

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JOB'S SURE KNOWLEDGE.

A Sermon

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“For I know that my Redeemer liveth.”—Job xix. 25.

I DARESAY you know that there are a great many difficulties about the translation of this passage. It is a very complicated piece of Hebrew, partly, I suppose, owing to its great antiquity, being found in what is, probably, one of the oldest Books of the Bible. Besides that, different persons have tried to translate it according to their own varying views. The Jews stiffly fight against the notion of the Messiah and his resurrection being found in this verse, while many Christian commentators see here everything that we can find in the New Testament, and translate the passage as though Job were as well instructed in this matter as we are now that Christ “hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Others say that, while there is, no doubt, a reference to the person and the resurrection of Christ, yet it is not so vivid as some seem to think.

Personally, I am quite satisfied with the translation given in our Authorized Version; yet it has occurred to me that, possibly, Job himself may not have known the full meaning of all that he said. Imagine the patriarch driven into a corner, badgered by his so-called friends, charged by them with all manner of evils until he is quite boiling over with indignation, and, at the same time, smarting under terrible bodily diseases and the dreadful losses which he has sustained; and, at last, he bursts out with this exclamation, “I shall be vindicated one day; I am sure I shall. I know that my Vindicator liveth. I am sure that there is One who will vindicate me; and if he never clears my name and reputation as long as I live, it will be done afterwards. There must be a just God, in heaven, who will see me righted; and even though worms devour my body until the last relic of it has passed away, I do verily believe that, somehow, in the far-off ages, I shall be vindicated.” He throws his faith forward to some tremendous era which he anticipates, and he declares that there will be found then, as he believes there is

alive even now, a Goel, a Kinsman, an Avenger, who will stand up for him, and set right all this wrong. He cannot conceive that God will permit such gross injustice to be done as for a man, who has walked as he has walked, to be brought so low, and then to be stung with such unfounded accusations; he is positive that there must be a Vindicator for him somewhere, and he appeals to that last dread tribunal, which he dimly sees in the far-off future, and he believes that someone will be found to stand up successfully for him there.

If that be the case, you will see that Job was driven, perhaps beyond his former knowledge, by his very pains and trials. He may but dimly have perceived a future state, but his condition revealed to him the necessity for such a state. He felt that, if the righteous suffer so much in this life, often apparently without any just cause, and if the wicked prosper, then there must be another state in which God will set right the wrongs of this, and rectify the apparent inequalities of his providence here. Job realized that; and, possibly, his deep griefs may have been the channel of another revelation to him, namely, that there was a mysterious Divine Being, concerning whom that dark prophecy had been handed down from the garden of Eden itself, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He felt sure that, for those who were wronged as he had been, there must be an Advocate provided. He had before complained that there was no Umpire—no "Daysman"—to stand between them both; but now he asks for an Advocate, and he feels that there must be one, yea, he knows that there is, and he declares that, somewhere or other, there is an Advocate who will, some day or other, set right all that concerns him, let things go now as they may. So, possibly, Job was seeing more than he had ever seen before of that mysterious One who pleads the cause of those who are oppressed, and shows himself strong, on their behalf, at the right hand of God.

I am not going to enter into any discussion of the matter, but shall use the passage in the full Evangelical sense. Job may have known all that we now know concerning Christ, for he may have had special revelations and manifestations. We do not find all that we know in his Book, yet he may have meant all that I shall say in this discourse. If he did not mean it, I trust that we shall, under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I. I shall speak first upon this point,—JOB HAD A TRUE FRIEND AMID HIS MISTAKEN FRIENDS.

These men were miserable comforters, but Job had a real Comforter; they were estranged from him, but he had a true Friend left; so he said, "I know that my Goel liveth." That is the Hebrew word; I suppose you all know that it means the person nearest akin to him, who, because he was nearest akin, was bound to take up his cause. If a man was slain by misadventure, the goel pursued the one who had slain him, and endeavoured to avenge his death. If a person fell into debt, and was sold into slavery because of the debt, his goel, if he was able, had to redeem him; and hence we get the word "redeemer." Or if estates became mortgaged

through poverty, it was the duty of the next of kin to redeem them, if possible; so again we get the idea of redeemer. But the word "goel" is more comprehensive than the word redeemer, so we will begin with its first meaning.

Job, in the midst of his false friends, had *One whom he called his Kinsman*. "I know," he said, "that my Kinsman liveth." We interpret that word "Kinsman" as meaning our Lord Jesus Christ, and we sing,—

"Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,
Arrayed in majesty and blood,
Thou art our life; our souls in thee
Possess a full felicity."

I want you, just now, to think of Jesus Christ as your Kinsman if you are really in him, for he is indeed the nearest akin to you of any,—bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Now, your own flesh and blood, as you call them, are not so near to you in real kinship as Jesus is; for, often, you will find flesh and blood near akin by birth but not by sympathy. Two brothers may be, spiritually, very different from one another, and may not be able to enter into each other's trials at all; but this Kinsman participates in every pang that rends your heart; he knows your constitution, your weakness, your sensitiveness, the particular trial that cuts you to the quick, for in all your afflictions he was afflicted. Thus he is nearer to you than the nearest of earthly kin can possibly be, for he enters more fully into the whole of your life; he seems to have gone through it all, and he still goes through it all in his constant sympathy with you.

Christ's kinship with his people is to be thought of with great comfort because it is voluntary. We have some, perhaps, who are akin to us, yet who wish they were not. Many a time, when a rich man has poor relations, he is half ashamed of the kinship between them, and wishes that it did not exist. Shame upon him for thinking so! But our Lord Jesus Christ's relationship to us is no accident of birth; it was voluntarily assumed by him. He would be one with us because he loved us; nothing could satisfy him till he had come to this earth, and been made one flesh with his Church. "For this cause," it is said concerning marriage, "shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery," said Paul; "but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." And, verily, so was it with Christ, as the poet sings,—

" 'Yea,' saith the Lord, 'with her I'll go
Through all the depths of care and woe;
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear.' "

This he did because he would be one flesh with his people, and that is a very near kinship which comes as close as that, and which willingly does so,—not by force, but by voluntary choice.

And, further, this is a kinship of which Jesus is never ashamed.

We have known or heard of the prosperous man who has been ashamed of his poor old mother, and of the educated young man who has looked down with scorn upon the very father who has toiled and slaved in order to give him the advantages of such an education. It is disgraceful that there should ever be such ingrates; but it is written concerning our great Kinsman, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." He declares to the whole universe, concerning those persecuted ones, those who are ridiculed as being fools, "They are my brethren." The Prince of glory, whose fingers are adorned with stars of light like rings of priceless value, calls the poor bedridden woman, who is a child of God, his sister, and calls the humble, toiling, labouring man, who walks with him, his brother; and he is not ashamed to do so. Think, beloved, with intensest gratitude, of this great Kinsman of yours, who is so near of kin to you,—voluntarily near of kin, and not ashamed to own the kinship.

Remember, too, that your Kinsman liveth in this respect,—that he will always be your Kinsman. The closest ties of earthly relationship must, to a great extent, end in death, for there are no husbands and wives, as such, in heaven. There cannot be, "for in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." There are other ties, of a spiritual kind, that will far outshine the best of bonds that linked us together here; but, when all other ties are broken, Jesus will always be our Kinsman, our Brother. We shall find the fraternal relationship better understood, more fully enjoyed, and more clearly manifested up there than it ever can be here. When all other relationships are growing dim, this blessed eternal kinship will shine out the more brightly. So I want all of you, who truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, to interpret my text in this way: "I know that my Kinsman liveth," and to feel how honoured you are to have such a Kinsman as Christ is. Ruth was highly privileged in having such a kinsman as Boaz, who was not content for her to glean in his fields, but who took her as his wife; and your great Kinsman intends that you should be betrothed unto him for ever, and he will bring you to his heavenly home at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

There was a second meaning to the word *goel*, arising out of the first,—*Job's Kinsman would become his Vindicator*. It was the kinsman's duty to defend the rights of his needy relative, so Job intended here to say, "I know that my Vindicator liveth;" and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Vindicator of his people from all false charges. It is not easy for Christians to live in this world without being slandered and misrepresented; certainly, those of us who live in the full blaze of public life can hardly utter a word without having it twisted, and tortured, and misconstrued. We are often represented as saying what we loathe even to think; yet we must not be surprised at that. The world loves lying,—it always has done so, and it always will. Even in private life you may meet with similar cruel treatment; there are some of God's best children who lie under reproach by the year together. The very things which

they would not tolerate for a moment are laid to their charge, and they are thought to be guilty of them, and even good people hold up their hands in pious horror at them, though they are perfectly innocent all the while. Well, beloved, ever remember that your Vindicator liveth. Do not be too much concerned to clear your own character; above all, do not attempt to vindicate yourself in a court of law, but say to yourself, "I know that my Vindicator liveth." When he cometh, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." His people may be under a cloud now; but, when he appeareth, the cloud shall break, and their true glory shall be seen. The greater the obloquy under which any of us have unjustly lived on earth, the greater will be the joy and the honour which will be vouchsafed to us in the day when Christ shall clear our character from all the shameful aspersions that have been brought against us. All will be cleared up in that day, so leave the accusations alone, knowing that your Vindicator liveth.

There is another most comforting thought,—that our Vindicator will clear us from true charges as well as false ones. As for the false charges, what do they matter? It is the true ones that really concern us: can Christ clear us from them? Yes, that he can. Remember how the apostle John writes, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." You see, it is not merely, if we have been said to sin when we did not, but if we really sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father." O blessed Advocate, how dost thou clear thy people of the sin which they have actually committed? Why, in this way; he took it upon himself,—the awful load of their guilt,—and suffered the full penalty for it. So there he stands before the eternal throne, to plead their cause; and, as he does so, he says, "Those sins, committed by my people,—I have taken them upon myself, and suffered in the room, and place, and stead of all who will believe in me." O thou blessed Kinsman, how glorious art thou in thy grace, in that thou hast so completely undertaken our cause that thou hast been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in thee! Yes, beloved, Jesus will plead the merit of his precious blood and his spotless righteousness; and, before that powerful pleading, our sins and our transgressions shall sink beneath the flood, and shall not be remembered against us any more for ever.

In that day, too, our Vindicator will defend us against all the accusations of Satan. Our great adversary often assails and attacks us here, and the Lord says to him, as he did concerning Joshua the high priest, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee!" We may tell the devil, when we stand foot to foot with him, and are sore beset, that our Vindicator liveth, and we may quote to him that grand promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," because our Vindicator, who is to bruise the serpent's head, still liveth. The old serpent may nibble at your heel for a while, as he did at your Master's, but you, in the strength of your Lord, shall bruise his head; and whatsoever other adversary of your soul there may be, at any time, rest you in quiet confidence. Even if that

adversary is permitted to prevail over you for a while, say unto him, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

So you have two meanings of the word *goel*,—my Kinsman, my Vindicator, liveth. I hope you who are greatly tempted and tried, and you who are persecuted and oppressed, will catch that second meaning, and commit your cause unto God. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Be slow to anger; fret not yourselves because of the wicked man that prospereth in his evil way, and think not of being revenged upon your oppressors. In patience and quietness possess your souls, knowing that your time of vindication will surely come, for your Vindicator liveth.

Then the third meaning of the word *goel* certainly is redeemer, so Job could say, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth.*" As I have already said, the next of kin, in the process of vindicating his poor Kinsman, was accustomed to redeem him from bondage, or to redeem any part of his estate that might be under mortgage. So, let us next think of how the Lord Jesus Christ hath redeemed us from bondage. Having broken the law of God, we were in bondage to that law; we had received the spirit of bondage again to fear. But we, who have believed in Jesus, our Kinsman, can say that he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, and that we are no longer in bondage. We were also in bondage under sin, as Paul wrote, "I am carnal, sold under sin;" but Christ has come, and broken the power of sin in us, so that its reigning power is subdued; and though it still striveth to get the mastery, and often maketh us to groan within ourselves, even as Paul did, yet do we, with him, thank God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are two redemptions,—redemption by price and redemption by power, and both of these Christ hath wrought for us;—by price, by his sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary; and by power, by his Divine Spirit coming into our heart, and renewing our soul. Ought we not unceasingly to bless the Lord who hath redeemed us from under the law, having paid the penalty for the commands which we had broken, and who hath also redeemed us from the power of sin? "I know that my Redeemer liveth," then I know that I am a free man; for if the Son makes us free, then are we free indeed. I know that he paid the price for my soul's eternal redemption, then may my soul continually exult in him, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith he hath made me free.

But, as I have already reminded you, the redeemer was also accustomed to redeem the estate as well as the person of his kinsman. We had lost everything. Father Adam had put everything under a heavy mortgage, and we could not even meet the interest on it; but the whole estate is unmortgaged now, even to paradise itself. Does someone ask, "Is there not any mortgage even upon paradise?" I answer,—No; for Christ said to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" so it is clear that he has entered

paradise, and claimed it on his people's behalf. Jesus Christ hath said, in the words of the psalmist, "I restored that which I took not away." Bankrupt debtors, through the Lord's sovereign grace, you are no longer under any liabilities because of your sin if Christ be accepted by you as your Goel and Redeemer. He hath restored to you the estates which your first father, Adam, had lost; and he hath made you heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, through the wondrous redemption which he wrought for you upon the cross of Calvary.

Suck the honey, if you can, out of these three gloriouis truths, and you will be able to do so in proportion as you can personally use the words of the text, "'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I know that he lives who will vindicate my character, and rectify my wrongs. I know, too, that he lives who hath redeemed me from sin and hell; and even though I die, I know that he will redeem me from the power of the grave, and that he will enable me to say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'"

Dwell on the remembrance that you have such a Divine Helper, and then let us pass on to another thought, at which I will only briefly hint as I proceed to another part of my theme.

II. The second point is this,—JOB HAD REAL PROPERTY AMID ABSOLUTE POVERTY.

Job had lost everything,—every stick and stone that he possessed, he had lost his children, and he had lost his wife, too, for all practical purposes, for she had not acted like a wife to him in his time of trial. Poor Job, he had lost everything else, but he had not lost his Redeemer. Notice, he does not say, "I know that my wife and my children live;" but he says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Ah! "my Redeemer,"—he has not lost him, so he has the best of all possessions still left. Looking up to him, by faith, with the tears of joy standing in his eyes, he says, "Yes, he is my Redeemer, and he still lives; I accept him as mine, and I will cling to him for ever." Can you, beloved friends, not merely rejoice in Christ as *the* Redeemer, but also as *your* Redeemer? Have you personally accepted him as your Redeemer? Have you personally trusted him with your soul, wholly and really; and do you already feel, in your own heart, a kinship to this great Kinsman, a trust in this great Vindicator, a reliance upon his great redemption? Another man's redemption is of no value to my soul; the sweetness lies in the little word "*my*"—"my Redeemer." Luther used to say that the marrow of the gospel is found in the pronouns, and I believe it is: "*my* Redeemer." Say, with me, each one of you for himself or herself,—

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess *my* sin.

"My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes *her* guilt was there."

If you really do rely upon Christ's atoning sacrifice, and so take him as your Redeemer, you may not only hope your guilt was there, but you may know that it was. There, poor man, you may not have a penny in your pocket, but if you can truly say, "my Redeemer," you are infinitely better off than a millionaire who cannot say that. Thou, who knowest not where thou wilt have a lodging to-night, if thou canst truly say, "my Redeemer," thou needest not envy the very angels of God, for, in this respect, thou art ahead even of them, for they can call him "Lord," but not "Redeemer." He is not so near akin to them as he is to thee, "for verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He took your nature and mine, beloved, for Christ became a man.

So Job had something real and valuable left even when he had lost all his property.

III. Thirdly, Job seems to lay stress upon the word "liveth": "I know that my Redeemer *liveth*." This teaches us that JOB HAD A LIVING KINSMAN AMID A DYING FAMILY.

All his children were dead. We cannot easily estimate the full force of that blow upon the patriarch's heart. The loss of one child is a very painful event, even when the child is a very little one, and the parents have many others left; but it is a far worse bereavement when the children, who are taken away, are grown up, as Job's were. They were evidently a very united family, who used to meet in each other's houses for mutual fellowship. They seem to have been a very happy family, and they were certainly a family under very gracious influences, for Job was accustomed, after their days of festival, to offer sacrifices for them, lest they should have sinned against the Lord. Altogether, it was a fine family,—seven sons and three daughters;—and now they were all gone at once! To lose all one's family at once, like that, is a heavy stroke that none can measure but those who have felt it. All were gone,—the whole ten at once! That was sad for poor Job, but it was most blessed that he was able to say, "Though my children are all dead, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' He is not dead, and in him I find more than all that I have lost."

Look at your Lord, dear friend, if you are mourning, just now, the loss of loved ones, and see whether he is not better to you than ten sons and daughters. See whether there is not, in his heart, room enough for that affection, which has been so rudely snapped, to grow again. The tendrils of your soul want something to cling to, and to twist around; then let them twine around him. Rejoice that he lives in a dying world. If you walk through the cemetery, or stand by the open grave, how blessedly these words seem to fall upon your spirit, like the music of angels, "These are dead, but 'I know that *my Redeemer liveth*,'—liveth on, liveth in power, liveth in happiness, liveth with a life which he communicates to all who trust him. He lives, and therefore I shall live with him. He lives, and therefore the dead, who are in him, shall live for ever." O blessed truth!

You will yourself die soon, dear friend; no, I must correct myself,

you will not *die*, for it is not death for one who knows the Saviour to die. You will fall asleep in him, one of these days, at the very hour that God has appointed; and when you open your eyes, it will not be in the narrow death-chamber, you will not be on the bed of sickness. Methinks you will be startled to find yourself amid such new surroundings. "What is this I hear?" you will say. "Such music as this has never charmed me before, and what is that I see?" But you will not need to enquire, for you will know *that* face at once. You knew, while on earth, that Jesus still lived; but you will know it better then, when you lay aside these heavy optics that do but dim our sight, and get into the pure spirit state, and then see HIM. Oh, the bliss of that first sight of Christ! It seems to me as if that would gather up an eternity of delight into a single moment; that first glimpse of him will be enough to make us swoon away with excessive rapture. I do verily think that some saints, whom I have known, have done just that,—swooned away with the excess of joy that they have felt in their departing moments. I have, sounding in my ears just now, the voice of a dear brother, by whose bedside I sat for a little while before I came to this service. He said to me, "I shall be home to-night, pastor. I wanted to see your face once more before I went; but I shall be home to-night, and see the face of Jesus." I hope you will all be prepared to die after that fashion. The godly old negro said, "Our minister is dying full of life." That is the way to die,—full of life. Because Jesus lives, we shall live also, and we may well die full of life because of our union to him.

IV. The last thought I want to leave with you is this,—JOB HAD ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY AMID UNCERTAIN AFFAIRS.

He said, "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth." Why, Job, I should have thought you would not have known anything for certain now. I should not have liked to insure Job's sheep, and oxen, and asses, and camels, or the houses in which his children met together to feast. Nothing seemed to be certain with Job but uncertainty; yet there was one thing, concerning which he felt that he could put his foot down firmly, and say, "*I know.*" The winds may rage, and the tempests roar, but they cannot shake this rock. '*I know.*' '*I know.*' '*I know.*' Beloved, is everything uncertain with you in this world? Of course it is, for it is so with everybody. But does it appear to be more uncertain with you than it does with anybody else? Does your business seem to be slipping away, and every earthly comfort be threatening to disappear? Even if it is so, there is, nevertheless, something that is certain, something that is stable,—Jesus your Redeemer lives. Rest on him, and you will never fail. Let your faith in him be firm, and confident; you cannot be too fully established in the belief that Jesus, who once died, has left the grave, to die no more, and that you, in him, must also live eternally. Something may be wrong with you, for the next few days or weeks, but all is right with you for ever, and "all's well that ends well." There may be some rough water to be crossed between here and the fair havens of eternal felicity, but all is right there for ever and ever. There may

be losses and crosses, there may be tossings and shipwrecks, but all is right for ever with all who are in Christ Jesus. "Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship,"—but all who are in Christ Jesus shall escape "safe to land." There are uncertainties innumerable, but there is this one certainty: "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Spring on this rock, man! If you are struggling in the sea, just now, and waves of sin and doubt beat over you, leap on to this rock,—Jesus lives. Trust the living Christ; and, because he lives, you shall live also. I could cheerfully take my place with Job, if I might be able to say as confidently as he did, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" and if you, as a poor sinner, are trusting wholly and only in Christ, then he is your Redeemer, and you are saved for ever. If he is the only hope that you have, and you cling to him as the limpet clings to the rock, then all is right with you for ever, and you may know that he is your Redeemer as surely as Job knew that he was his. The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOB XIX.

Verses 1, 2. *Then Job answered and said, How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?*

They struck at him with their hard words, as if they were breaking stones on the roadside. We ought to be very careful what we say to those who are suffering affliction and trial, for a word, though it seems to be a very little thing, will often cut far more deeply and wound far more terribly than a razor would. So Job says, "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?"

3. *These ten times have ye reproached me: ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me.*

He means that they had reproached him several times over, and hints that they ought to have been ashamed to act so strangely, so coldly, so untenderly, towards him.

4. *And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself.*

"I have done you no harm. The error, if error there be, is within my own bosom, for you cannot find anything in my life to lay to my charge." Happy is the man who can say as much as that.

5, 6. *If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach: know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net.*

Job seems to say, "I did not bring this trouble upon myself; it is God who has laid it upon me. Take heed lest, in reproaching me because of my trouble, you should reproach God also." I suppose that we cannot, all of us, see into the inner meaning of these words; but if we are in very sore trouble, and those who ought to comfort us are bringing cruel accusations against us, we shall read the language of Job with no small sympathy and satisfaction.

7. *Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.*

Poor Job! When our prayer is not heard, or we think it is not, then