

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JOB'S RESIGNATION.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 22ND, 1896,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, March 11th, 1886.

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”—
[Job i. 20—22.]

JOB was very much troubled, and he did not try to hide the outward signs of his sorrow. A man of God is not expected to be a stoic. The grace of God takes away the heart of stone out of his flesh, but it does not turn his heart into a stone. The Lord's children are the subjects of tender feelings; when they have to endure the rod, they feel the smart of its strokes; and Job felt the blows that fell upon him. Do not blame yourself if you are conscious of pain and grief, and do not ask to be made hard and callous. That is not the method by which grace works; it makes us strong to bear trial, but we have to bear it; it gives us patience and submission, not stoicism. We feel, and we benefit by the feeling, and there is no sin in the feeling, for in our text we are expressly told of the patriarch's mourning, “In all this Job sinned not.” Though he was the great mourner—I think I might truly call him the chief mourner—of Scripture, yet there was no sin in his mourning. Some there are who say that, when we are heavy of heart, we are necessarily in a wrong spirit, but it is not so. The apostle Peter saith, “If need be ye are in heaviness through manifold trials,” but he does not imply that the heaviness is wrong. There are some who will not cry when God chastiseth them, and some who will not yield when God smiteth them. We do not wish to be like them; we are quite content to have the suffering heart that Job had, and to feel the bitterness of spirit, the anguish of soul which racked that blessed patriarch.

No. 2,457.

Furthermore, Job made use of very manifest signs of mourning. He not only felt sorrow within his heart, but he indicated it by rending his mantle, by shaving off the hair of his head, and by casting himself prone upon the ground, as if he sought to return to the womb of mother-earth as he said that he should; and I do not think we are to judge those of our brethren and sisters who feel it right to wear the common tokens of mourning. If they give them any kind of solace in their sorrow, let them have them. I believe that, at times, some go to excess in this respect, but I dare not pass sentence upon them because I read here, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." If the crape should be worn for a very long while, and if the sorrow should be nursed unduly, as others judge, yet we cannot set up a standard of what is right for others, each one must answer for his conduct to his own Lord. I remember the gentleness of Jesus towards mourners rather than his severity in dealing with them; he hath much pity for our weakness, and I wish that some of his servants had more of the same spirit. If you who are sorrowing could be strong, if the weeds of mourning could be laid aside, it might indicate a greater acquiescence in the divine will; but if you do not feel that it should be so with you, God forbid that we should rebuke you while we have such a text as this before us, "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground;" and "in all this Job sinned not."

I want you, however, to notice that mourning should always be sanctified with devotion. It is very pleasant to observe that, when Job had rent his mantle after the Oriental custom, and shaved his head (in a manner which, in his day, was not forbidden, but which under the Mosaic law was prohibited, for they might not cut their hair by way of mourning as the heathen did), and, after the patriarch had fallen down upon the ground, he "worshipped." Not, he grumbled; not, he lamented; much less that he began to imprecate and use language unjustifiable and improper; but he "fell down upon the ground, and worshipped." O dear friend, when thy grief presses thee to the very dust, worship there! If that spot has come to be thy Gethsemane, then present there thy "strong crying and tears" unto thy God. Remember David's words, "Ye people, pour out your hearts,"—but do not stop there, finish the quotation,—"Ye people, pour out your hearts before him." Turn the vessel upside down; it is a good thing to empty it, for this grief may ferment into something more sour. Turn the vessel upside down, and let every drop run out; but let it be before the Lord. "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us." When you are bowed down beneath a heavy burden of sorrow, then take to worshipping the Lord, and especially to that kind of worshipping which lies in adoring God, and in making a full surrender of yourself to the divine will, so that you can say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." That kind of worshipping which lies in the subduing of the will, the arousing of the affections, the bestirring of the whole mind and heart, and the presentation of oneself unto God over again in solemn consecration, must tend to sweeten sorrow, and to take the sting out of it.

It will also greatly alleviate our sorrow if we then fall into serious

contemplations, and begin to argue a little, and to bring facts to bear upon our mind. Evidently Job did so, for the verses of my text are full of proofs of his thoughtfulness. The patriarch brings to his own mind at least four subjects for earnest consideration, out of which he drew great comfort. In like manner, you will do well, not merely to sit still and say, "I shall be comforted," but you must look about you for themes upon which to think and meditate to profit. Your poor mind is apt to be driven to and fro by stress of your sorrow; if you can get anchor-hold of some great clearly-ascertained truths, about which you can have no possible doubt, you may begin to derive consolation from them. "While I was musing," said David, "the fire burned," and it comforted and warmed him. Remember how he talked to himself as to another self, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." There are two Davids, you see, talking to one another, and cheering one another! A man ought always to be good company for himself, and he ought also to be able to catechise himself; he who is not fit to be his own schoolmaster is not fit to be schoolmaster to other people. If you cannot catechise your own heart, and drill a truth into your own soul, you do not know how to teach other people. I believe that the best preaching in the world is that which is done at home. When a sorrowing spirit shall have comforted itself, it will have learned the art of consoling other people. Job is an instance of this kind of personal instruction; he has three or four subjects which he brings before his own mind, and these tend to comfort him.

I. The first is, to my mind, **THE EXTREME BREVITY OF LIFE.**

Observe what Job says, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." He came forth, and he expected to go back to mother-earth, and there to lie. That is Job's idea of life, and a very true one it is, "*I come forth, and I go back again.*" One asked a man of God, one day, "Will you tell me what life is?" The man of God stopped just a moment, and then deliberately walked away. When his friend met him, the following day, he said to him, "Yesterday, I asked you a question, and you did not answer it." "But I did answer it," said the godly man. "No," rejoined the other, "you were there, and you were gone." "Well, you asked me what life was, and that was my answer. Could I have answered your question better?" He answered and acted wisely, for that is a complete summary of our life here below,—We come, and we go. We appear for a brief moment, and then we vanish away. I often, in my own mind, compare life to a procession. I see you, dear friends, going by me one by one, and vanishing, and others come on behind; but the point that I am apt to forget—and you do the same,—is that I am in the procession, and you are in it, too. We all count all men mortal but ourselves, yet all are marching towards that country from whose bourn no traveller returns.

Well now, because life is so short, do you not see where the comfort comes? Job says to himself, "I came, and I shall return; then why should I worry myself about what I have lost? I am going to be here only a little while, then what need have I of all those camels and sheep?"

So, brethren, what God has given us, is so much spending-money on our journey, to pay our own fares, and to help our fellow-travellers; but we do not, any of us, need as much substance as Job had. He had seven thousand sheep. Dear me! what a task it must have been to drive and to feed such a large flock! "And three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen!" That is, a thousand oxen. "And five hundred she asses, and a very great household." Our proverb says, "The more servants, the more plagues;" and I am sure it is true that the more camels, the more horses, the more cows, the more of such things that a man has, the more there is to look after, and to cause him trouble. So Job seems to say to himself, "I am here for such a little time, why should I be carried away, as with a flood, even when these things are taken from me? I come and I go; let me be satisfied if other things come and go. If my earthly stores vanish, well, I shall vanish, too. They are like myself; they take to themselves wings, and fly away; and by-and-by I too shall take to myself wings, and I shall be gone." I have heard of one who called life, "the long disease of life"; and it was so to him, for, though he did a great work for his Master, he was always sickly. Well, who wants a long disease? "There's the respect that makes calamity of so long life." We want rather to feel that it is not long, that it is short, and to set small store by all things here below, and to regard them as things which, like ourselves, appear but for a time, and soon shall be gone.

Further, Job seems especially to dwell with comfort upon the thought, "*I shall return to the earth, from which all the particles of my body originally came; I shall return thither.*" "Ah!" said one, when he had seen the spacious and beautiful gardens of a wealthy man, "these are the things that make it hard to die." You recollect how the tribe of Gad and the tribe of Reuben went to Moses, and said, "If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan." Of course, they did not want to cross the Jordan if they could get all their possessions on the other side. But Job had not anything this side Jordan, he was cleaned right out, so he was willing to go. And, really, the losses that a man has, which make him "desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better," are real gains. What is the use of all that clogs us here? A man of large possessions reminds me of my experience when I have gone to see a friend in the country, and he has taken me across a ploughed field, and I have had two heavy burdens of earth, one on each foot, as I have plodded on. The earth has clung to me, and made it hard walking. It is just so with this world, its good things hamper us, clog us, cling to us, like thick clay; but when we get these hampering things removed, we take comfort in the thought, "We shall soon return to the earth whence we came." We know that it is not mere returning to earth, for we possess a life that is immortal, we are looking forward to spending it in the true land that floweth with milk and honey, where, like Daniel, we shall stand in our lot at the end of the days; therefore, we feel not only resigned to return to the womb of mother-earth, but sometimes we even long for the time of our return to come. A dear servant of God, whom you would all recognize if I mentioned his

name, was talking with me concerning our dear departed brother, Hugh Stowell Brown, and he said, "All the brethren of my age and yours seem to be going home; they are passing away, the fathers and the leaders are going, and I could almost wish," he added, "that our Heavenly Father would put my name down as the next to go." I said that I hoped the Lord would not do so, but that our brother might be spared to labour a while longer here; but that, if I might put in another name, I would plead for my own to go in there instead of his. Happily, we have nothing to do with the date of our home-going, it is out of our hands; yet we are glad to feel that, when the time of our departure shall arrive, it will be no calamity, but a distinct advancement, for the Master to bid us to return to the dust whence we came. "Return, ye children of men," he will say, and we will joyfully answer, "Yes, Father, here we are, glad to stretch our wings, and fly straight to yonder world of joy, expecting that even our poor bodies, by-and-by, at the trump of the archangel, shall come back to thee, and we shall be like thine only-begotten Son, when we shall see him as he is."

II. Secondly, Job seems to comfort himself by noticing THE TENURE OF HIS EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. "Naked," says he, "came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither."

He feels himself to be very poor, everything is gone, he is stripped; yet he seems to say, "*I am not poorer now than I was when I was born.*" I had nothing then, not even a garment to my back but what the love of my mother provided for me. I was helpless then; I could not do anything for myself whatever." One said to me, the other day, "All is gone, sir, all is gone, except health and strength." Yes, but we had not as much as that when we were born. We had no strength, we were too weak to perform the least though most necessary offices for our poor tender frame. David often very sweetly dwells upon his childhood, and still more upon his infancy; and we shall do well to imitate him. Old men sometimes arrive at a second childhood. Do not be afraid, brother, if that is your case; you have gone through one period already that was more infantile than your second one can be, you will not be weaker then than you were at first. Suppose that you and I should be brought to extreme weakness and poverty, we shall neither be weaker nor poorer than we were then. "But I had a mother," says one. Well, there are some children who lose their mother in their very birth; but if you had a mother to care for you then, you have a Father to care for you now; and, as a child of God, you surely feel that your mother was but the secondary agent to watch over you in your weakness; and God who gave that love to her, and moved her to care for you, will be sure to find that same love which flowed out of him into her still stored up in his own bosom, and he will see you through. Do not be afraid, my brother, my sister, the Lord will see you through. It is wonderful that, after God has been gracious to us for fifty years, we cannot trust him for the rest of our lives; and as for you who are sixty, seventy, or eighty years of age, what! has he brought you thus far to put you to shame? Did he bear you through that very weakest part of your life, and do you think he will now forsake you? David said, "I was cast upon thee from the womb," as if then he had none but God to help him; and

will not he who took care of us then take care of us even to the end? Ay, that he will; wherefore, let us be of good courage, and let the poverty and weakness of our infancy, as we think of it, cheer us if we are weak and poor now.

Then Job adds, "However poor I may be, I am not as poor as I shall be, for naked shall I return to mother-earth. *If I have but little now, I shall soon have still less.*" We have heard of a rustic who, when dying, put a crown-piece into his mouth, because he said that he would not be without money in another world; but then he was a clown, and everyone knew how foolish was his attempt thus to provide for the future. There have been stories told of persons who have had their gold sewn up in their shrouds, but they took not a penny with them for all their pains. Nothing can be taken with us; we must go back to the earth, the richest as poor as the poorest, and the poorest no poorer, really, than the richest. The dust of great Cæsar may help to stop a hole through which the blast blows, and the dust of his slave cannot be put to more ignoble uses. No, poor and weak as we may be, we are not as poor and weak as we shall be by-and-by; so let us just solace ourselves with this reflection. The two ends of our life are nakedness; if the middle of it should not always be scarlet and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, let us not wonder; and if it should seem to be all of a piece, let us not be impatient or complaining.

I want you to notice, also, what I think really was in Job's mind, that, notwithstanding that he was but dust at the beginning, and would be dust at the end, yet, still, there was a Job who existed all the while. "I was naked, but *I was*; naked shall I return thither, but *I shall be there.*" Some men never find themselves till they have lost their goods. They, themselves, are hidden away, like Saul, among the stuff; their true manhood is not to be seen, because they are dressed so finely that people seem to respect them, when it is their clothes that are respected. They appear to be somebodies, but they are nobodies, notwithstanding all that they possess. The Lord brought his servant Job to feel, "Yes, when I had those camels, when I had those she asses, when I had those sheep, when I had those men-servants, they were not myself; and now that they are gone, I am the same Job that ever I was. The sheep were not a part of myself, the camels were not a part of myself; I, Job, am here still, lying in my wholeness and integrity before God, as much a servant of Jehovah, in my nakedness, as I was when I wrapped myself in ermine." O sirs, it is a grand thing when God helps us to live above what we have, and above what we have not! Then it is that he brings us to know ourselves as we are, in our God, not dependent upon externals, but maintained and strengthened by food of which the world knoweth nothing, which cometh not from milk of kine. Then are we robed in a garment that cometh not from fleece of sheep, and we possess a life that dependeth not on the swift dromedary, a true existence that is neither in flocks, nor herds, nor pastures, nor fields, but delights itself in God, and stays itself on the Most High. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither," says Job, but "still it is I, the blessed of God, his same

devoted servant, who will trust him to the end." That was good talk for Job's heart, was it not? Though it may not all have been said in words, I doubt not that something like it, or something much better, passed through the patriarch's mind, and thus he solaced himself in the hour of his sorrows and losses.

III. But now, thirdly, and perhaps the most blessed thing, is what Job said concerning THE HAND OF GOD IN ALL THINGS: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

I am so pleased to think that Job recognized *the hand of God everywhere giving*. He said, "The Lord gave." He did not say, "I earned it all." He did not say, "There are all my hard-earned savings gone." "Ah, me!" he might have said, "all the care for those sheep, and the dreadful expense of those camels, and the trouble that I have been at with those oxen; and now they are all gone, it does seem hard." He does not put it so, but he says, "The Lord gave them to me; they were a gift, and though they are gone, they were a gift from him who had a right to take them back, for all he gives is only lent. 'A loan should go laughing home;' and if God lent me these things, and now has called them back, I will bless his name for having let me have them so long."

What a sweet thing it is, dear brothers and sisters, if you can feel that all you have in this world is God's gift to you! You cannot feel that, you know, if you came by it dishonestly. No, it is not God's gift then, and it brings no blessing with it; but *that which is honestly the result and fruit of your cheerful industry*, you may consider has come from God; and if, in addition, you have really sanctified your substance, and have given your fair proportion to help the poor and the needy, as Job did, if you can say that you have caused the widow's heart to sing for joy when you relieved her wants, then all that you have is God's gift. God's providence is man's inheritance, and your inheritance has come to you from God's providence. Look at it all as God's gift; it will sweeten even that little loaf of bread and that tiny pat of butter,—which is all you will have to eat to-day or to-morrow,—if you regard it as God's gift. It will soften that hard bed upon which you lie, wishing that you were somewhat better covered from the cold, if you think of it as God's gift. A slender income will give us much content if we can see that it is God's gift.

Let us not only regard our money and our goods as God's gifts; but also our wife, our children, our friends. What precious gifts they often are! A man is truly rich who has a good help-meet; he is really rich who has godly children about him. Even though they may cost him much care, he is abundantly repaid by their affection; and if they grow up in the fear of the Lord, what a choice gift they are! Let us look at them all as God's gifts; let us not see them or anything else about the house without feeling, "My Father gave me this." Surely it will tend to draw the teeth of every sharp affliction if, while you have enjoyed the possession of your good things, you have seen God's hand in giving them to you.

Alas! some of you do not know anything about God. What you have, is not counted by you as God's gift. You miss the very sweetness

and joy of life by missing this recognition of the divine hand in giving us all good things richly to enjoy.

But then, *Job equally saw God's hand in taking them away.* If he had not been a believer in Jehovah, he would have said, "Oh, those detestable Sabeans! Somebody ought to go and cut to pieces those Chaldeans." That is often our style, is it not?—finding fault with the secondary agents. Job has nothing to say about the Sabeans or the Chaldeans, or the wind, or the lightning. "The Lord," said he, "the Lord hath taken away." I believe that Satan intended to make Job feel that it was God who was at work when his messenger said, "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep." "Ah!" said Satan, "he will see that God is against him." The devil did not succeed as he thought he had done, for Job could see that it was God's hand, and that took away the sting of the stroke. "The Lord hath taken away." Aaron held his peace when he knew that the Lord had done it, and the psalmist said, "I was dumb with silence, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;" and Job felt just that. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Never mind the secondary agents, do not spend your strength in kicking against this bad man or that; he is responsible to God for all the evil he has done, but at the back of these free agents there is a divine predestination, there is an over-ruling hand, and even that which in men is evil may, nevertheless, in another light, be traced up distinctly to the hand of the Most High. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away."

Will you recollect that with regard to your children? If Job had lost his eldest son alone, he might have needed much grace to say, "The Lord gave him, and the Lord hath taken him away." Job *had* lost his eldest son, but he had lost six more sons, and he had lost his three daughters as well. I have known a mother say, "My two dear boys sickened and died within a week; I am the most tried woman who ever lived." Not quite, not quite, dear friend; there have been others who have excelled you in this respect. Job lost his ten children at a stroke. O Death, what an insatiable archer thou wast that day, when ten must fall at once! Yet Job says, "The Lord hath taken away." That is all he has to say about it: "The Lord hath taken away." I need not repeat to you the story of the gardener who missed a choice rose, but who could not complain because the master had plucked it. Do you feel that it is just so with all that you have, if he takes it? Oh, yes! why should he not take it? If I were to go about my house, and take down an ornament or anything from the walls, would anybody say a word to me? Suppose my dear wife should say to the servant, "Where has that picture gone?" and the maid replied, "Oh, the master took it!" Would she find fault? Oh, no! If it had been a servant who took it down, or a stranger who removed it, she might have said something; but not when I took it, for it is mine. And surely we will let God be Master in his own house; where we are only the children, he shall take whatever he pleases of all he has lent us for a while. It is easy to stand here and say this; but, brothers and sisters, let us try to say it if it should ever come to us as a matter of fact that the

Lord who gave should also take away. I think Job did well to call attention to this blessed truth, that the hand of God is everywhere at work, whether in giving or in taking away; I do not know anything that tends more to reconcile us to our present sorrows, and losses, and crosses, than to feel, "God has done it all. Wicked men were the agents, but still God himself has done it. There is a great mystery about it which I cannot clear up, and I do not want to clear it up. God has done it, and that is enough for me. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.'"

IV. Job's last comfort lay in this truth, that GOD IS WORTHY TO BE BLESSED IN ALL THINGS: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Dear friends, *let us never rob God of his praise, however dark the day is.* It is a funeral day, perhaps; but should not God be praised, when there is a funeral, as well as when there is a wedding? "Oh, but I have lost everything!" And is this one of the days when there is no praise due to God? Most of you know that the Queen's taxes must be paid; and our great King's revenue has the first claim upon us. Let us not rob our King of the revenue of his praise. "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised." "Oh, but I have lost a child!" Yes, but God is to be praised. "But I have lost my mother." Yes, but God is to be praised. "I have a bad headache." Yes, but God is to be praised. One said to me, one evening, "We should have family prayer, my dear sir, but it is rather late; do you feel too tired to conduct it?" "No," I said, "I never was too tired yet to pray with my brethren, and I hope I never shall be." If it is the middle of the night, let us not go to bed without prayer and praise, for we must not rob God of his glory. "There is a mob in the street," but we must not rob God of his glory. "Our goods are getting cheaper and cheaper, and we shall be ruined in the market," but let us not rob God of his glory. "There is going to be, I do not know what, happening by-and-by." Yes, but we must not rob God of his glory.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job means that *the Lord is to be blessed both for giving and taking.* "The Lord gave," blessed be his name. "The Lord hath taken away," blessed be his name. Surely it has not come to this among God's people, that he must do as we like, or else we will not praise him. If he does not please us every day, and give way to our whims, and gratify our tastes, then we will not praise him. "Oh, but I do not understand his dealings," says one. And are you really such a stranger to God, and is God such a stranger to you, that, unless he enters into explanations, you are afraid that he is not dealing fairly with you? O sir, have you known the Lord for twenty years, and cannot you praise him for everything? Brethren, some of us have known him forty years now, perhaps some of you have known the Lord for fifty years; are you always wanting to have chapter, and verse, and explanations from him before you will praise him? No, no, I hope we have gone far beyond that stage.

God is, however, *specially to be praised by us whenever we are moved by the devil to curse.* Satan had said to the Lord concerning Job, "Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face;" and it seemed as if God had hinted to his servant

that this was what the devil was aiming at. "Then," said Job, "I will bless him." His wife suggested afterwards that he should curse God, but he would do no such thing, he would bless him. It is usually a wise thing to do the very opposite to what the evil one suggests to you. If he says, "Curse," do you bless. Remember the story of a man who was going to give a pound to some charitable institution. The devil said, "No, you cannot afford it." "Then," said the man, "I will give two pounds; I will not be dictated to in this way." Satan exclaimed, "You are a fanatic." The man replied, "I will give four pounds." "Ah!" said Satan, "what will your wife say when you go home, and tell her that you have given away four pounds?" "Well," said the man, "I will give eight pounds now; and if you do not mind what you are at, you will tempt me to give sixteen." So the devil was obliged to stop, because the more he tempted him, the more he went the other way. So let it be with us. If the devil would drive us to curse God, let us bless him all the more, and Satan will be wise enough to leave off tempting when he finds that, the more he attempts to drive us, the more we go in the opposite direction.

This is all meant to be sweet, cheery talk to suffering saints; how I wish that everybody here had an interest in it! What will some of you do, what are some of you doing, now that you have lost all,—wife dead, children dead, and you are growing old, yet you are without God? O you poor rich people, who have no interest in God, your money must burn your souls! But you poor, poor, poor people, who have not anything here, and have no hope hereafter, how sad is your case! May God, of his rich mercy, give you even a little common-sense, for, surely, common-sense would drive you to him! Sometimes, in distributing temporal relief, we meet with persons who have been out of work, and full of trouble, and have not had bread to eat, and we say to them, "Did you ever cry to God for help?" "No, sir, we never prayed in all our life." What are you at? Here is a child, crawling about a house, shivering for want of bread and clothes. "Did you never ask your father for anything?" "No, never." Come, friend, did God make you, or did you grow without him? Did God create you? If he made you, he will have respect unto the work of his hands. Go and try him, even on that low ground. Go and seek his face even as his creature, and see whether he does not help you. O unbelief, to what madness dost thou go, that even when men are driven to starvation, they will not turn to God! O Spirit of God, bless the sons of men! Even through their fears, and sorrows, and losses, bless them, and bring them in penitence to the Saviour's feet, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOB I. 6—22.

Verse 6. *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

Angels and all kinds of intelligent spirits had, as it were, a special, solemn, general assembly,—a great field-day, or levee. Perhaps, in stars far

remote, in various parts of the universe, there was celebrated that day a high festival of honour unto Jehovah; but since sin has come into the world, since even amongst the twelve apostles there was a Judas, so in every assembly, even though it be an assembly of the sons of God, there is sure to be a devil: "Satan came also among them." If he is not anywhere else, he is sure to be where the sons of God are gathered together. Yet what impudence this is on his part, that he dares to come even into the assemblies of the saints! And what hardness of heart he must have, for he comes in as a devil, and he goes out as a devil! The sons of God offer their spiritual prayers inspired by the Holy Ghost, but the devil offers diabolical petitions suggested by his own malice.

7. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?*

He is obliged to give an account of himself; he cannot go a yard from his door without divine permission.

7. *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

Satan is always busy, never quiet; he cannot be still.

8. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job,—*

You see, Job is a man whom God calls his servant even in speaking to the devil, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?"

8. *That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

God himself gives Job that high character. He is a non-such, he stands alone amongst mankind: "There is none like him in the earth." "Hast thou reckoned him up? Hast thou taken his measure, O thou accuser of the brethren?"

9. *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?*

Even the devil could not bring a charge against Job's conduct; so he insinuated that his motives were not pure.

10. *Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?*

"He finds that it pays, it answers his purpose to be devout."

10, 11. *Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

See, the devil measures Job's corn in his own bushel; but, happily, it was the measurement of a liar, so he measured amiss. There are still some who say, "Yes, it is a fine thing to be good when you are rich; it is a very easy thing to behave yourself aright when all goes smoothly with you. Would the man, who is such a devout servant of God now, be like that if he were in poverty, or if he were cruelly slandered, or if he were treated with contempt? Would the grace of God carry him over those rough bridges? His religion is a fine thing, no doubt; but if he were tried and tested we should see what he would do." Now, the Lord delights in proving the graces of his people, for it brings great glory to his name when experiments are made upon them, to test them and try them, and to let even their greatest adversary know how true they are, and what a divine work it is which God has wrought upon them.

12. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.*

Satan could go so far, but no farther; there is an "only" in the permission granted to him: "Only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

12, 13. *So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house :*

That was a bad day for trouble to come. Satan selected that day because it was a joyful day, and therefore it would make the trials of Job the more startling. Moreover, if Job could have had his choice, he would have preferred that his trouble should come when his sons and his daughters were praying, not when they were feasting.

14, 15. *And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, 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 ; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

The bad news comes to him all of a sudden, just when he is thinking of something very different. There is only one servant left to tell the tale ; he was spared that Job might know that the news was true. If that one other servant had been killed, the tidings could only have reached Job as a rumour, that might or might not be true ; but now, one of his own servants tells him the sad story, so there is no mistake about it. Ah ! the devil knows how and where to strike when he does strike ; yet this was only the first blow for poor Job, and there were heavier ones to follow.

16. *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, and the servants, and consumed them ; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Now, if that lightning had fallen on the Sabeans while they were robbing and plundering, one might not have wondered ; but to fall on the flocks of a man of God who had clothed the naked with the fleeces of his sheep, and had presented many of the fat of the flock unto God in sacrifice,—that did seem strange. This trial, too, comes right upon the back of the other, and this one would appear to be more severe than the former one because it seemed to come distinctly from God. “The fire of God”—the lightning, “is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep.”

17. *While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, 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.*

Three such heavy blows will surely be enough to test the patriarch, but a fourth messenger came with the direst news of all.

18, 19. *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, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead ; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Did any other man ever have to endure such a complication of troubles, such agonies piled one upon another with no respite ? Job must have felt well-nigh stunned and choked by these consecutive griefs.

20—22. *Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither : the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

Oh, the triumphs of almighty grace ! May God grant us such patience, if he sends us such trials, and unto him shall be the glory evermore !