not a word did he know; and what is more, here are these words at the beginning of the world's history — not so very long after the flood, and after man began to spread himself a second time over the earth. If man boasts abundantly of his acquisitions and his skill of knowledge, science, and civilization since, why not he answer the challenge of God now?

The wisest of men are the most ready to own their incompetence, and how little they know. This at least they know, that they cannot answer God. I dare say there may be men so ignorant as to fancy that they could. It is precisely in this way that ignorance often betrays itself: An ignorant man may not flatter himself, perhaps, that he can answer; but, unacquainted with the limits of human power and knowledge, he fancies that there are behind him those of reputation who can. Some doubt not for a moment that it must be an easy affair, in the present march of intellect, and in material science above all, for somebody wiser than themselves to answer questions as to nature asked three or four thousand years ago.

The truth then is, that God appears on the scene for the express purpose of annihilating the pretensions of man; and here in the most magnificent language, as far as I know, that was ever uttered on such subjects — language worthy of Him who is said to have spoken — Jehovah appears to put Job in his true place, and that place was dust and ashes, morally death, where self was to be withered up before Him. Who and what was Job to speak or murmur against God? Jehovah only touches the skirts of His power, the outer domain of His glory; yet what had man to say? What could Job answer? Not a word. Such seems to be the force of it. And did he who could not explain God's least things presume to judge the deepest part of His ways and designs? For is there anything so deep as what concerns His purposes, affections, and ways with the saints that He loves, and this in the face of their weakness and of a mighty and subtle foe?

You have heard a saying not unworthy of a good and great man, "that all matter never produces mind, and all mind never produces love."* God had acted on the same principle here, in these words taking up but a small part of His wisdom and power in the outward world; and this just because they are so insignificant an object compared with the ways of His grace. They are no more than what, so to speak, His fingers have formed. If I look at the heavens, the firmament showeth His handiwork, as David says in Psalm 19. Do you suppose that His ways with us are the mere fruit of such skill? They speak of incomparably more. His heart, His thoughts, His plan of love and goodness — all that God is — has come out in the blessing of His saints, because He has Himself appeared on their behalf in Christ, the One who is not merely the alone true, but also the full, expression of what God is in Himself and towards us. Here He does not, of course, bring out, even by the most distant anticipation, what was to be unfolded in the New Testament. He does refer, as we have seen, to the external manifestation of His power and glory: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Who shut up the sea with

doors, when it brake forth?" etc. It did not matter whether He pointed up to the heavens, or whether He looked down into the sea: in every part of the creation man's ignorance and powerlessness are evident. No answer to a single question of Jehovah could be given. "When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" (Job 38: 4-11.)

* "Tous les corps, le firmament, les étoiles, la terre et les royaumes, ne valent pas le moindre des esprits; car il connoît tout cela et soimême; et le corps, rien. Et tous les corps, et tous les esprits ensemble, et toutes leurs productions, ne valent pas le moindre mouvement de charité; car elle est d'un ordre infiniment plus élevé. De tous les corps ensemble on ne sauroit tirer la moindre pensée: cela est impossible, et d'un autre ordre. Tous les corps et les esprits ensemble ne sauroient produire un mouvement de vrai charité; cela est impossible, et d'un autre ordre tout surnaturel." — OEUVRES DE B. PASCAL (*Pensees*), t. ii. p. 297: ed. Paris, 1819.

Thus it is evident that God is here bringing to nothing all the proud talk of Job. But He does not content Himself with demonstrating man's littleness by that which is vast; He takes up what we might think comparatively small things. After traversing the immense heavens and the uncontrollable sea, and then again the treasures of the snow and the hail, of the lightning and the waters, He notices various heavenly bodies in detail; but descends at length towards the end of the chapter to the little things of nature, where man is equally at fault. Thus it matters little whether we gaze at the greatest, or whether we look into the least, of the works of God; everywhere meets us that which is entirely beyond the ken of man. "Who can number," says He, "the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, when the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together? Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions, when they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat." What could better expose the futility of man's arraigning God? Job had even pretended to judge the depths of God morally; but he could not face, nor had he the slightest adequate idea of, what God is in the least part of His universe.

In the next chapter, Jehovah carries on the same appeal to Job, here taking up animate nature more fully. What did he know of the mountain goats and the hinds? what control had he over the wild ass or the wild ox? Let him weigh the sovereignty of God as to the ostrich and the war-horse, the hawk and the eagle. Into this we need not enter more, however beautiful may be the details.

Let me only draw your attention to His putting the question pointedly in Job 40 to Job in person. "Moreover Jehovah answered Job, and said, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?" He ought to be able, if he judge God. This is precisely what fills Job with shame: "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?" Job had contended with the Almighty. "He that reproveth God, let him answer it." And Job does answer. This is important as connected with the unravelling of all at the close. Job was thoroughly brought down in his own conceit, and ashamed of having murmured against God and His ways without understanding the least of them. Having accepted this, and bowed to God, assured in his soul that God must have a most worthy and gracious end in all his troubles, Job now does answer. This is important. He no longer holds his peace like the others. "Then Job answered Jehovah, and said, Behold, I am vile" — not a word more about Jehovah now — "I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further."

Thus he has been brought to nothing before God, and to this humiliation as to himself with

confidence in God; for a mere withering up of man would be little but despair, unless the heart turned in confidence to God. And this is of great moment in our practical walk. Take for instance the principle of separation, without which there can be no real holiness. But what is the worth of separation, brethren, if it spring not from communion with God? Be assured there is no small danger when people get the habit of harping on separation without dwelling on its only divine power. Severed from that gracious spring and motive, it becomes not only hollow, but really repulsive. Those formed by a dry principle are mere Pharisees, instead of witnessing Christ, the Holy, the True. (Rev. 3) Thus it is of deep consequence that we should always have not merely the outward manifestation, but the root, which alone gives divine sap and the real pith.

Here then, in Job's case, we have both manifested — his own vileness, but his confidence in God; and it was the latter, we may be very sure, that made him feel and own his vileness. His grace is the power. The last thing a man comes to is to think ill of himself.

Again, in the last two chapters of Jehovah's answer (Job 40, Job 41), on which I must be very brief, we have God surveying, not the whole realm of nature, but quite enough, and more than enough, to convict Job of ignorance and incapacity to speak before God. This he needed to learn in order that he might distrust himself as well as confide in God. In these He takes up, as we may see, only two of His creatures — one, a powerful beast of the earth, in Job 40; the other, an equally mighty monster of the deep, in Job 41. There is behemoth on the one hand, and leviathan on the other. The two chapters indeed give the finest description that ever was written of these works of God.

But His object seems to be not the least that for which men use them. Men talk as if God's object was merely to occupy us with His works. God, on the contrary, brings forward His works to turn us away from our thoughts and bow us to Himself; for if the works of God be so wondrous, who is He that wrought the work, and what is man if he dare to judge such a God? This is the point in hand. God's object therefore, in describing them in magnificent language, is not in the least to induce us to rest there, making them a study so as to occupy our minds and arrest our souls; but the very reverse. He would turn us away from ourselves to confide in Himself. Do you think that after this Job was occupied with behemoth or with leviathan? Not at all, but with God; and this was the design of it all. The people, therefore, that spend their time and thoughts on the wonders of creation, and cite these chapters to that end, do evidently show that they have not entered into the purpose of God in the least. It was not even so in the Old Testament, still less in the New.

Let us now briefly turn to the account of the final result. "Then Job answered Jehovah, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not." He takes up the humbling words that God addressed to him in order to apply them to himself. This was right; he owns they were "things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me." So had God before said, and he repeats them to his own humiliation. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee." It was nothing external now; no mere distant rumour. "Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself." Do you think that searching into the structure or habits of behemoth and leviathan would have led to anything of the sort? Assuredly not. He had to do with God Himself, who used them for the express purpose, and had thereby turned Job from all to Himself. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So in the New Testament the Lord used the crowing of a cock to convict the great apostle of the circumcision.

And it was so that, after Jehovah had spoken these words unto Job, Jehovah said to Eliphaz the

Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends." He singles out the oldest of them, who, after all, had spoken with the least acrimony of the three, but still guiltily; for he as the wisest ought to have known best. "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" What is that especially which God singles out as the right thing? For on the surface of the book one might think that Job had been saying as many wrong things about God as the rest. Indeed it would appear to a superficial reader that Job had spoken more rashly than either Eliphaz or his two friends. But the truth is that the grace of God bears much more tenderly than men suppose with the random words that men utter under the pressure of so terrible a trial as that of Job.

Do not think that this in any way makes light of Job's faultiness. I repeat that there is all the difference in the world between three men that were not in trial and the man who was. It is all well for those that are not suffering to find fault with the embittered words of one under such pressure. But God felt gravely as to men, who assuming to speak properly, underneath that calm surface wholly failed to apply the truth of God to the case. And let me say that this is much to be observed, and can only be through the Spirit. Abstract truth is altogether in vain for the saints of God. There may be more harm done by things which are true, misunderstood and misapplied, than by many a thing that is false; because misapplied truth gives the apparent authority of God to an error, which has all the more weight because it comes as the truth. If a foolish thing be said, or one unequivocally false, people despise it; but no believer can slight the truth of God. If the truth of God, therefore, be wrongly used — if it be applied to crush one that is an object of intense interest to God at the time, how foreign and offensive to His mind! How hateful that His name should be so perverted! They were guilty of this. How often is the truth of God now used to exalt self; yet how utterly opposed to His character and will! Had they not done both these things?

The mistakes of Job are palpable enough. Wherein then was the thing that was right? There was this that we can readily see. It was assuredly to say the thing that was right when he humbled himself utterly before God. I do not say it was the only thing right in Job; but this none need hesitate to accept or endorse. Job had said that which was right in his last words, his answer to Jehovah's appeal to him. There he was brought into the presence of God. There he does speak as became a man that had right feelings at the bottom of his heart; but at the surface, ah, there was many a thing wrong! But now Jehovah brings to light the depths of his heart. Now he himself had got there at length. All the rest, all that was superficial, had been judged. Consequently here we may be sure there was what was right to speak of, none else now: Job's justifying God at his own expense; Job's maintaining, not his righteousness now, but his own nothingness and vileness in dust and ashes before God whom he owns unreservedly to be perfectly right.

Then God tells Eliphaz to take unto him "seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering." At this time it does not appear that there were sin-offerings; and this is no small intimation of the exceeding early date of the book, or rather of the circumstances recorded in it. It must have been before the law. In Levitical days there would have been of course a sin-offering offered; but before the law had brought out that careful and minute prescription of what was required in the case of sin, the burnt-offering regularly was offered. So we find at the beginning, in Noah's time, as in other cases. One might have thought otherwise that the sin-offering ought to have been here; but God speaks of burnt-offerings in that day.

This He prescribes as a solemn confession of sin: "Lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job." It was done of course accordingly. "And Jehovah turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends:" a beautiful

expression of the work of grace. It was not merely that He turned their punishment away when Job prayed, but He turned Job's own captivity when his heart went out on their behalf. Job himself now was consciously delivered. He had felt himself a captive held in a vice up to this time, one may say; but Jehovah turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. His heart was active in grace; he had seen grace, and now he expressed grace, and this too for the very people that had wounded him most. Job never had been so grievously wounded by any in the world as by his three friends. They were now the very persons for whom he prayed. And God loved to see it, and turned his captivity when he prayed for them.

But Jehovah also gave Job twice as much as he had before; for the book could not end without a witness of God's goodness even outwardly. Though it be not yet the time for careful adjusting of all that is crooked, or of remembering every good or righteous deed, yet Jehovah does not allow His saint to go without a proof of His interest and of His blessing. Job therefore received even then this testimony of what God is. He did not forget the man who had passed through such a storm of trial, and who had held to Him when He seemed against His servant, though obliged to learn what he was himself when the devil left, after the first question had been decided against the enemy. But Job only held fast God because God held fast Job. Such was the real root of the matter. It is grace after all that gives and keeps integrity. But God was not unrighteous to forget Job. He showed His sense of all, even before the day of requital came. The fullest testimony of respect and confidence poured in from all his relatives and even his acquaintances. "Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days."

May the Lord then bless His own word, and bless His saints who deeply need to cleave to that word in this day of increasing confusion and unbelief.